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The Virtual Musician's Guide to Promoting your Band

The first thing you need to do in order to successfully promote your band is become a true believer. Keep the faith that your band is the best band out there and deserves recognition. Proselytize to a fault, because what is truly going to differentiate your band from the other thousands of bands out there is how many people know about you! A&R reps , booking agents, promoters and producers, a necessary evil, need know about you. Don't give this area of your career short shrift! It is (unfortunately) as important as learning your instrument and being able to write marketable songs. Remember, Madonna didn't get where she is today because she has a great voice. So, maybe you 're not after that sort of fame, but the point is that there is a lot to be said for wanting it more than the other guy.

There are three essentials in any promo kit.....

A) THE BAND PHOTO

The band photo is probably the least important part of your package. Just try maximize your strengths with it. If you are a group of highly photogenic men or women, take advantage! Get a good, clear picture of everyone looking relaxed and happy. Try to avoid the obviously 'staged' picture, as it always comes off as phony as it looks. If you're not great lookers, go for an attitude. Basically, do whatever is right. You definitely don't have to hire a professional photographer. You can get great results with a friend with a Minolta.

B) THE DEMO TAPE

The demo tape is important, I recommend scraping the money together to record three of your best songs in the best studio that you can afford. If you have the means to record digitally, by all means do so. You'll then have many more options when marketing your recorded material. If your music is already in a digital format, you can create an MP3 file of it and promote your original music over the Internet. If it is not currently in a digital format, you can go to a studio

and have it transferred to digital. Anyhow, getting your music recorded well, regardless of format, is critical. Everyone prefers to listen to good sounding, well mixed music. Unless you are already well versed in sound engineering and mixing and you have really good recording gear at home, go to a studio. It will result in a better sounding product, plus you will be able to work with people who produce sound for a living. You can experiment with your musical sound, for example, utilizing the expertise of an engineer who has produced vocals countless times. It can make a real difference. My first experience with my band in studio (we had done a couple of "do it yourself" demos that were botched affairs) was enlightening. Working with the engineer on different vocal sounds, he was not only able to get a fantastic sound for my voice, but because I was hearing this great mix in my head phone, I achieved a vocal performance that exceeded anything I was able to do up to that point. I came out of the booth astonished and my bandmates all gave me an ovation. So, working with experienced people can help you put your songs across better.

Also, be meticulous in song selection. If you think you have a tune or two that could be a bona fide hit song, put it on the tape. Don't let the winds of band politics allow you to put any songs on your demo that you can't get 100% behind. Have all the screaming matches you need, but put your best songs on the tape in the end, because no matter how good it sounds, if the songs don't attract the ear of the listener, they will turn it off.

C) THE PRESS KIT (bio's, news clippings, press releases)

The last part of your package is important for club owners and record producers because it speaks directly to your current level of popularity. So, put in everything you got! A bio is nice, but just one page with a blurb about each member is all you need. If any member of your band was ever in any band before, that achieved any level of notoriety or success, be sure to include that in the bio. But what is going to attract the most attention are any news clippings or favorable concert/record reviews that attest to your band's popularity. This is what is called "creating a buzz". If a club owner sees that you are packing 'em in at other clubs, he's of course going to want you to pack 'em in his club, too. If a record producer reads evidence in your

press kit that you have an established audience he's more likely to want to record you. But if you are not an established act with tons of press clippings, here's one thing you can do. If you have gigged at clubs that list their schedules in the paper (most clubs do), then cut those schedules out and include those in your package. Then, at least, people will see that you have been out playing the circuit and know that you have experience and, probably, at least a small following.

Stay Tuned,

The Virtual Musician