

100 Free & Affordable Tips For Live Music Promotion

THE BASICS

1. Never leave promotion to the other guy. Don't count on the band or label.
2. Know your niche market(s) or hire/befriend someone who does.
3. Always think of the fan/ticket buyer first when making any decisions.
4. Start early. Pre-promote. Get a show on sale now! 3 to 4 months prior is not too early for a rock show or and 6-9 months is not too early for an adult or family show. It allows time for viral/word of mouth buzz (free promotion) to build and insures you'll get your share of a limited discretionary spending.
5. Always use a tour or venue publicist to get free media.
6. Request promotional material immediately after a date is booked. Don't wait until you need it.
7. Email lists must be your religion. Put your list sign-up visibly on the top half of the front page and watch the list grow. Consider segmenting your email lists by genres to fight email burnout.
8. Produce and send good e-cards. Products like www.Jukeboxalive.com and www.audiocal.com have built in music players. Use a newsletter builder like www.mynewsletterbuilder.com.
9. Make your web site a destination by keeping it updated and including news, giveaways, polls and things to make it worth visiting regularly.
10. Put your promo online including photos and logos in downloadable form for 24 access by the media and fans
11. Encourage others to do promo for you. Ask fans to put up flyers and send out emails for their favorite bands. Put a poster online as a free downloadable PDF for fans to use.
12. Create, utilize and reward a street team. Here's a short article on the subject:
http://musicindustry.suite101.com/article.cfm/creating_and_running_a_street_team.
13. Talk to people and take informal polls. Have they seen your ads? Where? Did they grab them and provide useful information?
14. Survey your audience via email, on the web and at shows. One buyer we know even polls his audience before he buys a show. "It we got these five acts and ticket were \$25, which ones would you come to?"
15. Add a free poll to your web site or blog via <http://www.yourfreepoll.com>
16. Get every free listing everywhere you can no matter how obscure or far away. Maintain an extensive "listings" email list and use it.
17. Enhance the value of free listings (or press releases) by attaching a photo or graphic file (or a link to one) related to the event with every announcement. If they use it you get 5 times the exposure of a listing without a photo.

MEDIA & SPONSORSHIPS

18. Aggressively seek sponsorships for your venue and each concert. Big sponsorships are great but no sponsorship is too small to consider. Think about co-branded event posters a special publicist to work both a concert and the sponsor. Use cross promotion in ads. Does the sponsor have free stuff to give away?
19. Always think of each concert and your company or venue as a brand that needs to be defined, marketed, and protected.
20. Try targeted local cable TV. Some local spots on Fuse or other targeted channels go for as little as \$7 each. Check out www.spotrunner.com or www.dmarc.com or better yet contact your local cable companies and wheel and deal.
21. Try local internet advertising <https://adwords.google.com> and other services.
22. Advertise on internet radio and blogs that serve your market
23. Create consistency for your brand by creating ad mats and radio spots beds.
24. Underwrite/sponsor non-commercial radio and get mentions. NPR is great, but don't forget about college radio. It might be more cost effective.

25. Think out of the box with radio tie-ins and you might get treated better. Try talk radio for a classic rock show. Try classical radio for George Winston. Try jazz radio for a fusion show. Radio stations want to expand their audience too.
26. Co-brand. A Celtic concert with an Irish bar or specialty shop. A metal show with a tattoo parlor. Worry less about money and think more about exposure.
27. Sponsor somebody else's event and get signage and mentions. Consider trading sponsorships.

BEYOND THE BASICS

28. Create a venue sell sheet and rider. Put stage and backstage photos online. Let agents and artists know your tech specs in advance.
29. Create your own affordable venue or genre specific net radio stations on Live 365. You can even ad announcements and PSA's.
30. Add blogs to your website by various band or venue staff members to help keep content fresh. Google's blogger.com has free blogging tools and www.typepad.com has more sophisticated tools for a small monthly fee.
31. Learn about and use viral marketing by posting on related list-servers and discussion groups.
32. Start your own venue or fan discussion group for free at <http://groups.yahoo.com/>
33. Try MySpace.com and Facebook.com They're free but don't just set it up and forget it. Update it and promote it. Make it worth visiting.
34. Make each show an event. What holiday is it on or near? Is it a band member (or even staff member's) birthday? Any kind of anniversary near?
35. Name your shows as part of a branded series and promote the title and concept. ("New Artists" "The Cutting Edge")
36. The internet is your friend. Study it, learn from it, explore it and use it.
37. Run contests for best posters designs and homemade commercials for your venue. Put a lot of finalists up on the web. Throw a party to announce the winner.
38. Produce monthly or even weekly podcasts and feature regular summaries of upcoming and recent shows with music. Have it produced cheaply by a local college DJ.
- 39.

ENHANCE THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

40. Give stuff away at each show and online – passes, seat upgrades, seats on stage, tix to the sound check, mp3's of live songs.
41. In the entertainment business perception can be reality. Is your show the biggest, best, loudest, "most talked about"? Then be sure to tell the world that it is.
42. Enhance the core fan experience and make money with gold circle/priority seating.
43. Invite gold circle ticket holders or contest winners to sound check.
44. Put a few seats right on the stage for street team members or contest winners.
45. Walk you facility like a first time customer. How welcoming is the staff? How clean are the restrooms? How easy is it to find the emergency exits?

GO OLD SCHOOL

46. Cut through email overload by also faxing calendars and announcements to record stores, large offices, etc. using free fax broadcast software. Make the faxes look like mini-posters worth hanging up.
47. Fly a plane with a banner over someone else's event.
48. Park a van or truck with a banner on a main street or across from a show by a similar act or venue.
49. Buy a billboard for an event or series of shows. Place it strategically near a competitor or across from a college campus.
50. Use one of the cheap automated phone answering services advertised in the classifieds to set up a special phone line for your schedule.

51. Pass a clipboard(s) around before a show to capture emails or do a survey.
52. Try the good old fashioned US mail occasionally. It actually gets peoples attention.

UTILIZE THE TIME BEFORE AND AFTER A SHOW

53. Utilize the time before the show for announcements, surveys, giveaways. Consider recording a few “commercials to be played over the PA.
54. Use a celebrity MC. Make him/her the host of the evening. Think out of the box. Try DJ's, TV newscasters or local personalities, politicians, even local bands. Discuss way to co-promote with them in advance.
55. Make announcements from the stage just before the show and/or between the sets about upcoming shows, the merch table, websites and email lists, etc.
56. Program the music over your PA. Sell upcoming shows.
57. Promote “After Parties” in your venue – or even at another venue - that are cheap or free with a concert ticket. Use band members as DJ's. Advertise it with the original show as a free-with-ticket value added option.
58. Hand out flyers on the way out of the show with calendars of upcoming dates

MORE IDEAS

59. Capture info from all ticket buyers.
60. Ask your web visitors questions.
61. Sell venue merchandise at affordable prices. It's branding that someone else pays for. Want variety but don't have much money? Try www.cafepress.com.
62. Get creative with your merchandise – don't just sell shirts. Try flip books (<http://www.flippies.com>), for example.
63. Encourage fans to support you if you're a non-profit or a favorite charity if you're not by adding a page off affinity programs to your web site. For example, when they click on an Amazon logo on your site and make a purchase, you or a charity get back a small %.
64. In this age of too much info and media, work to make yourself a trusted gatekeeper for a genre(s) of music. Use newsletters, blogs, tips, links, internet radio, and more.
65. Post short videos on YouTube.com of live shows, interviews, backstage, etc.
66. Create your own related niche blogs or web sites (for example MidWestmetal.com or NightlifeDetroit.com). You can make yourself the only (or primary) advertiser, but keep it real with info and news from others.
67. Send thank-you notes/emails after a show. Venues send one to the customers and artists. No one ever says thank-you anymore. It will be remembered
68. Remember to always SELL your show. Remind people of what you are asking them to buy. Use song titles, quotes from critics, etc.
69. Market to the niches. Hand out flyers and a pair of tickets to bartenders in Irish pubs for a Celtic show or motorcycle shops for a heavy metal show. Try tattoo parlors, coffee shops, book and record stores, niche clothing stores.
70. Make your emails and web site useful to the reader. Add info and links to things your audience might interesting or useful that you have nothing to do with.
71. Share your best promo ideas and avenues of promotion with other stakeholders in each show – bands, promoters, labels, publicists, and sponsors.
72. Venues and promoters should share their media list with the band's team highlighting things you think will work best for this particular show.
73. Throw non-concert related parties and events on off nights to reward your regulars. Why not a free big screen Super Bowl party or group viewing of a popular TV show finale.
74. Sell a series or try a combo ticket. “Buy a ticket to this show and get a free New Music Series pass.
75. Surprise people. Balloon drops in July. Special guest MC's. Special guest musicians even if it's just a local favorite.
76. Create and use banners. Don't have time or \$ for Kinkos? Try Avery Banner Maker for simple paper banners http://www.bettymills.com/specials/avery/avery.html?gclid=CO_ukdyEj4MCFUICDgodaAZG3Q

77. Trade occasionally for targeted email lists, but don't overuse them.
78. Hire or befriend a geek who will help you keep up on new technologies and internet promo opportunities.
79. Read Hypebot. Skyline Music's blog about music promotion & technology <http://www.hypebot.com>
80. Partner with an appropriate charity. Build good will and get more free media. Maybe it's a small % or maybe it's auctioning off or selling the seats on stage or tickets to the sound check.
81. Consider Craigslist.com and Ebay.com as promotional tools...Try selling tickets there/
82. Musicians want to be actors and actors and athletes want to be musicians. Think about how you can cross promote so everyone wins.
83. Always make available a hi-resolution color photo available for easy download and you'll get much better placement in Sunday editions and calendar sections.
84. Develop several creative seating configurations for different kinds of shows (all seated, a dance floor, all ages sections) and promote which one you are using in advance in all ads.
85. Some fans travel so try cross-promoting with another show (by the same band or a similar band) in a city 50 or 100 miles away.
86. Create a special "Insider" email list for pre-announcements and include key media and tastemakers who love to know things first...and like to tell others.
87. See if the artist will agree to do a meet and greet after show and makes sure that it is advertised. The fans always want a chance to meet the musicians.
88. Offer a student discount or senior discount.
89. List all your schedules online at pollstar.com, celebrityaccess.com, musictoday.com, livenation.com and elsewhere. You never know where people will go looking for a show.
90. Venues and promoters should work make it easier and cheaper on fans to buy tickets online. There are always going to have to be some fees, but some services like InTicketing charge much smaller fees than Ticketmaster. Find ways to reward regular ticket buyers.
91. Enhance your gatekeeper status by creating your own free Pandora.com or Last.FM "radio station" and linking to it from your site.
92. Create free custom Pandora or Last.FM for each concert event..."To get it the mood for Solomon Burke with this classic soul stream...". It's another free way to make the concert an event and keep them talking about it to others.
93. Start a free short term blog for every show or series. Post when it goes it go on sale, when an opener is added, when the front rows are sold out, news about the bands, everything.
94. Produce and sponsor a cable access show. Produce portions of it at your venue or concert.
95. Utilize free college interns, but make sure their getting college credit so they are motivated to work. Use cell text messaging to communicate instantly. Try <http://www.nightlifetexting.com> . Google to find other companies.
96. Flier, flier, flier. It's the cheapest form of advertising. <http://www.clubflyers.com/> offers 1000 free fliers every month or try <http://flyerfaucet.com/> . A good flier promotes more than one show and can also be hung as a mini poster.
97. Flier someone else's show in a related genre.
98. If you hear about a good promo idea, go online and research it RIGHT NOW.
99. If you try something and it works, tell others...then they'll be more likely to share their ideas with you.
100. Send your best ideas to Bruce Houghton/Skyline Music bruce@skylineonline.com and we'll share them with others.

Onward to a great show!

SKYLINE MUSIC

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