
Publicity is a Valuable Resource for the Independent Musician

By Janelle Rogers

In a music industry where the term “bad economy” is a conversation staple, it can be difficult for bands, or any music entity for that matter, to envision even minor success. As labels cut budgets, employees and artist rosters, bands almost have to follow the Do-It-Yourself philosophy. This is different from the days when bands at SXSW showcased to encourage major label interest. These days, instead of waiting for talent scouts, artists are utilizing the conference to establish new connections and build larger fan bases all on their own.

When it comes to publicity, any band embracing the DIY mentality knows the challenges of trying to break through the media gates. It is not uncommon for underground bands to contact media outlets and send out CDs without receiving a single response. Although there are never guarantees with media coverage, hiring a publicist can be a sound investment, especially with advanced research. A successful publicist has access to key media outlets and knows the most effective way to deliver results. That knowledge can be a difference between a *Pitchfork* review and a calendar listing in your community paper.

If publicity exposure is your main objective, your first line of defense should be searching out a publicist while you are at SXSW. If you are a conference registrant, a simple search for publicity on my.sxsw.com can bring a host of possibilities. Send a message to the publicists you find, indicating that you are interested in their services, or Twitter their activity to determine where you should make contact. Then after SXSW, make sure to research their websites to determine which is a good fit, and be sure to follow up.

Here is a quick checklist of what to ask when making contact with potential publicists to ensure a successful partnership.

- 1. What other bands do they work with?** Before moving forward, make sure there is a good fit musically so your publicist can represent you effectively to the media contacts approached. Media relationships take time to develop, and a heavy metal-focused publicist may not have the contacts or knowledge necessary to promote your indie rock wares. Also, working with firms who represent established acts can benefit an up-and-coming band, but can the publicist devote adequate time and energy to the smaller bands on his or her roster?
- 2. What types of media do they work with?** As the media landscape changes, good publicists should be embracing online and traditional media simultaneously. Blogs can be a direct link to the fans, but traditional media still gives your band staying power. The two build on each other, so an emphasis on one without the other limits future potential.
- 3. Where have they secured press recently?** If you are taking the DIY leap, you need to know there is a chance of return on investment. Know where you would like to see coverage, and determine whether or not the publicist can make it happen.



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- 4. How do they approach media?** Some publicists can be notorious for pestering media without purpose or for over-hyping artists. Publicists who approach media from a journalistic viewpoint will have greater success in the long run. That means targeting only those outlets that would be interested in your style of music and only presenting newsworthy items that could be of interest to their readers.

A DIY philosophy allows you to take control of your career. If you do it wisely, you will have the benefit of creating your own economy amidst the chaos. ■

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