ADVICE | GETTING NOTICED

Everything you need to know about getting yourself noticed, also available at:

[bbc.co.uk/music/introducing/advice/](http://bbc.co.uk/music/introducing/advice/)
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GETTING NOTICED

SHOWCASING YOUR MUSIC

ONLINE
You’ve recorded your best tunes, now all you have to do is unleash them on the waiting public.

There are loads of ways to get your music heard online for nothing. Sites like Bebo, Buzznet, MySpace Music, Last.fm and Reverbnation all let you upload tracks for your current and future fans to hear.

Sending your music to established blogs is a good move. If the people behind them like your stuff and give you a mention it’ll help build interest in your music. Make sure to target specific blogs that cover the sort of music you make, if you read a particular one it’s likely to be the perfect fit. If you’re struggling to find one The Hype Machine offer a list of the biggest.

It’s important to use as many tools as you can online to get your music to people who can expose it even further. You can even send us tracks via the BBC Introducing upload tool. Once you submit your music it’ll be passed on to your nearest local Introducing show and you can even pick which national show best matches your musical style.

Whatever site you decide to use, make sure you choose your best two or three tracks to show what you’re made of. Maybe think about adding songs that demonstrate the range of your talent, showing off different tempos or songwriting styles. And it seems obvious to mention, but if you’re making your MP3’s available to download remember to tag them up properly with their correct name; something called “track 1.mp3” on someone’s desktop is useless.

Why not sign up to a range of sites? Each one increases your chances of being heard by someone new. Keep any page you build clean and easy to navigate and be sure to keep it up to date. It’s important to keep a balance between making your site look unique (‘pimping’ it so it stands out) and not going over the top so it becomes troublesome to navigate. The longer a profile takes to load the less patient a visitor may become. They could give up before they’ve even heard any of your songs. A list of common mistakes bands make when putting material online can be found here.

It’s worth putting specific members of the band in charge of different parts of your online operation like Little Comets did. For example, if one of you is responsible for replying to messages and emails you receive while someone else writes your blog it’s easier to keep on top of things.

YOUR DEMOS AND MIXTAPES
If you’re going to post demos and mixtapes to journalists, promoters or management, there are a few other things to think about. Make sure you put a name and phone number on every CD you send out, not just the case. That way, someone who likes your music can get in touch even if they’ve lost your packaging. Jot down a link to one of your sites – whichever you update most often - and add that too.
How you package your demo is up to you – but don’t go overboard with flashy designs. A simple, explanatory note and biography, including any gigs you have coming up, will suffice. Just like your profile pages, the more elaborate a package - the more likely people are to find something they don’t like about it.

Rather than sending your demo out blindly to everyone with a post box, try getting in touch with labels and managers who already deal with acts similar to you. A quick look through the album sleeves of bands you sound like should give you a list of companies – now it’s time to find a contact there. If you don’t get the right name, your carefully-put-together package could well be opened by that week’s work experience person, not the high-powered exec you were aiming for - so it’s worth doing your research. Sites like Showcase, The Unsigned Guide or the CMU Directory can also help you track down that elusive name and address. Of course, make sure you spell your contact’s name correctly on the envelope or email; people tend to not be flattered by being confused with someone else! After a while it’s worth following up with a call or email to see whether they’ve had a listen and what they thought, but be careful not to hassle them or appear desperate.

Keep in mind that sending out demos is not the only way to get discovered. Remaining approachable, sociable and working hard at improving your music and playing gigs can be just as good ways of getting attention.

**BUILDING A BUZZ**

As great as your demo or mixtape may be, you’re going need to work hard to create a fanbase. Building a buzz around you locally can really help open a few doors. You may find gigging regularly and being seen by as many people as possible helps more than just sending your demo or mixtape around. If you’re creating a buzz, someone will come and find you. How you do it is up to you, but rest assured that if someone has tracked you down and asked for your demo, they a far more likely to listen to it than if it arrived on their desk unannounced.

“I think sending demos out, if they get heard, is great. But a lot of the time they don’t, which is why we didn’t. I know it probably seems a bit insane not to send it out because it’s like ‘who’s going to hear us?’ But I love the way we did it. I love the fact that we didn’t pander to companies. We’d done that so much in the past that it was really nice just letting them find out about it, letting them come to us.”—Pete Turner - Bassist, Elbow

More than ever it’s important to be creative to get yourself noticed. Every act has a Myspace profile, anyone can create a Facebook fan page but what makes you stand out from the crowd? What are you going to do that will get people talking about you and make them remember your name?

Pulled Apart By Horses created a buzz around one of their early gigs by inviting a select number of people by text to a secret set. For Little Comets it was playing impromptu gigs around Newcastle on trams and in university lecture theatres. The idea enough got the band attention - people started talking about them, bloggers and people on messageboards wrote them, but they did the basics too, getting friends to hand out flyers with their myspace on them to passers by.

Whatever you do think about how you can maximise the exposure it can bring you. Film anything that may make interesting viewing and stick it on YouTube. If you play an unusual gig record it and give it away as a download on your website.
If you look after your fans they’ll look after you too. Nothing builds excitement around a new act like a legion of enthusiastic and passionate fans. Keep in touch with your followers online. If they contact you reply to their messages, give them free music and exclusives that will keep them coming back for more. Every person you build a good relationship with is another person who can tell their friends about you.

When it comes to building a buzz don’t underestimate the importance of your local scene. Aim to be the best known band in your area before anything else - it worked for bands like The Horrors and The Ting Tings who had press and industry bigwigs coming to their hometowns just to see them play at nights they put on.

Don’t be afraid to stamp your own personality on what you do. From handmade artwork to creating your own merchandise it’s all an extension of your identity and part of the package that will get people interested in you. For example, Florence of Florence And The Machine fame designs her own clothes as does Tinchy Stryder. Not only is it a way of bringing in a little extra income but means that they reach a whole new audience via fashion and style writers and blogs.

Building a buzz is as much about making a good impression on people as it is about your music. If you’re known as being interesting, approachable and professional you’ll have a good reputation to go along with your talent which will only enhance your impact. The more people you can get talking about you in a favourable light the further your name will go.

The more people involved in music you know the more opportunities will come to you. Get to know people in your area - promoters, DJs, venue owners, writers, people who work in music shops... they all know and talk to people in the industry who can spread the word about you. Get to know some of the so-called tastemakers in the industry too. There are thousands of bloggers writing about the music they love online, often with a focus on less exposed or local artists. It’s not uncommon for them to host an mp3 of one of your tracks too, so don’t be shy – get in touch with them. The Hype Machine offers a list of the biggest, but make sure to target ones who focus on the sort of music you make. Music forums like UK Music, Indie Rock Talk or TrueGroovez are also great places to introduce yourself to potential new fans and meet other musicians.

By connecting with people in as many different ways as possible, you should start building an army of fans in no time.

DOES IMAGE MATTER?

Yes, in so much as you can never make a first impression twice. If you’re not comfortable with how you look because you’re only wearing something for a gig or photoshoot, it’ll be obvious to everyone. You have your own style and you don’t need to change it just because you’re a performer. Having said that, you may feel more confident and have more stage presence if you feel like you’re putting on more of a show.

If you’re interested in fashion and like to dress a certain way don’t be afraid to let it show. Acts like Gossip and Yeah Yeah Yeahs have started trends, not followed them and, like their music, their dress is an extension of their character. Their unique style has worked to their advantage too, making them standout from the crowd.
For some acts their image is more than just a style but part of their act. People like Florence and the Machine, Bat For Lashes and the Klaxons, for example, don’t just dress a certain way but have an aesthetic that covers everything from their artwork to their videos and stage setup. Slipknot’s masks and Drums Of Death’s face paint are part of their onstage character, a talking point and part of the fun of seeing them play live.

The way you look can also help develop your identity within a scene or genre. If you share a common style and attitude with your audience it can help them buy into you as an act and gives them a strong idea of what you’re about from the start. For example, from just looking at them there’s no doubting that Gallows are a hard rock band, or that La Roux will do the trick if you’re into shiny, electro-pop.

However, it’s all about doing what feels best for you - you don’t have to follow any trends or do what other bands in your scene are doing. If dressing up as a schoolgirl or Superman makes you feel more lively onstage go for it. Likewise you’re under no obligation - Radiohead are a thrilling live act in nothing but a pair of jeans and a t-shirt.

Remember though, if you haven’t got the songs to back it up no amount of PVC, glitter or eyeshadow will get you very far. Try not to get too bogged down with what people may expect you to look or dress like - just do what comes naturally. The way you dress should be an extension of your character and your music, not the other way round.

GETTING PLAYED ON THE RADIO

There’s no doubting that getting played on the radio can do wonders for your career. Unfortunately, that means pretty much every act around is trying to do it, which can make getting that precious airtime one heck of a battle. However, by following a few simple rules and targeting the right people and stations you can definitely improve your chance of success.

Getting played on big national stations is a competitive business. Not only are you battling against local and up-and-coming acts, but also national and internationally renowned artists. For a new act it’s also harder because, in the daytime at least, there a limited number of slots you can fit in to. A lot of the music during the day is picked by the station’s Head of Music and Music Programmers who will be looking for a particular type of act or will focus on established names. Although daytime DJs and the producers who help plan their shows have some slots where they can play whatever they want there’ll be a lot of signed acts ahead of you in the queue.

That’s not to say that you shouldn’t try to contact people that you think may be interested but, DJs and producers get sent hundreds of records every week. As well as music sent to them by individuals they also receive music from radio pluggers who work on behalf of labels and bands to get exposure on the airwaves.

With all this competition you’ll have to plan carefully who you send your music to. Target the stations, specialist shows and DJs who play the music you make. Don’t just put all your eggs in one basket either - send your stuff to as many suitable stations as you can, big and small. If you need some fresh ideas of which stations may work for you, or want contact details check out sites like Radio Now or MediaUK.

As well as the presenter send a copy to the show’s producer as they will sometimes be the one who has to organise the show’s playlist. If you send a CD make your package and contents look as professional and appealing as possible. You only need to send two or three of your best tracks. Label
everything clearly - print a clear cover with the tracklisting and some basic info about yourself. Unlabeled CDRs won’t do you any favours, make sure that if someone does listen to your CD and likes it they can easily follow up their interest by going to your website or sending you an email. At the same time don’t bombard them with information, no one has time to read a three page essay about your musical inspirations and flick through photos of your latest gig. Likewise, if you choose to send an email a link to your myspace and a brief introduction to yourself is all you need. You can get more tips on sending out your CDs from Tom Robinson here.

A good way to get your music to the BBC Introducing shows is to upload your tracks to us via the website. As our shows focus on new and unsigned music you’ve got a better chance of getting that first play and, by using the Uploader, not only will your music be sent to the team on your local Introducing show, but also the national show that suits your style best.

As well as thinking about hitting up the well known bigger stations it’s worth knowing which local, student, regional and online radio outfits may play your music. Often shows focusing on music by unsigned acts will be presented by someone who is active in the scene themselves who can help you in other ways and the more organised ones will be more likely to record sessions and interviews with unknown acts which means more exposure.

Web radio is a good place to get some plays. Many bloggers have their own regular podcasts and there are plenty of online stations who focus on unsigned music like Kooba. You can find a list to start your search for online outlets on Radio Stations.