

"Indispensable." —Publishers Weekly

THE INDIE BAND SURVIVAL GUIDE



THE COMPLETE MANUAL FOR THE
DO-IT-YOURSELF MUSICIAN

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Indie Band Survival Guide* (www.IndieGuide.com), a practical how-to manual to get your music heard, distributed, sold, booked, promoted, and seen. In the past, you could only do all of this with the backing of a major record label, but you can now do it on your own. We'll tell you how to get started and walk you through the process.

This book is for all musicians, from hobbyists to professionals. It's also for managers, bookers, labels, promoters, recording engineers, music teachers, music- video directors, filmmakers, and anyone else who works with music. In fact, many of the methods we share here are useful for any creative endeavor; you don't have to be a musician to get a lot out of this *Guide*. But our focus is on how each topic relates to music. For instance, when we explain how to create Web sites, we specifically cover the creation of *music* Web sites, even though the principles of good Website design we share are applicable to any site.

The information in this book is applicable to musicians of all ages, from teens starting their first garage band to retirees who have rediscovered their love of music and want to share it with the world. It will be indispensable to you whether or not you have a lot of experience with the Internet. The *Guide* will explain how to use all of the talents that you already have and supplement them with tools, techniques, and a network of people to accomplish what was only possible for major label bands in the past.

More than anything, at the heart of this book are essential techniques for getting your music to the world.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is about *doing*.

In the book, we cover the theory behind how things work so you can navigate unfamiliar tasks (such as publicity), but you should expect to *act* on these how-to steps and suggestion, not just think about them. The book works best if you have a notepad next to you while you read so you can take notes on what to do next for your music.

The *Guide* is not a book of lists and links. Although we have important links throughout the book, new tools and services for musicians are always popping up (as well as disappearing). For this information, as well as a way to connect to other motivated musicians, head to www.IndieGuide.com.

Naturally, as a musician you'll want to improvise on what we suggest here. Go for it. As we like to say, these tools and lessons are no substitute for artful practice.

BUY THE INDIE BAND SURVIVAL GUIDE

Now In
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Take Control of Your Music Career for Less Than the Price of a Major Label CD!

"Finally! A comprehensive and practical guide for musicians that explains how to navigate today's music world without a label. A must-read!"

- **Derek Sivers**,
founder of **CD Baby** and **HostBaby**

"I've seen a lot of books over the years; I've worked on every side of it...You have the most up to date reference book for young musicians."

- **Matt Pinfield**, radio and
MTV/VH1 television personality

"The best compilation of information and advice on how to make it in the 'post Net' era"

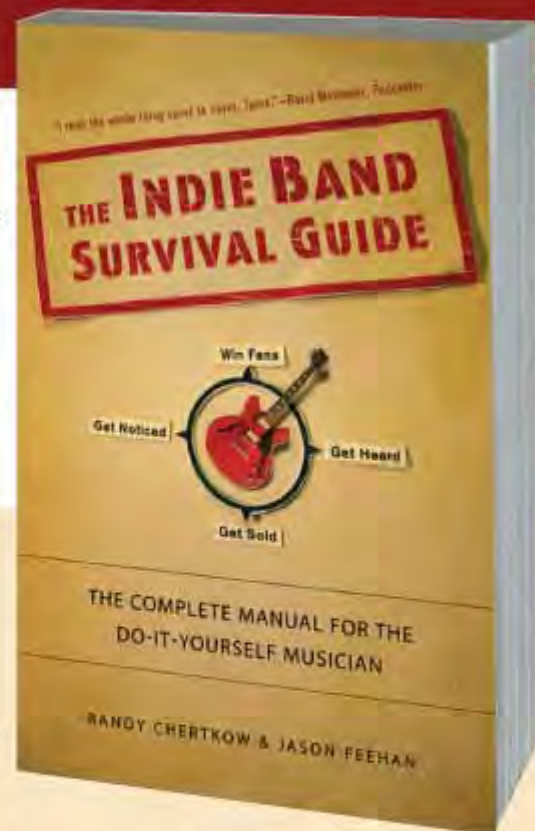
- **The Lincoln Journal Star**

"Chertkow and Feehan's detailed and well organized book is essential reading for both veteran and budding independent musicians."

- **BlogCritics Magazine**

"Weighing in at 329 pages, it is jam-packed full of incredible information. The Indie Band Survival Guide is a book that all artists, independent or not, need to own."

- **Ariel Hyatt**, author, publicist, and founder of **CyberPR**



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CHAPTER 1 (EXCERPT)

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO BE A MUSICIAN

There has never been a better time to be a musician.

The tools at your fingertips today were barely even dreams just ten years ago. Global digital distribution for music is simple to achieve, and with it you can sell millions of copies of your album from one physical copy. More opportunities exist to get your music played and heard than ever before. The Web can get you a worldwide fanbase. And you can record your music at home with technologies and capabilities better than a professional recording studio could do a mere decade ago. The system, which used to be closed off, is now wide open for anyone who wants to participate. The traditional players in the music industry were like tollbooth operators, and the price of admission was your music. Now, you don't have to ask anyone's permission, and the cost is minimal.

We've entered a world where the musicians are in charge. The numerous middlemen who separated the musicians from their fans are falling away. In fact, musicians can stop wasting their time trying to appeal to the mainstream-minded music executives and focus on the people who really matter: the fans.

Unfortunately, the best techniques for taking your music into your own hands are scattered all over the Web, or in books and courses oriented toward audio and computer professionals. Even more answers have existed only in the heads of musicians who have solved these problems from scratch, but haven't yet shared how.

That is, until now.

You are holding a book written by two indie musicians who ran into those problems and who, by necessity, navigated and deciphered the confusing worlds of music copyright and licensing, CD replication, publicity, music-video production, and booking, to name a few. This is the guide that we wish that we had when we started our own band over a decade ago. With this book, you'll learn how to win fans worldwide, achieve global digital distribution and sales, get your music heard on radio and the Internet, launch publicity campaigns, and get yourself and your music noticed throughout the world.

In short, you now have everything you need to do it yourself.

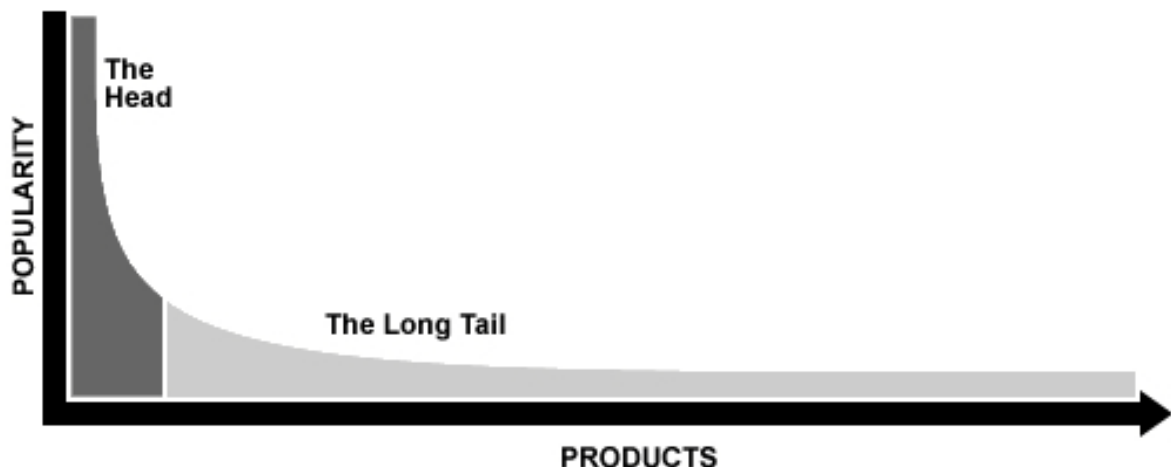
THE DEATH OF THE HIT- DRIVEN MUSIC INDUSTRY

THE LONG TAIL

The music industry has long focused on the hits. From the Billboard Top 100 charts to the focus on gold and platinum albums, success for music was marked by the number of units sold. This industry is obsessed with popularity and sales numbers. This isn't surprising, since most of the sales for the industry came only from those hits. Why bother with any other music?

But that was in the days when music could only be sold as pieces of acetate or plastic, and the only way to hear new music was to listen to the handful of radio stations in your town. At the heart of the titanic changes to the music industry is a concept called the Long Tail, a theory created by Chris Anderson, editor of *Wired* magazine, author of the book [The Long Tail](#), and, incidentally, a musician.

His theory about what changed is simple: there has never been room for items that might sell just one or two units a week. But, with computers and the Internet, there is no end of shelf space. For example, if we look at music sales, it would resemble the graph below. Most of the music industry focused on the Head of the graph, which represents hit albums. But the gray part, the Long Tail, extends way beyond what even the graph can show.



Here's the surprising part: the combined sales of the Long Tail are greater than the combined sales of the Head (the "hits"). The reason is simple: so much more makes up the tail than can ever make up the head. And because people aren't limited to just buying their music from the head, they are traveling down the tail and buying what they want to hear, rather than what the industry has made available to them.

Are all of these so-called Long Tail songs, well, good? Naturally, not. But the amazing thing is that every single one of these tracks, good, bad, and ugly, usually sells. This key paragraph from *The Long Tail* explains it best:

... for online retailers like Rhapsody the market is seemingly never-ending. Not only is every single one of Rhapsody's top 60,000 tracks streamed at least once each month, but the same is true for its top 100,000, top 200,000, and top 400,000, even its top 600,000, top 900,000 and beyond. As fast as Rhapsody adds tracks to its library, those songs find an audience, even if it's just a handful of people every month, somewhere in the world.

This means that there's a market for all music thanks to high-speed Internet connections and dirt cheap hard-drive storage. The implications for your own music should be obvious: there's room for you in the pool.

Hop in.

UNLIMITED CHOICES

In the recent past there were only so many radio stations, TV channels, and shelf spaces. Audiences' choices were limited. But today, choices are unlimited.

This changes everything.

And not all of it is good for the traditional media, the media that most musicians target to get their music played. A multitude of new entertainment options such as YouTube, podcasts, video games, and the Internet have diluted their audience. According to The Long Tail, if you were to drop a television share sheet for today's top network television show on the desk of a television executive from one of the three networks of the 1970s, he would immediately cancel the show due to poor ratings. And with even more choices being offered to audiences, these numbers will probably drop even further.

In the past, because the channels were so expensive, the gatekeepers focused on hit music or shows that maximized their audience share. Generations of people internalized this hits-only economic model and began to assume that there was "a mainstream" that everyone liked. Anything that didn't make it past the gatekeepers had no value. So how much of this was because mainstream entertainment was the only entertainment available?

"Music is an industry grossly underserved by the blockbuster model," Chris Anderson told us in an interview. "People don't realize how much music is out there. The vast majority of bands don't get signed to a major label and don't get sold in major record stores. Music is an example of the richness of culture and the violence that traditional distribution does to that variety."

But as he explained in his book, the traditional distribution model is now being swept away. And this trend is good for indies. Plus, because the means of production and distribution are in the hands of people like you and me, more people are making music themselves. They have realized that they can find an audience on the Internet, even a big one. And the irony is that the average person is not only spending less time consuming traditional mainstream media, he or she is actually competing against it.

NICHES

The limited number of channels of the past has exploded into a universe of niches. People can easily find others that share their interests no matter what that interest is, and no matter where in the world those people are. But this doesn't mean niches are small. For example, there are millions of tennis fans.

Music works the same way. No matter what genre of music you play, fans of that style can find you and hear your music. All you need to do is reach out to them. You need only go to CD Baby, the world's largest independent music store, to find that the top sellers appeal to particular niches. Derek Sivers, the president and founder of CD Baby, shared his observations about this trend:

Imagine an archery range with a target one hundred feet away that you're shooting at with your bow and arrow. For the last few decades that target has been two inches wide. And the only way you could hit it was aiming dead at the middle. If you had perfect aim, you could have a big hit. Otherwise, you'd have nothing at all. Now it's like that target is one hundred feet across, and it's easy to hit, except somebody did a little trick and cut out the middle. It's like a big giant doughnut. It's easy to hit, but if you're still aiming at the middle, there's nothing there.

This trend is good for indies. There are people who want to hear your music. And, the goal of the rest of the Guide is to tell you how to effectively find your niches.

HOME RECORDING AND ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Distribution wasn't the only gated-off part of the hit-driven music industry, recording technology was also expensive and unavailable to most musicians. Recording used to require the financial resources and backing of a label. Today, access to this technology is within most musician's reach.

"Today's recording technology both equals that of the studios in the past, and at the same time is a fraction of the cost," says Norman Hajjar, the Chief Marketing Officer of Guitar Center, the largest musical instrument retailer in the US. "For less than \$1000, you can be a bedroom rock star." As Hajjar points out, this affordable recording technology and gear has "unbottled the creativity that was always there; it was just inaccessible to most people. Musicians today have so many different and exciting ways to not only get access to the creative tools that allow them to express themselves, but also more ways to share their creativity with the world. Ways that were unfathomable in the past. I have zero doubt that we're hearing music today that would not have been created if it weren't for this access to technology."

The recording capabilities that musicians have now are stunning, and are a whole world to explore itself. And it's even more powerful now that this music production revolution has been coupled with instant worldwide music distribution. It means that the musician's basic desire to make and record music that others will hear has now been fulfilled. And it's this new era that has brought a lot of people back to music, as well as enticing new people to explore it.

How the Long Tail Affects Your Music

Here's what it means to you:

- There is room for every artist.

- You no longer need to go through gatekeepers to get your music to an audience.
- Traditional mainstream media such as television and radio are no longer the only ways to get heard. There are more ways to win fans using a broad array of other media that don't have the same barriers to entry.
- Music hits are never going to be as big as they were in the past, because people aren't forced to select their music from a small set of options. Astronomical hits were an artificial by-product of limited choices.
- Because of the number of options that the audience has, you must compete for your audience's attention, but there are countless niches for your music.
- The distinction between being signed and being indie will not matter to fans. Instead talent, quality, publicity, and genre will be all that matters.
- Your band is a niche.

THE NEW ERA OF MUSIC

Today's music world has entirely new concepts and terms that drive it, with audiences that have a completely different view of music from what they have had in the past. You will need to take these changes into account to plunge forward into this world. We're going to talk about this new era below.

PRE-NET AND POST-NET

The heart of this new era for music is the Internet's capability to instantaneously transmit music among people all over the world. Other factors include better encoding for small music-file sizes, peer-to-peer file sharing, faster computers, and broadband connections.

In the **pre-Net** era, limited resources meant limited access for audiences. It meant few channels of distribution, with control concentrated among few players. These players decided what music would be distributed and where. It was a world of one-way communication—of broadcasting.

In the **post-Net** era, barriers between artists and their audiences have fallen away. Post-Net audiences are fickle, and they expect to get most of their information and entertainment for free. Trends come and go quickly in this world. It's easy for something to "go viral" because people spread the music they enjoy to people they know. In the Internet world, this can mean millions of people taking an interest in a short time.

We will be using the terms pre-Net and post-Net to discuss differences between these two eras. We'll be comparing them often because many commonly held pre-Net conceptions still need to go.

PRE-FILTERS AND POST-FILTERS

In the pre-Net world, there are two layers of filters.

Pre-filters are the gatekeepers who decide what music will go into distribution channels such as stores, TV, radio, and film. Examples of these are music executives, agents, and A&R representatives. In the pre-Net world, it was tough to break into this system, and only a minute percentage ever did.

Post-filters are the reviewers, newspapers, Web sites, and other sources that people trust to filter through the sea of information and find the gems that match their tastes.

While the pre-filters still exist in the post-Net era, they can be ignored if someone wants to post their work for the world to see. There are no pre-filters on YouTube, for example. Anyone can post any video he or she wants. But of that morass of videos, which ones are actually entertaining? That's where post-filters come in. Many people depend on sites such as [Milk and Cookies](#), which only posts links to videos that users in their community found amusing, to point out the good ones.

Also, even the role of post-filters has opened up. In the pre-Net era, only a few people were empowered to review new works for the public. In the post-Net world, anyone can blog his or her opinions or post a review on Amazon.com. The traditional reviewers, who were at times influenced by the major players, suddenly had unbiased, genuine competition from people who wanted nothing more than to share their opinions. This authenticity is the true currency of the Internet.

There are many types of post-filters:

- **The traditional reviewer.** An individual who gives his or her personal opinion as to what is worthwhile. Some examples are music writers and movie reviewers. In the post-Net era, it also includes bloggers and Web sites that post reviews.
- **Community-based filters.** Community-based filters are Web sites that let their own communities suggest and vote on what they consider to be the best content. With a large enough community, this can be a powerful way to filter. Some examples of community-based filters are [Digg](#) and [Reddit](#), which we discuss in the "Your Web Presence" chapter.
- **Editor-based submission filters.** This combines elements of traditional reviewers with community-based filters. A Web site that has editor-based submission filters will accept submissions from anyone, but an editor will sift through these and post what he or she thinks is worthwhile. One example of this type of post-filter is [Slashdot](#).

- **Aggregation filters.** Since so many opinions are now to be found, some sites aggregate reviews to give a more accurate picture. For instance, Rotten Tomatoes (rottentomatoes.com) takes reviews from known movie reviewers and quantifies their opinions into a combined approval percentage for each film.
- **Word of mouth.** The most important kind of filter there is. One that becomes even more powerful online.
- **Advertising and marketing.** Although these are less effective than the other types of filters, advertising and marketing can have a powerful effect on what rises into people's consciousness.

Since pre-filters can now be avoided, the post-filters have become all-important. They are the primary way that people will find out about your band. As Jim DeRogatis, music editor for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and co-host of National Public Radio's *Sound Opinions*, says, "No matter how obscure a name I throw at you or you throw at me, the fact that we'll be able, in no time at all, to sample that band for ourselves is incredibly liberating. But you'd never know about [these groups] if I didn't mention it to you." As an indie musician, you will need to target these post-filters. We will talk about how to influence them to cover your music in upcoming chapters.

THE BIG HIT VS. THE LONG, SLOW BURN

Most major label bands are only profitable for a short time after they release, and so there was always an emphasis on the quick hit. And for some reason, indie musicians still think that it has to be true for them as well. But a sustainable music career is not built quickly--especially when you're independent and don't have the money for billboards and saturation of radio play. "It requires a long, slow burn" as indie musician, Gavin Mikhail says.

Fortunately, since the internet is always on, you are constantly giving people a chance to discover your music, as opposed to the days when radio was the only significant way to get heard. Approaching your music with an eye on the long-term will result in greater successes than imitating the outdated hit model. Word of mouth and the recommendation of a friend has always been one of the best methods for fans to discover new music. Today, word of mouth and recommendations occur online as well as offline. But the great thing about it happening online is it's easily hyperlinked, shared, and forever archived so others can stumble on the same recommendation in the future.

THE PEDESTAL VS. THE ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONSHIP

If the prior music industry was all about putting the artist on a pedestal, the new one is about having one-to-one relationships with your fans.

As Andrew Dubber, Degree Leader in Music Industries at Birmingham City University, blogger, and founder of Music Think Tank (musicthinktank.com), says:

The new model is about starting an ongoing economic relationship with a community of enthusiasts. It's about attention and repeat engagement....It's not a top-down, one-to-many distribution model. It's not a customer off the street happening by and exchanging money for a product. This is about trust,

recommendation and reputation. This is a many-to-many dialogue, and the money goes where the attention lies.

Most all of the artists that we interviewed, as well as ourselves, all have developed personal connections with their fans and built a community. Both Gavin Mikhail and Jonathan Coulton talked about the eight to ten hour days they spent corresponding to individual fans through email. Our band has gone on to collaborate with fans on their own projects – from writing music for live theater to writing theme songs for podcasts and videos. The UK band Hope & Social (formerly Four Day Hombre) went even further, and ended up starting a music label with some of their biggest fans so that they could fund their next projects. And their music videos were all filmed by a fan, Mark Wordsworth, who turned out to be so talented, he ended up building a career as a music-video director.

DO IT YOURSELF

As an indie, making your music successful is now your responsibility. Unfortunately, it's not enough to just post an MP3 on your MySpace page. Everything that a label would do for you is in your hands. You need to get yourself [noticed](#), [booked](#), [distributed](#), [played](#), [seen](#), and [publicized](#).

Luckily, you have [outstanding tools, services, and resources at your fingertips](#) to help you do it yourself. You have global distribution, unlimited promotional opportunities, and countless new ways to get your music to millions of people all over the world. Stop worrying about a music industry and focus instead on your music and fans. Your fans are out there. You just need to win them over.

That's what the *Guide* is all about. Read on to find out how.



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CHAPTER 3 (EXCERPT)

YOUR BRAND

Pre-Net, you had to build awareness of your music among those people you could physically meet or those who could see you play live. Post-Net, you have the ability to share your music with more people than those pre-Net bands could ever dream of. Your arm's reach is no longer limited to where you're located.

Today, the people who have met you or seen you play live are likely to be a minority of the people who listen to your music. The majority will now be those who discover you online. To these people, your band will only be known through your music, name, and the identity you convey through your Web site, logos, photos, blogs, videos, avatars, and so on. Another way to say this is that they will only know you through "your brand." While you can't meet everybody, your brand will.

Because of this, whether you like it or not, you have a brand to manage. Ideally, you should not even start putting your music out into the world until you've come up with a clear and consistent brand identity. Skip this step, and you'll have a haphazard brand that you don't control. If you have three different logos, a new slogan each month, or otherwise portray an inconsistent online presence, it will confuse people.

You should take the time to accurately brand yourself. We'll talk about how to establish an effective brand in this chapter.

BRAND BASICS

WHAT'S A BRAND?

A brand is a communication of your band's identity. The key to effective branding is ensuring that your audience sees the identity you want to project.

Whether you're a solo musician or a large group, there's simply too much information about you and your music for new fans to easily digest. Branding is about distilling your identity into its key components. Some of these components are your name, your images (logo, album artwork), and your text (your story, your tagline). These components make up your Brand Toolbox, but before we talk about these, we need to first understand what makes an effective brand.

BRANDS THAT WORK

There are four ingredients to an effective brand:

- **Accuracy.** Your brand should not be at odds with your actual identity. In other words, it should set accurate expectations and give people a clear sense of what your band and its music is about.

- **Impact.** Your brand should convey its message quickly and easily. When it comes to words, this means brevity (e.g., “Have a Coke and a smile” or Microsoft’s “Where do you want to go today?”); when it comes to graphics, it means having an image that “pops.” It should be memorable. The cooler your logo, tagline, and so on, the more likely your fans will promote it and purchase branded merchandise.
- **Repetition.** The key to an effective brand is to use it repeatedly. Repetition is necessary since it takes time to cement your identity in the minds of your fans. This can only happen at the individual level, so your brand only gets stronger each time a person encounters it.
- **Consistency.** Because repetition is the key to strengthening your brand, consistency is critical. Changing elements of your brand on a whim ruins the associations you’ve built up over time in people’s heads. Your past branding work goes to waste every time you make dramatic changes.

ALWAYS BE BRANDING

Given these four ingredients, it’s crucial you brand everything: your Web sites, your albums, your videos, your MP3s, your press kits, your posters, and so on. Your brand is what fans will identify you with. After all, why else would anyone buy a T-shirt from a musician? Your brand gives merchandise its value.

FINDING YOUR BRAND

You’ll want to make sure you build a brand that’s on target right from the start. You need to be comfortable with the words and images representing your band, both today and years down the road. Your brand should be rooted in your identity. At the heart of this is your music (style, attitude, lyrics) and your story (where you’re from, your influences, your motivations, your goals). The best branding comes from these things because they’re genuine. Plus, the more specific your brand is to you and your identity, the more distinctive it will be. Since branding is a long-term endeavor, the more in tune your brand is with your band’s unique identity, the more durable it will be over time. Distilling your music and identity into a brand takes thought, but we assure you that the time and energy you put in now will pay dividends in saved time and energy in the future.

YOUR BRAND TOOLBOX

Your Brand Toolbox consists of your name, your images (logo, photos, artwork), your text (story, tagline), and your music. You’ll be using these components over and over for your Web sites, your albums, your videos, your MP3s, your press kits, posters, and so on. You should have them ready before you even think of creating your first press kit or releasing your first track online.

YOUR NAME

More than anything, your band name will be the unique identifier of your music. If people hear your music, the first thing you want them to know is who you are. It's all about name recognition, so...

...learn more about the elements of your Brand Toolbox and how best to build your own in the book, [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#).



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you use to make your music.**

CHAPTER 5 (Excerpt)

YOUR WEB PRESENCE

The web allows you to reach people in new ways beyond playing live shows—whether it's through social networks, message boards, podcasts, blogs, or even virtual online worlds. You'll be able to target your message and get your music in front of the people most likely to enjoy it based on their interests and tastes—not just their locale. Even better, the Web makes them easy to find. Millions of potential fans out there should know about your music, and you need to put your band and your music where they are.

The Web started out as a new way to broadcast information to people. Today it has grown into a conversation, where you can interact with anyone who shares the same interests. But more important, it's become a collaboration, enabling people all over the world to socialize and work together. This chapter will explore each of these activities— broadcasting, conversing, and collaborating.

While we're going to mention a lot of Web sites and technologies by name, keep in mind that the Web is fluid, and some sites that we mention might disappear in the future. To help keep you up-to-date, we maintain a listing of the current useful tools, sites, and resources for musicians at IndieGuide.com. For the book, however, rather than dwell on particular sites, we'll instead focus on the concepts behind them. Our goal isn't just to show you the latest useful tools; it's to prepare you to recognize and take advantage of new ones when they come out.

BEFORE YOU START

Before you begin broadcasting, conversing, and collaborating, a few things to keep in mind when establishing your Web presence are setting up your profiles, doing self- promotion, and dealing with user agreements.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR LOG- INS AND PASSWORDS

Because you will be joining many different sites for your band, you will need a way to keep track of the Web sites, log- ins, and passwords, and perhaps even share it with other members of your band. We recommend doing this in a spreadsheet, or on [Google docs](https://docs.google.com) online, although you should password- protect the files themselves. For a secure solution, we like [Password Gorilla](https://passwordgorilla.com), a free tool that allows you to track all of it in one convenient place with a single password.

ALWAYS BE BRANDING: YOUR ONLINE PROFILES

As we learned in chapter 3, an effective brand is consistent and repeated. As you build your Web presence, you'll create accounts at multiple sites, each of which will ask for personal information. So, you'll be making heavy use of the images and text in your Brand Toolbox.

Given the number of tools out there, you're going to want to divide the jobs of maintaining each one among your band members. We recommend having your branded images and text ready to go at your Web site so anyone in the band can access them. Some of what you'll need includes:

- **Avatar.** Upload the same avatar representing your band anytime you register an account. In our case, we always use our turtle mascot.
- **Tagline.** Many sites ask you for a pithy saying or short description of yourself. We suggest making a tagline out of your elevator pitch.
- **Description or bio.** Many sites allow a more detailed profile. Our advice is to keep it short. Use your elevator pitch or short bio (with a link to your Web site for more information).
- **Link.** Most profiles allow you to link to your Web site. We recommend copying and pasting your Web site address from your browser's address bar, since there's nothing more embarrassing than mistyping your own Web site's URL.
- **Footer or signature line.** Some sites allow you a footer or signature line that displays when you make posts or leave comments. Use this footer as another opportunity to promote your band. With these footers, we get a lot of visitors from posts that we make.
- **Your contact information.** Keep your contact info consistent. You'd be surprised at how many people contact you using your profiles.

SELF- PROMOTION (AND STEALTH- PROMOTION)

If you believe in your music, you shouldn't be ashamed to promote it, especially when you're first starting out and your music needs the biggest boost. There's nothing wrong with self- promotion, but when you promote yourself, you want to do it appropriately. That means that you shouldn't just push your music at people. As Chris Anderson says in his interview for the book *Blogging Heroes*, "Bloggers shamelessly self-promote, but they do it in an appropriate way. They e-mail people they know, regarding things that really are of interest to those people, and ask for links [back to their own blogs]. They're not just begging for a random link—they're actually adding value, because this link is in fact complementary to something the blogger they're e-mailing has already done."

This isn't just true for blogs, it's true for anything that you do online that you wish to self- promote. In fact, we recommend the following:

- Carefully target the people that you wish to get your message to.
- Think of their point of view when you promote yourself; for example, give them links to a song of yours that relates to a topic that they cover in their blog.

- Remember, real people are behind the posts, blogs, and messages on the Web. No one likes another sales pitch. You might want to wait until you've exchanged some e-mails before even bringing up your music.
- Do some research on whom you're contacting or the group you're targeting. This means actually reading their posts and blogs.
- In your messages to those you target, be sure to focus on them. Talk about recent entries in their blog, podcast, or profile as it shows that you are aware of their work. That way, they're more likely to pay attention to you.
- Don't forget that all of the general concepts covered in the "Your Network" chapter apply to self-promoting online as well. Also, we go into more detail on promotion in both the "Get Noticed" and "Get Publicized" chapters.

That said, keep in mind that on some sites you won't want a branded online profile. Instead, you'll just want to be yourself or an anonymous user. Sites that ask for user submissions of news stories or links to interesting Web sites, such as [Digg](#), [Slashdot](#), or BoingBoing, typically frown upon blatant self-promotion. For example, those with editors often reject stories about an "amazing" new song or video if they sense these were submitted by the band itself. And sites such as [Reddit.com](#), which make judgments by the site's online community, can often be harsher in public about you and your story than any editor.

Record labels don't let this stop them. They still shamelessly self-promote, by using pseudonyms or paying third parties to post stories on their behalf. For sites such as these, we recommend creating pseudonym profiles yourself. Eventually, your fan network will promote you spontaneously by submitting stories, links, and posts about your music. In the meantime, you'll have to be your own fan.

For example, we wrote a song dedicated to the Battle of Denmark Strait and the HMS Hood for our Song of the Day project. We made a simple post to a message board about the song with a link, saying that it was a tribute song. The members of the message board loved it, but we only got a handful of hits from this low-traffic forum. To our pleasant surprise, one of the people on that board posted the link to a Web site about model warships, and another about ships in general. Those additional posts got us hundreds of additional plays. This was for about ten minutes of work.

USER AGREEMENTS

Most every Web site where you create an account will have a user agreement. When you signed up for these sites as an individual, you probably didn't bother reading them. Unfortunately, with your band and its music at stake, you need to start paying attention to these, since some may require you to give up certain rights.

You must make sure that these agreements don't overreach and hamper any plans you have for your music, videos, or other content you upload. For example, the user agreements for music sites can be especially aggressive about copyrights, sometimes dictating that you give them

the right to sell your music on compilation albums or to use it in other ways you might find objectionable. We routinely skip Web sites that have user agreements that claim rights to the material that we upload.

If you are uncertain about the meanings behind any agreements, you should consult with your attorney.

BROADCASTING

In this section, we'll talk about technologies you can use to broadcast information to your fans. Technologies in this category include e-mails (your mailing list), blogs, podcasts, video blogs, photo sharing, and more. Broadcast tools are often incorporated or embedded directly into the design of your Web site.

MAILING LISTS

Do you know who your fans are? You should, and your mailing list is the best way to do so. People who sign up for your list are most likely the loyal fans that come to your shows and buy your albums. Much of your success depends on your ability to inform and motivate them.

You should ask for contact information whenever possible. While your Web site should elicit contact information at multiple points (when visitors download a song, purchase some merchandise, etc.), you should mention the mailing list whenever you interact with them. Have a piece of paper out and add newcomers to the list when you see them in person, such as when you run a merch table.

Collecting a mailing list serves many purposes, but here are some of the most important ones:

- It tells you who your fan are.
- It lets you broadcast and announce your latest albums, videos, and news directly to your fans.
- It lets you broadcast show information to fans to boost live- show attendance.
- It boosts sales by allowing you to advertise and pitch your albums and merchandise.
- It helps with branding by reminding your fans about your band.

Of course, anytime you're dealing with a lot of information, it helps to have software to do the heavy lifting. You may need to track thousands of names, or even tens of thousands (or, if you're successful, millions, although at that point you'll need more than software).

You should build an e-mail list and a traditional mailing list as well. Both come in handy at different times for different purposes. We'll talk about both below.

PRIVACY POLICY

Many people are concerned about giving away their private information. With identity theft and spam on the rise, it's not hard to understand why. To set people at ease, you should post a policy for how you plan to handle the personal information you collect from them and adhere to it.

We suggest that you keep it simple and set a policy that all personal information you collect from others will only be used to keep the band in contact with those who sign up. Promise you won't sell or otherwise give any information to any third parties for other purposes. The idea, after all, is to build trust with the fans that are willing to give you their information so you can contact them.

You should create a page at your Web site where you announce your policy. It doesn't have to be in legalese. Plain English will do. You should link to this page from all pages related to your mailing list.

SAMPLE PRIVACY POLICY

Here's the most important part of our privacy policy, simple and to the point:

We guarantee that if you join the Beatnik Turtle E-mailing List, we will not sell, transfer, or spam your e-mail address. We guarantee we'll never, ever knowingly transfer your e-mail address to any third party. Beatnik Turtle promises to use your e-mail address only for Beatnik Turtle-related information and announcements.

Keep in mind that, once you post a privacy policy, you have to abide by it. If you later decide to change it, you should notify every person on your e-mail list of this change and give them a few days to opt out before enacting the new policy.

One way bands inadvertently violate their own privacy policies is by sending e-mail to their lists by using the To: or CC: field to send e-mails to multiple members of their mailing list. These fields expose everyone's e-mail address to everyone else on the message—and anyone the initial recipients forward the message to.

To avoid this embarrassing mistake and breach of your agreement, put the band's e-mail address in the To: field and place everyone else's in the BCC: field. By doing so, you'll know if your e-mail went out correctly once you receive it. Plus, if people accidentally hit Reply All in

response to your newsletter, they'll only end up writing your band address, not everyone on your mailing list.

Privacy laws vary from state to state in the United States, and Canada and the European Union have some of the most restrictive privacy laws. So, depending on where you reside, you'll also need to be aware of and meet the requirements of these laws.

E-MAIL LISTS

An e-mail list will be one of your primary methods for broadcasting information directly to your fans. You need consistent and regular contact with your fans. In fact, as Ariel Hyatt of Ariel Publicity says, "No list, no band." Fortunately, it's simple, inexpensive, and fans expect to sign up for it.

Unfortunately, e-mail is not as reliable as it once was, thanks to spam. Most e-mail spam filters are aggressive. Your newsletter, which likely contains hyperlinks and images, will probably trigger some of your fans' spam filters even though they've legitimately signed up for it. Although this may occur here and there, enough newsletters should reach their intended recipients to use this method to broadcast to your fans.

To increase the odds in your favor, encourage those who sign up to add the incoming e-mail address of your newsletter to their spam white list, so it's sure to go through.

Additionally, you'll likely want to reproduce the content in your newsletters on your blog or elsewhere on your Web site. Since your site should be RSS-enabled, this will doubly ensure your fans are getting your message.

Although e-mail is inexpensive, you shouldn't bombard your fans' in-boxes with newsletters whenever you have news. Doing so will surely annoy even your biggest fans. We suggest limiting your newsletters to no more than twice a month. Of course, special announcements, such as a last minute gig or major media coverage, are exceptions. However, they should really be special, and make sure the subject line of your e-mail conveys the unusual circumstances—be clear that you aren't normally going to overwhelm your fans' mailboxes.

Branding Your E-mail List

You should brand every newsletter that you send. Each one should have a consistent look and feel and should appear as a natural extension of your Web site. We actually named our newsletter (TurtleShell) and created it out of items from our Brand Toolbox. Once we'd created a template for the newsletter—the design, structure, fonts, use of images—we stuck to it.

What to Write About

Sometimes, what to write about is the hardest hurdle to overcome for your newsletter. Here's a list of ideas:

- List upcoming shows
- Mention new songs, albums, or merchandise

- Trumpet recent successes (a well- attended show, a positive music review, etc.)
- Link to media coverage you've received
- Highlight recent mentions in blogs or podcasts (and be sure to cross- promote)
- Feature photos from recent shows, both of the band and of the fans
- Announce upcoming projects (see "The Stay- Tuned Strategy" in the "Get Noticed" chapter)
- Quote interesting or funny questions or comments from fans

Whatever you decide to write, make sure it's fresh news. It shouldn't be anything too old or something you've mentioned in an earlier newsletter. Also, be sure to use your band name frequently in your stories. Although it'll be your fans reading, repeating your name always helps with name recognition.

What to Include

In addition to fresh content, each newsletter should contain the following:

- **Subject line.** Typically your subject line will be the name of your newsletter. If it's a regular mailing list, you'll want to denote the edition (the month or issue number). For TurtleShell, the subject line is: "TurtleShell— The Beatnik Turtle Newsletter—[Month, Year]." Of course, if the reason behind e-mailing your list is to announce something special, it helps to tell people this here.
- **How to subscribe/unsubscribe.** Include information on how recipients can subscribe and unsubscribe to your newsletter and provide links. Telling readers how to subscribe is important in cases where one fan forwards your newsletter to another person who isn't on your mailing list but then wants to join.
- **Basic information about who you are.** Beyond branding the entire look and feel of your newsletter, we suggest including your Web site address, contact information (you may want to create a separate forwarding e-mail address for replies to your newsletter), who you are (the elevator pitch version), and links to where fans can purchase your music and merchandise (your store page).
- **Copyright information.** Don't forget to add any copyright information about the newsletter. We suggest using a Creative Commons license to make it clear that people can share or post your newsletters if they like, as long as they attribute you, and as long as it isn't for commercial purposes. Of course, by the same token you'll need to clear any copyrighted graphics or photos you plan to use.

With the exception of the subject line, we suggest including the rest of this information in the footer. In our design, we adjusted the footer font to be slightly smaller than that of the body text. Additionally, to ensure consistency, we built this footer into the template of the design. Once we'd written it, we never needed to deal with it again.

Writing Good Copy

Writing newsletters can be time-consuming. However, keeping your fan network up-to-date is vital. It keeps your name in front of them, reminds them that you're doing things, and keeps them involved. Don't make this into an overwhelming task. And since we'd all rather be making music than studying for our journalism degree, stick to the following rules of thumb:

- **Be brief.** Keep your articles short. Write headlines and blurbs that effectively convey the main message.
- **Who, what, where, why, when, and how.** Begin each story by answering all of the above questions in the first paragraph, like a good newspaper article.
- **Use pictures.** Try to include pictures with every story.
- **Direct people to act.** Just as we advised in the chapter, "Your Website", be sure to insert a "call to action" in your stories if you want your fans to do something. Don't assume they'll "get it" from the context. For example, "Buy our new album today by clicking on this link." Or, "Come to our show on Saturday." See the "Get Noticed" chapter for the most effective ways to do this.
- **Salt your stories.** Throw in a teaser promise or question at the top of a story to arouse curiosity and draw the reader through to the end. For more on salting, see the previous chapter, "Your Web site."
- **Check spelling and grammar.** Obviously.
- **Get an editor.** Pass your newsletter to at least one other person with a knack for words to look it over for obvious mistakes before hitting *Send*.

E-mail List Software

E-mail list software simplifies subscribing, unsubscribing, drafting, and sending bulk e-mails to fans. You do not want to do this manually or use your personal e-mail account. We'll list the features you will want in an e-mailing list program if you are going to evaluate one below, but fortunately, you have many options when it comes to this kind of software, including [ReverbNation's free tools](#).

- **Subscription form that integrates with your Web site.** The e-mail list program should provide a sign-up form solution that embeds easily into your Web site.

- **Automatic unsubscribe.** Your program should let users unsubscribe automatically via a link in the newsletter. You do not want to manually manage this.
- **Dead e-mail address function.** You'll want the program to automatically remove dead or bouncing e-mail addresses.
- **Template function.** The program should allow you to create templates. This saves time and allows you to brand consistently.
- **Archive content.** The program should keep an archive of all the messages you've sent.
- **Ability to send text and HTML versions.** Some people don't want newsletters full of photos and images and prefer the text- only version. Sophisticated e-mail list programs allow subscribers to decide what type of e-mail they'd like to receive, automatically converting the HTML newsletter you create into text for those users.
- **Click tracking.** The program should perform click tracking so you can tell whether readers are clicking on links within your newsletter.
- **Postal mail integration.** Ideally, you'll want this program to be your one- stop shop for managing all the mail you send, whether electronic or postal. It should be able to manage both and have the ability to interface with printing programs so you can use it to send postal mail, such as postcards.
- **Multiple and separate list capabilities.** Your program should handle multiple lists and let single users subscribe to multiple lists at once. This may be useful later if you create more than one newsletter.

Postal Mailing List

Now that we have e-mail, it's become rare for musicians to use postal mail to communicate with their fans. After all, it's relatively expensive and time- consuming. However, you may want to take this step for special occasions. For example, a CD- release show may warrant a mailing.

If you do a postal mailing, we suggest using postcards. It's cheaper and more likely to be "accidentally" read by the recipient (even if it's floating through the air as it heads into the trash). It also forces you to be brief and think "billboard" when you create it. To make your postcards as effective as possible, give them some value by making them coupons for a discount ("Bring this postcard to the show for \$X off the new CD") or a free gift (a button, poster, special CD, etc.). Encouraging people to bring in their postcards in this manner will give you valuable feedback as to whether this expensive way of contacting your fans was effective.

BLOGS

Blogs have changed the nature of how people communicate and interact with each other and have even changed the nature of journalism itself. Originally coined from the terms Web and log, early

blogs were essentially online diaries. Although such online diaries still exist, blogs soon evolved into a communication form to rival the popularity and quality of print media.

It seems that everyone has a blog. In fact, many expect every business and organization to have one. This includes your band. But that's not the only reason you should consider starting one of your own. Most communication with your fans is impersonal. For instance, your news stories, newsletters, and press releases will tend to be factual: we have a show, we got some media coverage, our new album is out, our drummer exploded. These are not typically places to be casual. In your blog, you can (and should) promote your latest albums, releases, merchandise, and anything else that you've been up to, but do so from a personal angle. The strange thing that happened on your tour, the wild events of last night's show, the T-shirt manufacturer's misspelling your band name and having to do a second run, all make great blog fodder, though they may not be suitable for your news section.

As we said in the previous chapter, Nice Peter's blog is a great example of how to use blogs to humanize yourself and entertain your audience. They start to feel as if they're part of what you're doing.

Better still, because of the informal tone, members should feel comfortable blogging. Most blog software allows the creation of multiple author accounts and automatically identifies the author of each post.

Creating a Blog

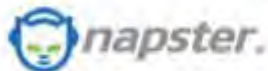
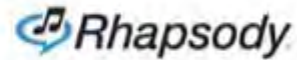
There are two ways to create a blog: a self-hosted blogging program you can install on your own Web site, or a Web-based blog-hosting service that will serve up your blog for you. Before we go into these two options, let's look at the must-have features of your blog...

...learn more about the best ways to broadcast your music and message to your fans through blogging, microblogging, and podcasting, as well as how best to converse and collaborate with your fans to promote yourself on social bookmarking and networking sites, message boards, virtual worlds and more in the book, [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#).

...



ReverbNation can get your music into the top 5 online retailers for only \$34.95.



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www.reverbnation.com



Music starts with the Artist. Artists start with ReverbNation.

BONUS CHAPTER

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT REVERBNATION



What ReverbNation is and how to get the most out of it to connect with your fans, get distributed, get heard, and win fans worldwide.

As we say in [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#), the Web allows you and your music to reach people in amazing new ways, not only through your own Website, but also through the various other social network platforms. Building your presence across these various sites not only allows you and your music to connect to more people than ever before, but it also raises your search rank and visibility.

However, it also creates a problem: managing your various Web presences can become repetitious and time-consuming. Worse, if you set up profiles haphazardly, you risk sending mixed messages about you and your music.

Wouldn't it be great if you only had to add a song to one music player and it automatically updated all your music players around the Web instantly? Wouldn't it be easier if you could deploy the same mailing list tool to your Website and every one of your Web presences so you don't miss a single fan signup? Wouldn't it save you time if song plays and activity from all of your sites could be tracked and analyzed in one coherent view?

[ReverbNation](#) (Reverbnation.com) has a solution for all of these problems. They've created a variety of free, embeddable tools and widgets to help you manage most of your Web presences and your Website, all in one place. But that's just the beginning of the many time-saving solutions they offer musicians.

REVERBNATION - POWERFUL MUSICIAN TOOLS

At first glance, you might think ReverbNation is a site along the lines of MySpace -- a site to help musicians and fans connect. But it's much more than that. Designed by musicians with musicians in mind, ReverbNation has tools to solve real marketing, promotion, distribution, sales, and networking problems that all musicians face. Not only does it have a suite of tools and widgets for the Web, it also has musician resources and services to help them get heard and connect to fans worldwide.

By populating your Web presences with the tools they provide (most of which are free), you'll be able to update all your Web presences automatically from one place using embeddable widgets or techniques such as RSS (a technology that's covered in detail in the book, [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#)). For instance, if you embed their mailing list widget into your Website and other Web presences such as MySpace, you can consolidate and funnel all of your signups into one mailing list.

Even your fans can help grow your fanbase by embedding your mailing list widget into their sites and profiles. While this will save you time and energy in the long run, there's another benefit: you'll also be able to track all the data their tools and widgets capture. Unlike most Web presence sites, ReverbNation provides a wealth of statistics, graphs, and charts to help you get a clear, real-time picture of how your marketing campaigns online presence is progressing, no matter who is doing it for you, or where they are putting these widgets.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONSISTENT BRAND

In the past, most of the people who would listen to your music would come to see you play. But with the web, you will never be able to meet most of the people that will hear your music -- you are now a musician with a worldwide presence. To these people, you will only be known through your music, Website, Web presences, logos, photos, bio, blogs, videos, avatars, and so on. Or, in short: "your brand". While you can't meet everybody, your brand will.

Because of this, whether you like it or not, you have a brand to manage. If you don't, you'll have a haphazard image that will turn off potential fans.

[The Indie Band Survival Guide](#) goes into detail about the four ingredients of an effective brand -- accuracy, impact, and repetition -- but one of the main lessons is to be consistent with your brand. Consistency is what gets fans to remember you, and cements your identity in their minds.

Musicians should be on as many Web presences as possible to get their name out, but this can quickly become a chore to keep them all in sync. ReverbNation's suite of tools can not only help save you time, it can allow you to be on more web presences, letting you reach more potential fans all over the world.

SETTING UP YOUR REVERBNATION ACCOUNT

If you're a musician with many Web presences, you should [set up an artist account with ReverbNation](#) to help you manage them all from one place.

Signing up also allows you to:

- **Host Your Music, Videos, and Photos**
ReverbNation allows you to upload unlimited songs, videos, photos, and pictures.
- **Use Free Promotional Tools**
Get access to free promotional widgets such as FanReach, their free mailing list/newsletter and street team software.
- **Sell and Distribute Your Music and Merchandise**
ReverbNation will help you sell and distribute your music as well as help you sell merchandise and tickets to live shows.
- **Connect With Fans**
ReverbNation allows you to write a blog (or pull an existing one into your profile); announce shows and manage your live calendar; and collect and share press clippings and blurbs.
- **Build a Street Team**
Interact with fans and listeners – including the ability to turn your most diehard fans into street teams through their free online street team service
- **Know Who's Talking About You and Your Music**
Track the 'Buzz' about your band on the web (blog posts, Twitter mentions, etc).
- **Get Paid**
ReverbNation shares 50% of its ad revenue with its members.
- **And More...**
Get access to a host of other premium services.

Below we'll go into some of the key tools they provide and how to leverage them.

LINK YOUR MYSPACE ACCOUNT

Got a MySpace account with tons of friends? Now you can log the number of those friends into your ReverbNation fans page so it's tracked. All you need to do is sync your MySpace account. Use the linking feature in your "Control Room", or on the fans section of your "Stats".

TIPS FOR MUSICIANS IN SETTING UP YOUR PROFILE

In [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#), we talk about saving time by having a "Brand Toolbox", which comes in handy when you first create your ReverbNation account (your standard profile picture, your standard bio, etc.). As you work on your profile, you can build your own brand toolbox, since you'll probably need the same elements for other sites. Here are a few more tips that you'll want to set up immediately (or, if you have an account already, you'll want to make sure you're doing these):

- **Upload your best songs.** Unlike many sites, ReverbNation allows you to upload an unlimited amount of songs. However, if you have songs that are larger than 8MB (either due to length or you wish to upload a higher-quality files), for a fee, you can sign up for their [Mega Songs](#) service. As we say in *The Indie Band Survival Guide*, you never get a second chance to make a first impression with your music. Upload your strongest songs in their player.
- **Add Videos.** ReverbNation allows you to 'import' unlimited YouTube videos into your page by simply pasting the link to the video at YouTube. This makes your videos available on your ReverbNation page, as well as in all of the widgets that support the videos. ReverbNation will even track how many video plays you are getting.
- **Add Shows.** ReverbNation also allows you to add upcoming shows to your profile. They have over 170,000 unique venues in the system, done "Wikipedia style", which means that more can be added at any time. In addition, they allow you to add attendance reports for any show you have played, and they track and graph that for you so you can see how your crowds are growing over time.
- **Sign up for FairShare program.** ReverbNation shares 50% of the total ad revenue from across all artist pages with its artists who have opted-in to the [Fair Share](#) Program. The 50% is pooled and each artist receives a portion of that based on their overall site activity for the month. Currently, they pay through PayPal.
- **Import your blog.** You have a choice to blog at ReverbNation, or to import your own blog via RSS. If you have a current blog at your Website (i.e. you use Wordpress or Blogger) then we recommend pulling the feed from there so it shows up in your ReverbNation profile. This keeps all of your web presences active, and all you have to do is update your blog in one place.
- **Set your "Web buzz" keywords accurately.** ReverbNation monitors the Web for mentions of you and your music. To do this, it looks for the name you used to set up your profile. However, you can enter additional keywords as well. For instance, we have it pulling Web buzz for our own band [Beatnik Turtle](#) as well as our podcast site, [TheSongOfTheDay.com](#). That way, more information about us is captured by ReverbNation's system. You will also receive a daily email summarizing any new mentions of your band on the web. This can help you track your publicity campaigns, and keep up with anyone who is covering your band.
- **Sign up for their FanReach Mailing List/Newsletter tool.** FanReach is a free, powerful

mailing list/newsletter tool that you can use to collect email addresses for your newsletter no matter which other web presences you use. You can then send out an unlimited number of custom emails to your fans for free. We'll give you more ideas on how to use this tool in a separate section below.

USING THEIR FREE PROMOTIONAL TOOLS FOR YOUR MUSIC

Creating an account gives you a public profile page to edit and it allows you to decide which features – widgets – to embed in your page. The following are just some of the useful tools they provide (ReverbNation allows any musician to use any third party widget in addition to their own) and some tips on how best to implement them for your music.

"PLACE ANYWHERE" WIDGETS

ReverbNation has created many different types of widgets that you can embed at your Website and other Web presences. What follows is an overview of some of the widgets you may want to adopt.

- **TuneWidget.** The TuneWidget is the easiest way to take your entire ReverbNation profile on-the-go. Once embedded, it allows people to hear, see, and view any of the information you uploaded or linked to your ReverbNation profile. No matter where you put this widget, visitors can hear your music, browse your photos, and watch your videos -- all within the widget itself. It also displays bio information, links to the stores where people can buy your music, shares your blog and Web buzz information, and where you're playing. At the bottom, ReverbNation also allows you to include their FanCollector widget inside the TuneWidget to encourage fans to "join the mailing list". Lastly, anyone can use it, so it's easy for you, your fans, or anyone else to post it to their site.
- **Video Gallery Widget.** Do you have a bunch of YouTube videos but don't want to embed each of them separately? This widget pulls all your videos into one browsable (and sharable) player. Videos are pulled into this widget once you add them to your profile.
- **FanCollector Widget.** If you adopt ReverbNation's powerful mailing list/newsletter tools, this widget is a must-have. You'll want to embed this widget at your Website and Web presences so you don't miss a single fan. Plus, it's sharable. We'll talk more about their mailing list/newsletter and street team tools below.
- **Music Player Widgets.** ReverbNation makes four different sizes of music players for embedding. Their blog-sized player is especially suited for your Wordpress or Ning site. It's also shareable like the other widgets.
- **Show Schedule Widgets.** Just as you can syndicate your music all from one place, you can do this with your live shows as well. If you perform live, you can enter your show information or, if it's easier, import a spreadsheet with your shows to your profile. It's also sharable.

- **Press Clippings Widgets.** This unique widget displays any reviews, blurbs, or press you've gotten from your profile page. It's sharable as well.
- **Grab Box Widget.** This widget posts a "Grab Box" that gives fans instant access to all of your widgets and banners. This allows them to easily share what they want and post it to their pages. Think of it as a "forward attack camp" for all of your pages. While all of ReverbNation's widgets allow fans to embed and share them, the Grab Box widget allows fans access to all the content you make available for sharing. Posting this widget gives your fans the choice about what they want to post and may increase the viral spread of your content reaching others.
- **One-Stop Banner Ad Distribution & Tracking.** Got a show, song, or album to promote? Make your banner ad once, upload it to ReverbNation, and let them help you distribute it across the Web. Once uploaded, ReverbNation gives you the URL of the image to use as well as the embed codes needed for some of the most popular Web presences. That way you (and your fans) can embed these anywhere -- on Web pages, within email, on blogs, etc. Banners can point to your ReverbNation page or any Website you want it to. As with all their widgets, impressions and click-through rates are tracked. So, you'll know which ones are working best to send people to your page. To learn more as to why statistics and tracking are crucial in understanding who's listening to your music and visiting your Website, see [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#).
- **TunePak Widget.** The TunePak is a configurable music player that's perfect for promotional campaigns. More on this widget below.

USING THE TUNEPAK WIDGET IN PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS

The [TunePak](#) widget is a music player that pulls songs you specify from your profile. In essence, you create a stand-alone playlist that you can share with anyone online. Rather than sending a CD to the press, venues, promoters, bloggers, or podcasters (or clogging their inbox with multiple MP3s), you can make a playlist and then share a link to the TunePak with them.

We used a TunePak widget to accompany our recent holiday PR campaign for our album "Santa Doesn't Like You" (an example of one of ours is [here](#)). Janelle Rogers of [Green Light Go Music Publicity](#) helped us reach out to bloggers and the press and incorporated the TunePak widget in her emailings. The TunePak made it easy for the bloggers and press to sample the music on the album instantly. Most importantly, because the TunePak is trackable from within our ReverbNation profile we were able to get statistics on the number of plays this instance of the TunePak received. This was valuable information in gauging the success of the campaign, and to find out which bloggers and press even listened to the songs, and when.

But TunePaks are not just for press campaigns. You or your fans can also embed, instant message, tweet, or email TunePaks to your friends. Fans registered at ReverbNation can create their own TunePaks as well - adding songs from musician profiles all over ReverbNation.

Also, you can enlist venues to help promote shows by creating a TunePak for them and asking them to embed it on their Website, ReverbNation page, MySpace profile, or other Web presence. It not only helps you out, but them as well since browsing audiences can sample your music to help get more fans to come out.

BRING REVERBNATION TO YOUR FACEBOOK PROFILE

If you have both a ReverbNation account and a Facebook account, you have all you need to bring your music, photos, and more to your Facebook profile. ReverbNation's "My Band" essentially brings your entire ReverbNation page to your Facebook Profile page.

Once installed, the tab, "My Band" will appear alongside your "Wall", "Info" and "Photo" tabs. Your Facebook friends can now listen to your music, see your photos, join your mailing list or street team, easily access links to those digital retailers selling your music and more. Like their other widgets, all ReverbNation's stats are collected back into one place. There is even an "invite friends" function so that you can send music out to your friends and invite them to come back and join your mailing list. If you're in a band, every band member can (and should) have the My Band application installed.

MANAGING YOUR MAILING LIST, NEWSLETTERS, & STREET TEAMS

Do you know who your fans are? You should. Do your fans know what *you* are up to? They should.

Throughout [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#), you can find the practical steps you can take to win and maintain fans worldwide, but one of the most important is to communicate on a regular basis with your fan network. This depends on your ability to keep them up-to-date and informed. After all, people who sign up for your list are most likely the loyal fans that will buy your music, come to your shows, and support you. As Ariel Hyatt, of [Ariel Publicity](#) says, "No list, no band."

Despite the importance, managing and maintaining a mailing list is one of the hardest things for most musicians to do and maintain. That's where ReverbNation's FanReach tool comes in.

YOUR MAILING LIST & NEWSLETTERS

[FanReach](#) is ReverbNation's all-in-one solution to handling your mailing list and creating effective newsletters. By using this as your mailing list/newsletter tool, you'll need only to focus on writing the content -- not setting up your software or maintaining "whitelist" status so your emails don't wind up in your fans' spam folders. ReverbNation has done most of the work for you.

FanReach is four things in one:

- **It's a Mailing List.** FanReach is a tool to consolidate all your mailing lists in one place. You can import your current mailing list, add people individually, or, by using the FanCollector widget, start putting your Website and Web presences to work in getting you more fans. Plus, any registered ReverbNation user that discovers you on ReverbNation and becomes a fan becomes automatically added to your list. Best of all, ReverbNation helps you with the necessary privacy/anti-spam hurdles – asking the fan to opt-in via an email and "consent" -- before it adds them to FanReach.
- **It's a Fan Organizer.** FanReach isn't simply a spreadsheet of email addresses. It also organizes your list of fans by location, gender, name, age, whether they joined your Street Team, and when they joined. This is helpful information to know so you can target just those fans in a certain location or demographic. Plus, FanReach lets you tag or label those in your list so you can organize them even further into categories that make sense to you. For instance, our band tags our own members as "BandMembers".

ReverbNation offers an additional service called [Fan360](#) to help get more information when all you have is an email address (those you may have gotten at live shows or pre-FanReach). Once activated, [Fan360](#) searches the Web for public information associated with the email. This can uncover names, locations, and gender. Not only will it uncover profile pictures and whether the person maintains a presence on Facebook, MySpace, or Bebo, it will also allow you to tell how many "friends" each of your fans has on these social networks -- information FanReach doesn't ask for. Filling in this missing information can help you better organize and target your list. For example, you can focus on the most influential fans to spread your music.

In addition, Fan360 has a very unique, powerful feature: it allows you to start a "friend request" in whatever network your fan has his or her profile (MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, etc). This essentially allows you to be "friends" with those in your mailing list giving you a simple and effective way to further build your relationship with your fans. The cost for this monthly service depends on how many names are on your list.

- **It's a Word Processor/Newsletter Creator.** Once you have targeted who you want receiving your newsletter, you can use FanReach's easy-to-use and versatile newsletter creator. ReverbNation gets you started by setting you up a default template that pulls information from your profile for your header and some basic and legal information at the footer. Everything else -- the body of the message -- is up to you to create and customize. You can keep it simple with a brief email announcement or write multiple stories with pictures, hyperlinks, and more through their word processor editor. (For tips on what makes an effective newsletter, see [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#).)

To keep things simple, they've added one-click options that you can choose to automatically add content pulled from your profile such as a link to your music (via a Tunepak), your show schedule, links to where to buy your music, and more. If you have HTML experience, their tool allows you to go straight to the code to further customize your newsletter.

As you create your newsletter, you can customize the colors of the header and body as well as preview the message within the browser or send a sample to yourself to see how it

will appear in your inbox. It's during the preview process that FanReach scans the contents of your message and warns you if there's anything in it that may flag your fan's spam filters. Bands named "Viagra" may get warned their message may not get through to all their fans.

- **It's an Email and Reporting Tool.** Mailing your newsletter may take some time depending on the amount of people you're sending it to, but once done, FanReach logs the activity so you can remember when you sent which newsletter. Also, all your newsletters are saved, so if you have a particular message you sent only to a subset of fans on your mailing list, you can instantly pull in the content into a new email and choose a different group of fans to send it to.

Plus, FanReach gives you the percentage of emails that were successfully delivered as well as the "open" and "click-thru" rate of each message so you can see which fans are getting and/or receiving your emails, and which links that they are clicking on in your newsletters.

There are many software solutions that can achieve these same results, but most of ones that equal what FanReach achieves will cost you money. It should be noted that musicians such as [Kenny Chesney](#) and [Trans-Siberian Orchestra](#) use FanReach as their fan management tool of choice.

YOUR STREET TEAM

Your street team, or fan network, is the most persistent and genuine way to get a publicity campaign under way. If your fans are willing to help you, they can put your name and music in places that you haven't even thought of. If you adopt FanReach and deploy FanCollector widgets, you can start building your street team since the FanCollector widget allows fans to opt-into your team (and provide additional information about themselves).

In [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#), we talked about [Mark Gunn and Andrew McKee of the Brobdingnagian Bards](#) who found their fans so enthusiastic about their brand of Irish Celtic music they were posting links to their site and music all over the Web. The problem was, they were doing it in places that really wouldn't help get new fans of their type of music. They found that they needed to provide their fans a little guidance.

In fact, for you to get the most out of your street team, you need a few more things as well: direction, tools, rewards, and a target.

Direction

Without direction, your street team is simply a mob. To get the most out of your team, you need to be clear on what you want them to do, and give them a time frame. If you don't do this, you could lose their interest, or give them the impression that you don't care about their time or loyalty.

ReverbNation's Street Team tool can help you define goals and a time frame at the outset. While the tool allows you to freely define your mission in any way you'd like, it also presents you a

series of preset missions to choose from (i.e. spread your music, increase traffic, enlist new fans, promote a show, etc.). Choosing these presets will help give your Street Team the tools they need to go out and succeed at the mission and will even give you some suggested text for your email to them.

Tools

Providing your team with the right tools at the outset will make your Street Team more effective, giving them the music and widgets they need so that it's easy for them to help you succeed.

ReverbNation's set of embeddable widgets are easily sharable tools that your street team can use. For instance, if you choose the "spread your music" mission, their tool automatically creates a unique Tune widget for fans to embed in websites, or even Instant Messages.

Rewards

Most fans appreciate a reward as a thank you for participating your street teams. Plus, laying out a reward at the outset of the mission gives them something to shoot for.

Rewards are up to you, so be creative. You can reward the top performer or the top few performers, or even anyone that meets your goals. Ideas as to what to reward are endless. Some suggestions include:

- An unreleased song
- An autographed CD
- A [t-shirt](#)
- Other [merchandise](#) (buttons, stickers, posters, etc.)
- A live recording of your top street team fan's favorite song
- A house concert (for more information about [house concerts](#) see [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#))
- A spot on your next album
- A song in their honor

A Target

You won't know who to reward if you're unable to measure everyone's effectiveness. Once again, ReverbNation's widgets - which are trackable -- help to provide a way to gauge your street team leaders. In fact, since the Street Team tool creates a unique widget for everyone.

At the outset of the mission, ReverbNation asks you to select a way to measure your fans progress for the mission (i.e. the number of plays a particular fan's widget receives).

Once launched, ReverbNation tracks the campaign until the end date of the campaign. Mission progress is viewable by you and the street team (not the public). Note that you can also create offline missions for your team as well such as posting flyers, however, to accurately measure your fans' progress so you know who to reward, it helps to have some online component.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR MAILING LIST & STREET TEAMS

The steps to adopting FanReach, the FanCollector widget, and the Street Team tool are straightforward. Here's what you need to do:

1. Deploy the FanCollector widget at your Website and Web presences.
2. Import your existing email list into FanReach. FanReach allows you to type email addresses by hand or copy and paste them from a spreadsheet. FanReach then emails each person and asks if they want to opt-in to your mailing list. People have to opt-in to your Fan Reach program in order to receive mail (otherwise it's considered spam).
3. Go through your email contacts in the email program you use (Gmail, Hotmail, YahooMail, Outlook, Apple Mail, etc.) and contact them about joining your mailing list or ask them if they'll consent to being included on the mailing list. If you're in a band, get all your band members to do this to their email contacts.
4. Contact your Myspace Friends by sending Bulletins and Messages to them about joining your mailing list. Attach the FanCollector widget within the post so it's easy for them to join your list.
5. Do the same with Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks that you have friends, fans, or followers.
6. Option: Enable [Fan360](#) so you get a more complete picture of who's on your mailing list.

[Fan360](#) searches the Web for public information associated with the email address you provided, uncovering names, locations, and gender. Not only will it uncover profile pictures and whether the person maintains a presence on Facebook, MySpace, or Bebo, it will also allow you to tell how many "friends" each of your fans has on these social networks. Filling in this missing information can help you better organize and target your list. For example, you can focus on the most influential fans to spread your music. Note that the cost for this monthly service depends on how many names are on your list.

7. Contact your new mailing list by writing your first newsletter. Include a request to help them spread your music with the new widgets and tools you now have at your disposal and a reminder that, if they haven't yet, to join your street team for a chance at getting special content and exclusives.

DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

ReverbNation is not just a set of promotional tools, they can also help you sell your music.

ReverbNation allows you to distribute your music to five of the largest online digital music retailers such as iTunes, Amazon, Rhapsody, Napster, and eMusic (ten of their stores in all).

There's a one-time setup fee per album (currently \$34.95). Unlike some other services, they charge an annual fee per album -- not per song. This means your album can contain as many songs as you want since it'll cost the same amount. It also means that ReverbNation does not take any percentage of the money you earn from these retailers -- what ReverbNation pays you is exactly what ReverbNation receives.

To upload your music and prepare it for digital distribution on ReverbNation, just log into your account, fill out the necessary information, and upload the songs or album that you want to sell. An album can be as few as one song or as many as fifty. We recommend uploading only WAV files to their service, not MP3s, since these are high-quality versions of your music (see [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#) to learn more about why this is the preferred format to use). Once uploaded, ReverbNation automatically starts the process of distributing your album to the online retailers which can take a few weeks.

Once available, you should update your profile to include all the places where your music is available for sale. To do this, head to the StoreLink section of your profile and enter in the direct links to the store. If you have multiple albums, you'll want to link directly to your artist page at the store. For instance, our band has 18 albums. Clicking on the iTunes logo in the Store will take you to our artist page at iTunes, not one individual album. Updating your StoreLink is important since it will make sure all your deployed widgets are up-to-date and display where your music can be purchased.

Note that currently you will need a PayPal account as this is the method ReverbNation uses to pay you. Also, at the time of printing, digital sales are not tracked through the charting authorities. For more information about ReverbNation's digital distribution service and to see their rates, click [here](#).

ONLINE PRESS KITS & GIG FINDER

As we say in [The Indie Band Survival Guide](#), paper press kits have long been a mainstay of for musicians and musician publicists, but with the advent of the Web, your online press kit will be used far more often.

A paper press kit generally contains a CD along with your band bio, photo, press clippings, information about the band, and contact information. Online press kits go much further omitting the CD in favor of actual song samples, videos, and up-to-the-minute show schedules and press releases.

Given all that ReverbNation does, it should come to no surprise that they specialize in providing online press kits as well. At the click of a button, ReverbNation will create your online [Reverb Press Kit](#), by pulling much of the information you uploaded and posted at your profile. Beyond your uploaded music, videos, show, and press information, they include statistical information about how you chart at ReverbNation, the venues you've played at, the attendance, other artists you've played with, links to your Web presences, and your fan's demographic information -- a unique feature to ReverbNation.

Creating an online press kit is free. To activate it so others can see and print a copy costs a fee (see [this link](#) for their rates). Activation also allows you to one-click send your Reverb Press Kits directly to venues within ReverbNation's system and inquire about booking a show. To help you find and target the venues you want to be playing at, they've created an additional free tool called, [Gig Finder](#). With Gig Finder, you can freely search by venue name or filter by location, similar venues, and where other artists that are similar to you have played. Once found, you can easily send them your Reverb Press Kit.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about ReverbNation, use any of the following links:

- To sign up as a musician, head [here](#).
- For an overview of ReverbNation's current features, click [here](#).
- For video tutorials on many of ReverbNation's widgets, tools, and services, head to [this page](#).
- For a video tutorial on their digital distribution services, [click here](#).
- To learn more about ReverbNation, check out their [About Us](#) page.
- Check out their [forums](#) for additional tips from the ReverbNation community

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Professionally, Randy Chertkow is an Information Technology specialist with over fourteen years of experience in enterprise-class Fortune 100 companies. He has a Bachelor's in Business Administration in Information Systems from University of Iowa and a Master's of Science in Computer Science: Data Communications, with a secondary concentration in Artificial Intelligence from DePaul University, where he graduated with distinction. Randy has played music all his life, including jazz, rock, and classical music. His instruments include baritone, tenor, alto, and soprano saxophones, flute, B^b and bass clarinet, guitar, bass, and anything else he can get his hands on. He started at the challenging New Trier High School Jazz program and went on to study jazz at Berklee College of music and then completed a Perfect Set course at the Bloom School of Jazz. He writes, records, and performs with Beatnik Turtle as well as performing with theater companies around Chicago.

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Professionally, Jason Feehan is a practicing corporate attorney that works for a multinational executive search firm. He has a Bachelor of Science in Political Science and Psychology from University of Iowa and a J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law. He plays guitar, keyboards, sings, records, engineers, and produces. He founded Beatnik Turtle in 1997, growing it from a four-piece band into an eight-piece rock machine with a full horn section and a recording studio all its own. Unfettered by a formal music education, he often learned to play instruments as he wrote the music, and used nearly anyone in arms-length who could play or said they could play a musical instrument. He is a very prolific songwriter and has written close to a thousand songs, three of which are actually not too bad.

BEATNIK TURTLE

The author's band, [Beatnik Turtle](#) is a horn-powered pop-rock band based in Chicago. They have recorded eighteen albums, released over 400 songs, and successfully completed a song of the day project where they released one song for every day of 2007 at its Website, [TheSongOfTheDay.com](#). They've written music for TV shows, commercials, films, podcasts, theatre (including Chicago's Second City), and have licensed music to Disney/ABC Family.

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[IndieGuide.com](#) is a free and open resource based on the book that shares all the practical information, gear, sites, and resources that are available to musicians, growing and changing as much as the new indie music environment does. Think Wikipedia edited by musicians, with ratings and comments just like Amazon. Add to that an automated link checker to make sure you don't waste time on resources and information that has disappeared. And since it's open, it grows and adapts as often as the new indie environment does. Join up, [keep track of and share your gear collections](#), and help your fellow indie musicians all at one site.

The Indie Band Survival Guide: The Complete Manual for the Do-It-Yourself Musician
Exclusive ReverbNation E-Book Edition

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So Do We.

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