

Indie Artists Reveal Their Best E-zine Music Promotion Secrets!

Contributed by Bob Baker

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Your Publicity advisor Bob Baker (How to Use the Internet to Become a Celebrity or Expert in Your Field) shares proven promotion tips from indie artists that will keep your fans coming back for more here.

"We decided long ago that we could accomplish much more by going after our fans proactively, rather than waiting for them to come find us," says Paul Dryden of the North Carolina band Cast Iron Filter. "Through our web site at <http://www.castironfilter.com/> we've been able to sell CDs and send our music to people across the country and overseas. There's not a chance we would have had access to these people without the Internet. Many of these people are finding us because their friends forward our monthly e-mail newsletters. With our music, it's all about having access to fans."

That sentiment was shared by dozens of musicians who responded to the two recent columns I wrote about the power of e-zine music promotion.

Cast Iron Filter's e-mail list has grown from 200 to more than 2,000 subscribers in eight months. Like most of the musicians who sent comments, Dryden says his band generates new subscriber sign-ups at live shows and at the band's web site. Fans are also given incentives for referring friends to the Cast Iron Filter e-zine. Subscribers who get others to sign up are entered into a monthly drawing for free band merchandise.

"We've played around with a few different formats," Dryden says regarding his e-zine's content. "It's really about learning the attention spans of your fans and making sure you get the most important information at the top. We started off including really long notes, but we've since put in some entertaining teasers designed to pull people back to our site. The day after any newsletter goes out, we get a 50% spike in site hits and significantly higher merchandise purchases."

Singer Christina Fasano (<http://www.funkywhitegirl.com/>) drums up new subscribers to her promotional e-zine by signing guest books on other music sites and posting to appropriate message boards. "Plus, I constantly network wherever I go," she says. "I strike up casual conversations, find out what people do and, in turn, they ask me ... and it goes from there. Half of the time, these people end up buying my CD and becoming fans."

Fasano fills her e-zine issues with information on new reviews, awards, interviews and more. "Sometimes I include a blurb about web sites I feel my fans might find helpful or companies on the Web who have graciously provided me with some promo," she explains. "And I ALWAYS update fans on what's going on with my band situation and upcoming live shows, and where any free CD giveaways of mine are happening."

To show her appreciation for fan loyalty, Fasano sometimes holds contests within her newsletter and gives away free T-shirts, videos and photos. "I like to offer CDs only to newsletter recipients for a special price. And if I need my fans' help on something, like a song title or whatever, I'll run a contest for that, too."

Sarah Brosch of the band Reagan? (<http://come.to/reagan?>) also likes to add an interactive quality to her act's online presence. "Quite often, we'll ask our fans to vote for something. For instance, we entered a song contest and had to decide which song to send in, so we asked people to vote for their favorite and got a really good response."

"For our band's e-zine, it's important to get information to people and make it easy for them to do things," says Ryan Langhurst of the band Fulbone (<http://www.fulbone.com/>). In addition to contests and giveaways to subscribers, Fulbone offers fans discounted tickets to shows and other exclusive promotions. "Giving them benefits that others can't get really helps," he adds. "It makes our fans feel like they are 'in' with the band, which is exactly how we want to be personal with our fans."

Langhurst also has some good advice on e-zine content...

"We keep paragraphs short and readable, with good writing and grammar. Nothing is worse than poorly written promotional material. We open the e-zine with a friendly salutation, such as 'Dear friends' instead of 'Dear Fulbone list members.'"

As for the body of the message, Langhurst lists the follow features in order of their appearance in his band's newsletter:

- The most recent band news and developments
- Upcoming show listings with complete details
- A fan profile section. Once a month, the band profiles a member of the list and what they do
- Related web site links that subscribers might want to visit
- A plea that encourages people to visit the band's web site
- A note thanking everyone for their support
- All of the band's contact information
- A note explaining how to unsubscribe from the e-zine

Danny Skinner, of the Dallas, TX band Start (<http://www.starttheband.com/>), has his own twist on the e-zine content topic. "We like to change it up and make the e-zine interesting and slightly different each time," he says. "It's usually just sent like a diary entry or a letter to a friend, letting people know what we are up to and when they can see us next. We always include a link to our site at least twice in each message along with links to different sites where people can go to vote for, review or just download and listen to our music."

Like tons of other bands, Start members are spending way more on their new recording than they first anticipated. "We're using our e-zine to give fans a chance to pre-order our CD. Not only does this give them an opportunity to have a copy reserved, but it gives us the money we need to finish the album."

Skinner also reveals an effective way to get new subscribers. "We get as many friends as we can to comb the audience with notebooks. They ask people if they are currently receiving our newsletter. If so, great. If not, they ask if they would like to. The only people who really ever say no are people who don't have e-mail. In those cases, we get their snail mail address and send them our stuff by regular mail."

Ryan Olbrysh's band, Gertrude (<http://www.gertrudenet.com/>), is generous with its e-zine marketing for gigs. "We always try to promote the entire show and not just our band. We include links to the other bands' web sites and always offer kind words about them. We also give fans ideas of what else they can do in the area that we happen to be playing in, so they can make a night out of coming to our show. And we always provide links to where our disc can be purchased."

Have any comments regarding your own favorite marketing tool that you employ? What do you do to keep fans interested and coming back to your shows? Post your Comments below. I'll enjoy reading them!

-Bob