

TABLE OF CONTENTS

06

INTRODUCTION

Why Musicians Should Care about Storytelling

09

THE ART OF THE PITCH:

What Makes a Compelling Story

09 Casting a Wide Net: In Search of Compelling Evidence

13 Panning for Gold

13 The Good Stories Rise to the Top

15 Polish the Gems

17

DELIVERING THE STORY

Follow Intrigue Protocol

26 Develop Your Own Press Release Voice

27

PITCHING BEYOND THE PRESS RELEASE

Photos, Videos, and Stage Production

30

TALES FROM THE FIELD:

Lessons Learned from Key Players in Web-Based Music Promo Services

31 FanBridge.com: Spencer Richardson, Co-Founder & CEO

37 TopspinMedia.com: Ian Rogers, CEO

45 BandCamp.com: Jennifer Elias, Business Development

48 CDBaby.com: Brian Felsen, President

53 ArtistData.com: Brenden Mulligan, Founder

56 NewRockstarPhilosophy.com:
Hoover and Voyno, Authors/Bloggers

59 ReverbNation.com: Jed Carlson, COO

62 **WHAT NEXT? AMPLIFY YOUR STORY!**

63 **ABOUT STORYAMP, LLC**

64 **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**
Dmitri Vietze
Tristra Newyear

**EVERY PIECE
OF MUSIC
HAS A STORY:
WHAT'S
YOURS?**

INTRODUCTION

WHY MUSICIANS SHOULD CARE ABOUT STORYTELLING

DIGITAL PIRACY GETS MUCH OF THE BLAME for the challenges facing musicians in the current music economy. But the far greater technological force complicating things for musicians these days is increased access to the means of production. It's not simply that music consumers have access to countless songs for little or no cost at their fingertips, but those same *consumers* can also now be *producers*. The barriers to entry for making an album—or even putting together a touring band—have declined significantly. It's tougher and tougher for anyone to sift through the massive quantities of musical choices. The need to make your music stand out has never been greater. The same forces that have simplified your ability to make a record or get on the road are also giving independent musicians and small record labels access to distribution, marketing, Internet promotion, direct fan conversations, and more. What can musicians do to stand out in the crowd?

Is it making great music? Making great music is clearly the first key component of success. Greatness, however, is in the eye (or ear) of the beholder. So making music that is great to a *particular* audience is the first key component of success. However, making music that appeals to a particular audience may not be enough to fully *reach* that group of potential fans. There is no longer a single mass audience that is looking for one sound or style. Today's music listener and fan has to filter through countless

sources of “noise” to find music *that appeals to them specifically*. Even within a niche, you cannot simply reproduce a sound or a trend; you have to add something new: your unique voice. As Seth Godin puts it, you have to resonate with your tribe.

When a marketplace gets crowded, as the music industry has become, you have to offer something unique in order stand out. In addition to your music, it is your story—whether biographical or mythological—that will help you stand out. Just as a good song does not include every single sound or rhythm at any given moment, a good story is not hype and excitement all the time. Your story must create contrast, build tension, rise and fall, and, sometimes, have silent moments.

What can you do to develop an intriguing story? Consider this: What parallel story exists in your mind as you create music? How can you share your inner workings so that fans can understand your music at a deeper level? What childhood myths or tragedies continue to drive the music you make? What longings or missed opportunities haunt you, and what unbelievable experiences or inspirations bring you joy time and time again? Your story does not have to be reality. You do not have to tell your comprehensive story. Your story just needs to engage.

A narrative for an artist or an album creates a foundation on which to create momentum. Each song or stop on tour becomes a chapter in a growing book about your career. If fans feel that they are becoming a part of that book, they are more likely to pass along your stories. The band takes on its own folklore and culture that spreads from person to person, from media outlet to media outlet, and from city to city.

Storytelling as a method for building a band’s career is nothing new. It is an artistic approach to marketing, one that engages the right side of the brain — the part of the brain where good artists are already strong. Think of your

story—your pitch to the press or to your potential fan base—as a creative endeavor. It blends the art of your music with the finesse of marketing. In order to amplify your story to fans and to the press, you have to have a story.

This book is written to help you—the independent musician, record label, or artist manager—develop pitches that will increase your chance of press coverage as well as fan engagement. There are two sections to this book:

1. The Art of the Pitch: What makes a compelling story
2. Tales from the Field: Lessons learned from key players in web-based music promotional services

While this will help you in your efforts to garner press attention, the same philosophy holds for booking, social media, soliciting record labels, seeking sponsorship, and other facets of a successful career in music. In fact, the real power of creating stories for your band is in the ability to unify all the components of your public face to guide music consumers through the funnel of fan engagement—from peripheral audience to engaged fan to super fan—with ways for them to connect each step of the way, emotionally and financially.

THE ART OF THE PITCH

WHAT MAKES A COMPELLING STORY

T

HIS IS NOT A RE-HASH OF CREATIVE WRITING 101. This is advice based on real-world music industry experience about the kinds of stories musicians can easily crystallize and express.

There are three steps to creating a compelling story:

1. Casting a wide net
2. Panning for gold
3. Delivering the story

Casting a Wide Net: In search of compelling evidence

The first step in creating your pitch is casting a net wide enough to bring back some good elements to integrate into the story. If you have never done a broad pitch to the press about you as an artist or band, you should go all the way back to the beginning; to your upbringing, earliest musical memories and experiences. Think back over your life so far and identify the top several events that have had the greatest impact on who you are. Think about which people have influenced or inspired you most. Were you drawn to them for inspiration or repelled from them to take a different

path, learning from their mistakes? Sometimes that person could be someone very close to you, like a parent, a teacher, a sibling. Sometimes it could be someone you barely knew: an older kid in the neighborhood, an acquaintance you admired from afar. If their story or life influenced you (even if their legacy mythologically grew in your mind alone), it doesn't matter how well you know them.

Think about your musical contribution to the world. If you made one contribution, what would it be? Is it the meshing of two different sounds? Is it the expression of a certain feeling? Is it placing a sound from one era into another context? It could be lyrical or musical. It could be aesthetic, or it could be philosophical. It could be political, or it could be very personal. It doesn't matter, as long as it is yours.

Or even if you are a music business veteran and you've already told a lot of elements of your story, you may want to go through a similar process simply for a fresh biography. Think of your biography as supplemental information that anyone who is learning about your music for the first time can use to get caught up on your career so far. As things change, you should update the bio to match. Your biography shouldn't focus too much on the current album, tour, or projects. Save that for your current press release or "pitch."

In addition to digging deep as you cast the net for your story, there are several other lenses to put on through this process:

I. PUT TOGETHER A TIMELINE OF YOUR MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT.

Include the year you started playing music; the year you started each instrument or style; who taught you different techniques or styles; what bands you were listening to during each period and how they influenced you. Include the year or specific dates you wrote your first songs or songs that were pivotal in your development. Write down the dates of your first public performances or performances that really meant something to you,

either because they were at reputable venues or because of your emotional state at the time. Track the years of any recordings you made or released. Make note of incoming or outgoing bandmates; or when you introduced new instrumentation into your repertoire. Look over this timeline and notice where your style pivoted; where you made your biggest leaps. Think about what led to those changes and improvements. This chronological reflection can be a great tool for remembering stories that really express how you got to where you are today.

2. TAKE THE SONGS ON YOUR LATEST ALBUM (OR TOURING SET LIST) AND DESCRIBE EACH ONE. If possible, create a table or spreadsheet with each song name in the left column and your notes about each song in the right column. Describe the lyrical content, the musical styles, the influences (musical or from life in general), the instrumentation, the players on each track. What were you trying to do with each song? Where were you when the kernel of the song came together? What evolutions took place in each song's development? What are some of the most interesting reactions you've gotten from each song? You don't need to answer each question for each song; just answer the question that produces the most compelling story for each song. Mix and match questions to get the best results. Make note of any stories that come out as you reflect on the repertoire itself. This exercise in particular is valuable for developing an album press release or pitch. Since bands typically "tour an album," the same pitch can be adapted for a tour press release as well.

3. REFLECT ON EACH OF YOUR BAND MEMBERS OR COLLABORATORS.

Again, try a table or spreadsheet with band member and instrumentation on the left and notes on the right. How did you meet them? What drew you to them? What do they bring to the band or to the collaboration? How have you changed or grown from working with them? Recall specific interactions or incidents with them that you will never forget. One good answer for each band member is all you need.

4. PICK UP EVERY INSTRUMENT YOU PLAY. When and where did you get it? Why did you choose this one? If the instrument was a person, how would you describe its personality? Did it replace another instrument? What have been the challenges of playing this instrument? What have been the breakthroughs? What techniques are you most proud of on this instrument? What about the way you play this instrument is specific to you or your sound? Go through these same questions with your voice if you sing; and with any studio tools or software you use as well.

5. REVIEW YOUR DISCOGRAPHY. If you've put out more than a couple of albums, reflect on each album. List the players on each album. List the styles of each album. What was the overall sound of each album? How did each album sound different from the last?

6. LIST YOUR TOP FIVE OR TEN PERFORMANCES OF ALL TIMES.

Why did each performance make it onto your top ten list? What are the future performance experiences you are hoping to have? Don't worry about hitting every best performance; just focus enough so that you have some stories to tell.

7. REVIEW PAST PRESS QUOTES ABOUT YOU. Compile the ones you like best and identify why they are noteworthy. What stories might you tell next time to shift how the press sees you in the future?

You do not need to answer all of the questions above. You do not need to be comprehensive; you just need to engage. These are just different approaches to brainstorming or cultivating possible story ideas to present to your fans and to the press. Think of them as various lenses through which to look at your body of work, your career, and your life as you search for the stories that will develop the most intrigue or at least enough interest for someone to take the next step. That next step might be streaming an audio sample, viewing a video, or reading further into a press release. It might also

be purchasing an album or a concert ticket. You do not need to present a comprehensive story; just enough to get people interested in moving to the next level.

Now that you have some material to work with, we'll talk about how to choose which items to hone in on as key elements of your story or pitch.

Panning for Gold: The good stories rise to the top

If you've ever heard a piece of music and were struck by the role of silence, then you understand the importance of being selective in your pitch or story. Or if you've ever composed a piece and then dropped certain sections or instruments and realized that this made the piece even stronger, you know how critical editing can be. Some of the best books got that way because there was someone there cutting out the less interesting scenes or chapters. That's the process you now must go through with the story elements you identified in the last section.

Make a list of intriguing items that came up in the net-casting exercises. This phase of the process is dedicated to crystallizing and polishing the gems. Oftentimes, the gems will poke right out at you and shine brightly enough for you to notice them immediately. You may say to yourself, "*This* is a really cool or intriguing aspect of my story," or "*This* is unique to me." If you find yourself thinking, "I never thought of it that way!" or "I forgot how cool that was," then you probably have a gem ready for use with the press. However, sometimes the gems may be found a little deeper. Read on.

Here are some tips for identifying which elements are gems:

1. PROFOUND PERSONAL MOMENTS. Don't be afraid to tell personal stories in your music pitches. Some musicians are tempted to put everything into a sort of universal voice, but vague pitches don't inspire readers. If you are not honest about what drives you, you will sound insincere. Musicians are sometimes concerned about their privacy or the privacy of their relationships (past or present). Vulnerability with your fans strengthens your connection to them. Musicians sometimes feel like sharing too much is an opportunistic ploy: for example, sharing about the death of a loved one or another tragedy. If that is what really inspired you, you are just being honest, not trying to capitalize on the experience. Artists process the world and their experiences through their art; that is how musicians add meaning to people's lives. Now that you have permission to get personal, scan back over your notes and ask yourself, "What did I leave out because it was too personal?" Don't leave these experiences out in the brainstorming process. You can always omit them in the editing process.

2. BE SPECIFIC. The more specific you are—about the time of day, the season, who was there, what was happening—the more it feels like a story rather than a sales pitch. You draw the reader's interest in with the details. The color and texture puts the reader closer into the story.

3. DON'T BE SCARED TO MAKE IT POLITICAL. Sure, you run the risk of warding off fans with different beliefs, but we are in an era of niches. You are more likely to identify your core fans with shared political beliefs. By political, I don't mean campaign speeches, but if you are standing up for certain rights or causes, this can be a great attractor for potential fans who share similar values.

4. UNEXPECTED JUXTAPOSITIONS AND HYBRIDS CREATE INTRIGUE.

A band whose concert tour includes bicycle-powered amplifiers, or Sahara desert nomads who traded in machine guns for electric guitars, even a songwriter who works with an architect to build site-specific domes as performance spaces, or a singer who pairs each song with a wine tasting can be used to create intrigue. If you have these strange juxtapositions or hybrids, flaunt them.

5. LET LYRICS TELL THEIR OWN STORY. Quirky, emotional, and imaginative lyrics can become a part of an artist's own story, even if they are highly fictionalized. If they are unique, use them to the fullest. If your lyrics aren't the strongest, don't emphasize them. Musicians sometimes think their lyrics can stand on their own, but many listeners will not catch the lyrics without an explanation of what they are about. Sometimes a turn of phrase or single line can become a strong element of an artist's story or identity.

Polish the Gems

Now that you have searched your mind, spirit, and repertoire for all the possible story angles, *write each one as a single sentence or paragraph without a lot of information surrounding it.* Does it sound *more* interesting with less context? Sometimes it does. You don't have to explain every aspect of a situation. Write each story angle this way, as a separate item with just enough explanation so that you understand what it is about.

Once you have done this with all the interesting items that came up, *pick the top three to five most interesting items.* Can they somehow work together into a story coherently? If those were the top three to five points in a pitch, what might the headline look like? Go ahead and write an early version of a

headline. Now try writing an introductory paragraph for the press release. You may have enough momentum and information to write a press release or biography at this point. If so, go ahead and piece together the elements one by one. You can then go back and re-order, tweak, edit, or add to it.

Another approach: If a headline or intro paragraph doesn't come to mind easily, put the elements in order, either chronologically or by priority. Then, write it up, patching together the paragraphs and adding the headline at the end.

If neither of these approaches worked for you, don't fret. The next section will help you further craft the overall story.

DELIVERING THE STORY

FOLLOW INTRIGUE PROTOCOL

W

HENEVER YOU ARE SENDING INFORMATION to the press, thought should be put into the message you are sending. While it is tempting to replicate what you have seen other musicians or record labels write in their press releases, don't blindly copy what you have read from other artists' press releases. In addition, if you research press release formats, you can get wrapped up in following a particular structure, but the intrigue of your pitch is more important than one particular format. Many times a journalist will cover a music story based on a simple email pitch containing no headline, resembling a personal note rather than a press release. The truth is that there is not one single format that journalists accept. The most important thing to remember about pitching the media is that ultimately journalists are storytellers. Their readers, listeners, or viewers are their audience. If you can help them tell a good story that is relevant to their audience, you increase your chances of getting media coverage. It helps if the journalist likes your music, but first he or she must be interested enough to listen.

To bring out the themes or stories you have identified and effectively tie them directly to your music, craft a narrative arc akin to what you'll find in a good feature story. This story aims to lead the reader deeper into the world and perspective that formed the music without misrepresenting or overshadowing it. Here are tips for how to deliver the story:

1. DON'T FOLLOW PRESS RELEASE PROTOCOL. FOLLOW INTRIGUE PROTOCOL.

There are no rules other than getting people interested, so do not get hung up on the exact format of a press release. If you have a good story, you are on a better track than someone who has followed some established traditional format, using a bunch of clichés or overused story angles. This is not simply about writing a press release: It's about telling compelling stories, whether in communications to the press, on Twitter and Facebook, in liner notes, music videos, or on stage to your live audience. Jump into *being you* with two feet. Do not hold back.

2. GIVE MUSICAL CONTEXT. Many readers or listeners may not have strong points of reference for certain musical styles, influences, or techniques. Put the music into a framework that uses familiar ideas to express what may be new musical or cultural concepts for the reader. Help the reader understand why something is significant within its context. For example, “Not only does playing the guitar with a violin bow look surprising, it creates a sound very different from the guitar’s usual timbre; more ethereal and ambient.” Or, “On the title song, she warbles in a way simultaneously reminiscent of the beauty of Nina Simone’s voice and the primal calls of a wild dog.” Or, “The music software he developed is unique in that it adapts to meters outside of the standard two-, three-, and four-beat measures and phrases. This allows for odd-meters and spontaneous phrasing that can sometimes be difficult to sample in a live environment.”

3. USE METAPHORS AND SIMILES. This approach goes beyond mere comparisons and name dropping—“The resulting sound brings to mind the music of Bob Dylan and Tom Waits”—and expresses an artistic vision, musical idea, or sound by analogy or juxtaposition: “the Dadaist answer to Jack White.” To be helpful, an analogy or juxtaposition must draw on elements common enough to be widely known to non-specialists, but with enough new and unexpected information to make the imagery vivid and surprising. The juxtaposition approach can help you defuse and subvert those dreaded cliché phrases that litter press releases and cause eyes to glaze over.

4. BE AS DESCRIPTIVE AS POSSIBLE. If you’re presenting new or unusual material to a reader with a limited attention span, a good way to draw them in to your narrative is by using lots of concrete detail and substantive adjectives. Make the story visual: Show, don’t tell. Here’s an example from a young Cajun band from Louisiana:

“The band was playing a gig near Cow Island, a tiny hamlet south of Lafayette with little more than a bar and a few houses. The evening soon turned surreal, thanks in part to a local drummer named Wooley, whose past included stints as a ’70s roadie. Wooley got up on stage, demanding to play a song or two, and before they knew it, Feufollet was rocking out Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin covers. Wooley ended the evening by posing for an innocent peck-on-the-cheek snapshot and at the last minute giving singer Anna Laura Edmiston a big, sloppy (and uninvited) kiss.”

In this story, you get a sense of what happened that night, the atmosphere of Cow Island, the wackiness of playing Sabbath when you’re a Cajun band, and the memorable inappropriate smack on the cheek.

Compare this very anecdotal, descriptive storytelling approach with more conventional “P.R.-speak”:

“Smith performs entrancing and uplifting songs with ancient soul and modern spirit. Backed by the mesmerizing interlocking melodies of the guitar and the deep grooves of an all-star lineup, her voice resounds with defiant strength and profound tenderness.”

As a reader, we have no idea what Smith actually sounds like and why we should care that her songs combine some old stuff and some new stuff. We know little about her or her sound or why we should care about the so-called “all-star” lineup.

Being vividly descriptive helps us communicate why an artist is interesting, innovative, or significant, without falling into hype, which sets off journalists’ finely tuned B.S. detectors.

5. MAKE YOUR LANGUAGE INTELLIGENT AND ACCESSIBLE.

Don’t get fancy with your vocabulary. Don’t be dependent on clichés or lingo. Music journalists deal in words every day. They will appreciate your effort to communicate without overdoing it.

6. SOUNDS LIKE... Phrases like “sounds like” or “if you like X, you’ll like Y” are a quick way to help the press get a sense of your sound, but don’t use these more than once in any given written document. This is even more effective if you say that it sounds like the “_____ of _____;” such as the Cyndi Lauper of Texas, or the Lil Wayne of country music, or the John Lee Hooker of the cello.

7. AVOID PRESS RELEASE CLICHÉS.

PRESS RELEASE CLICHÉS	WHY TO AVOID
So-and-so Records is proud to announce...	Who cares? Not journalists.
All-star lineup	Unless the lineup is truly made up of musicians widely acknowledged as stars, this phrase is meaningless and irritating. Try to find a way to talk about the band as individuals. Tell their stories very briefly. Contextualize them.
"Cutting-edge, groundbreaking new album"	It better be pretty innovative to earn these adjectives, and you should explain why. It's better to describe what the music does—i.e. combines throatsinging with tuba in a piece conducted by Yo-Yo Ma— than generically state that it's doing something new.
"Their sophomore release"	No one cares that the group has released a second (3rd, 4th) album, unless you make them. Don't use the same old words. They make you sound boring.
Generic positive and/or hyperbolic adjectives like "fantastic," "incredible," "amazing," "soulful," "heartfelt," "romantic," etc.	These adjectives alone tell us nothing about the music's context, sound, approach, instrumentation, etc. It's more effective to find more evocative adjectives that relate to your themes, or to qualify them with other descriptors.
"First," "only," "unique," "never-before heard," "unprecedented"	If you can verify that this is the case—as in the musician invented the darn instrument or is the last living performer of Zuni Corn Songs—then these words are powerful. Otherwise, they're inappropriate and create distrust.
Words implying widespread interest or praise, like "highly anticipated," "critically acclaimed," or "nationally recognized"	Unless there has been extraordinary coverage by major outlets or some genuinely documented buzz, these words sound like BS. Instead, use a quote from a very high profile media outlet or celebrity, and if you don't have one, then this is probably not critically acclaimed.

8. AVOID NAMEDROPPING. Referring to another artist or prominent figure is only helpful if there is a truly strong and valid connection to the project, and if that connection can help create a context for the project under discussion.

EXAMPLE: *“Seu Jorge comes from the outskirts and hits us directly in the soul. While many got a taste of his powerful presence and rough-but-sweet voice from his David Bowie renditions in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, his solo album *Cru* will satiate new fans yearning for his pared down, soulful approach.”*

NOTE: a) *Life Aquatic* was a major film in wide release; b) Seu Jorge’s role in it was distinct, extensive, widely appreciated; c) the film role merely serves as a contextualizing element in the wider discussion of Seu Jorge’s solo work.

A strong connection to a mainstream celebrity is best reflected in a nice, juicy quote from the big name, instead of simply including a reference to that person.

EXAMPLE: *“Equally melancholy is ‘Rain Rain Beautiful Rain,’ a song originally heard on Mambazo’s 1987 Grammy winning album, *Shaka Zulu*, and reinterpreted here with the trademark atmospherics of pop chanteuse Natalie Merchant. ‘It was such an honor to be invited to sing with Ladysmith Black Mambazo,’ says Merchant. ‘What an incredible experience to hear the rich texture of their harmonies in my headphones and add my voice to theirs.’”*

A laundry list of famous people with whom you did studio work or opened for is not as compelling as the above two examples or an example of a deeper level of collaboration.

9. MAKE IT A STORY, NOT A RESUME. While artists and their managers often emphasize what they feel are key moments in their careers—awards, honors, educational achievements, major concerts, collaborations, or big tours—these accomplishments may not have much resonance for those outside their scene, specialty, hometown, or country—like journalists.

EXAMPLE: *“Their CD has been hailed by critics worldwide as one of the most groundbreaking of its time. The album debuted at #1 on iTunes specialty chart and remained there for numerous weeks, and it charted on Billboard’s specialty chart for four consecutive weeks, peaking at #12. Band X also entered Esoteric Charts of Europe, at #76.”*

This summary doesn’t make you want to read to the end of the paragraph, nor does it give you any idea why you should listen to this band’s first album or what went into creating it. It also illustrates an important problem with the “résumé writing” approach to press releases, namely relevance. An American journalist, for example, may not know or care what the Esoteric Chart of Europe is or what it means.

All of the musicians mentioned must be fascinating and accomplished artists. Portray them as such, or you aren’t helping your reader. Listing names of obscure (however talented) performers from particular scenes—even if they are at the top of the avant-garde jazz harp game—doesn’t propel your reader to keep reading and keep thinking about the project. Mention only crucial collaborations directly connected to the project, and highlight their significance to the project, if only briefly. If you don’t have room to put them in context, remove them or add them to the end of the press release in a personnel section.

10. PUSH THE LINGUISTIC ENVELOPE. A press release is not a book report, so feel free to take some risks. Pick the quirkiest or most moving part of the story and start off with it. Make up your own words or use a mix of high and low registers—“a phat fugue.” While you want to avoid outright hyperbole, linguistic creativity can make the difference between ideas that are nice but ho-hum, and a gripping story that will draw people in and elicit an emotional reaction.

11. USE QUOTES. The artist voice is stronger when the artist is quoted directly. Avoid using direct quotes from managers, promoters, label executives, etc., unless they have truly interesting stories to tell (i.e. they discovered the long-lost queen of a forgotten style selling fruit at the local market). Their views often seem biased, as they will always gush about their clients.

12. MUST-HAVE MENTIONS. For albums, always include the album title (we suggest in *italics*), the release date, the record label (if you don't have one then use insert_your_website.com). When mentioning song titles, put them in quotes. If possible, mention band members and what instruments they play. If you are low on space, add the band personnel/instrumentation as an addendum.

For tours, include the tour timeframe (i.e. February through April 2013) and either list the biggest markets (i.e. “15 North American cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Vancouver”), or if there are fewer than a half dozen cities in total, mention them all. It's good to include a separate sheet with the full tour dates (including date, city, venue, address, show time, tix price, tix phone, tix URL). It's also good to include the album details (mentioned above) if there is a recent album, even if the press release is focused on the tour.

NOTE: The first mention of album titles, artists, and labels/release dates should be in bold. But do not use tons of bold and italics throughout the press release. Sometimes people want to put a list of several guest artists and put them all in bold. You decrease readability of the overall press release by doing this, and it does not help to draw attention to more than a few key guest artists. Don't use ALL CAPS for anything.

14. THE ELUSIVE PRESS RELEASE HEADLINE. After writing the press release body, it's time to turn your hand to the title, your first and best opportunity to communicate the essence of the project to your reader. The title should accomplish several goals:

Be eye-catching and instantly intriguing.

EXAMPLE: The Gibson-Toting, Afro-Sporting, Bellbottom-Wearing New Voice of Cuba: The Unexpected and Soulful Essence of Alex Cuba

This title tells us instantly who, what, from where, and perhaps even why (he's a cool study in contrasts and not your average Cuban musician).

Use literary devices and names judiciously for maximum impact.

EXAMPLE: Breaking Out of Bar(code)s: Manu Chao, Moby, and Noam Chomsky Tag Team for *Another World*

Use a strong verb. "To be" and similar passive verbs can lessen the impact of titles. Try an unexpected, unusual, action verb that packs some punch.

EXAMPLE: Balkan Beat Box Obliterates Nationality & Unleashes a New Mediterranean

Stick to the point. Using juxtaposition, creative language, and strong verbs can sometimes lead to unwieldy and cryptic titles. Don't try to wedge everything about the project into the title, but don't get so obscure that an educated layperson won't have at least some idea what you're referring to. Capture the project's essence.

EXAMPLE: The Bus, The Bribe, The Shrine: Aphrodesia goes to Afrobeat Mecca on *Lagos by Bus*

This headline delivers enough intrigue to compel the reader to find out how all the elements fit together without overwhelming them.

Develop Your Own Press Release Voice

Read several press releases and biographies from different sources. Look at the diversity of approaches. Identify which ones you like and why you like them. Try on different styles until you find one that plays on your band's strengths as well as your personal strengths as a writer. Have other people read what you write; band members, non-musical friends, relatives. Ask them what stands out in the story. What is the most interesting part? What seems to be missing? How's the grammar and vocabulary? Listen to their answers, but don't feel like you have to follow all of their edits and suggestions.

PITCHING BEYOND THE PRESS RELEASE

PHOTOS, VIDEOS, AND STAGE PRODUCTION

THE SAME PHILOSOPHY WE INTRODUCED IN THIS book for press releases can be applied to the other assets you use for convincing and engaging the press and fans.

I. PHOTOS. A great hi-res photo can be the difference between getting a listing or not. Newspapers print interesting and aesthetically pleasing pictures. Studio photos and headshots are stereotypical and do not draw interest. Get creative. A friend with a good eye can take a great press photo. Review the gems from your pitch process above and think about what images would represent those story angles. Use props symbolically. Try different settings and different clothing. Try color and black and white. Shooting photos outside (with the sun behind you) almost instantly makes your photos higher quality.

2. VIDEOS. Don't bother making a music video of you just lip-syncing your song. Make the video tell a story. Review the stories you identified above and think about a story line that would be easy to shoot as a music video. The narrative could follow the lyrics, it could follow something about the band history or experience, or intertwine both. You probably need two types of videos: one for fans and one for potential concert bookers (who won't book you without seeing or hearing your band live). Don't mix up the content and purpose of each type. Look for clever videos that are low-budget but high intrigue. Again, focus on the intrigue.

3. STORYTELLING IN CONCERT. Discuss great band or song stories with bandmates. Come up with 10 (or 20) you can tell on stage. Don't just play: engage & entertain! (And don't tell the same stories year after year. You fans will start to see them as gimmicks.)

4. STORYTELLING IN SOCIAL MEDIA. Grab some of the snippets from your press release and tweet them as mini-stories. Or tweet things that augment a story that couldn't be included. Whenever something interesting, strange, funny, sad happens to you or a member of the band, on the road, in rehearsal, or in the studio, tweet about it. Hashtag it with #story so you can find it later for your next press release.

5. WHAT YOU WEAR. When you are performing or presenting your musical persona, your “look” should match your story. Visuals help you build an aura. You have to wear *something*, so pick a wardrobe in line with your branding. If budget is an issue, you don’t need separate everyday clothes that differ from your band clothes. But not every band can be in slouchy jeans and t-shirts. Consider each band member as having a brand within the band. Dress the part. Stand out.

6. THE SAME GOES FOR POSTER DESIGN, WEBSITE LOOK, T-SHIRTS, CD COVERS, AND MORE!

TALES FROM THE FIELD

LESSONS LEARNED FROM KEY PLAYERS IN WEB-BASED MUSIC PROMOTIONAL SERVICES

WE INTERVIEWED FOUNDERS, CEOs, AND LEADERS of a handful of the foremost web-based services for independent and rising musicians about the role of storytelling and the press. In particular, we wanted to see how they have seen good story-telling impact the careers of artists who use their services. To contextualize their insights, we also asked them to explain how their services work. Here's who we talked to:

FANBRIDGE.COM: Spencer Richardson, Co-Founder & CEO

TOPSPINMEDIA.COM: Ian Rogers, CEO

BANDCAMP.COM: Jennifer Elias, Business Development

CDBABY.COM: Brian Felsen, President

ARTISTDATA.COM: Brenden Mulligan, Founder

NEWROCKSTARPHILOSOPHY.COM: Hoover and Voyno, Authors/Bloggers

EMPOWER THE CROWD WITH YOUR STORY ONE CHAPTER AT A TIME

A Q&A WITH FANBRIDGE CO-FOUNDER & CEO SPENCER RICHARDSON

I. DESCRIBE FANBRIDGE'S SERVICES FOR ANYONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW.

FanBridge is a fan relationship management and marketing platform. There are three pillars to that. The first pillar consists of the tools and services designed to help grow your list; your email list; your following on Facebook and Twitter. We think email is one of the most valuable pieces. It's the brand channel and the driver for social networks.

We do this by providing web sign-up forms for your website or the latest MySpace or other web pages where your fans find you. We acquired a company called *Damn the Radio* which is a media-rich Facebook fan page creator. That's valuable because it lets you improve the general look of your brand on Facebook, but you can also leverage that page to share content, share videos, share music, and require that people "like" the page or give their email in exchange, to unlock the page. Or you can require that they share that page in order to unlock content. So that's the first pillar: helping to grow the fan list so you can always contact your fans.

The second pillar is about fan engagement. FanBridge allows you to target email newsletters by geography, schedule emails in advance, and syndicate your messaging – from email to various social networks and mobile phones – so that how you communicate with fans is more consistent. We help our customers by unifying all those communication channels. We also enable you

to track the resonance of these channels. How many people are opening your messages? Who are the people opening them? Who clicked on each link? Who shared that email in social networks and helped spread it? You can also embed social media buttons in your emails to facilitate your social spread. You can link to a campaign in a social networking blast. We can see down to the fan level what they are doing in social and in email, in terms of engaging with your brand.

We offer a layer beyond that called “FanRank.” It’s essentially a Google Page Rank for your fans. You can now see who your most engaged audience segment is. Who are your super fans, your casual fans, and your at-risk fans? Our power-users build really cool initiatives by leveraging FanRank. Super fans are offered VIP tix or experiential packages, whereas at-risk fans are getting something to bring them back into a closer connection. So the second pillar includes messaging and analytics.

The third pillar is about monetizing these audiences. There are a lot of companies now working on the next best iTunes, creating merchandise stores and other ways to bring a fan into a financial transaction. So we have created a partnering system where we can introduce our clients to partners that provide products and services to help them get there; companies like Songkick or Topspin Media. This will continue to grow as a part of our service.

2. WHAT IS THE IDEAL POINT IN A MUSICIAN’S CAREER TO START USING FANBRIDGE?

As soon as they want to take their audiences seriously. As soon as they start caring about learning about the value of cultivating a fan community. Whereas some services are about transaction-ing fans, FanBridge serves fans at an earlier level. Some fans need to be developed to the point where they are converted to paying fans.

3. WHAT ARE THE FEES FOR USING FANBRIDGE?

Currently we have a free account which allows up to 400 outgoing messages via email, but no access to premium features. If you are just starting out, we want to give you access to the platform without really having to pay. As your expertise grows, you will want deeper information about your audiences. As you use more robust services than you pay a monthly subscription and get more gadgets and gizmos and richer analytics. Prices range from \$9 per month to custom plans in the many thousands of dollars per month. But it's typically in the \$20-50 per month range.

4. BESIDES MUSICIANS, WHO ELSE USES FANBRIDGE AND HOW?

We work with all the major labels and different clients they have. It could be on the label side, but a lot of the time it is on the management side. Labels typically have offers for solutions that they recommend to the artists and management. Sometimes the artists have solutions they like to use. We try to get in the conversation on both sides. We see a lot of the artists themselves use our services, or a friend that is helping them. It's really designed less around a specific kind of user and more around the idea that anybody can use it. We've put a lot of emphasis on ease of use. We want a zero learning curve. So our client service questions revolve more about strategic ideas of how to use it, not how do I send an email. We do a pretty good job of making it easy to understand what tools are at your disposal.

The reality is we are a fan management platform, and a lot of different industries have fans. There are a lot of brands and companies who view their clients as fans. A fan is a happy customer. People who get that are the ones that use the platform. So in addition to music professionals, we also get a lot of people from film and TV coming our way; anyone trying to get that recurring audience. Sports teams understand the lifetime value of a fan

very well. They understand a lot of this, so our technology helps them. We see authors, celebrities, and even politicians using it as well.

5. HOW IMPORTANT IS TELLING A GOOD STORY WHEN USING FANBRIDGE?

I have said many times internally that our product has to tell a story because our clients have to learn the value in telling a story. That's why we try to streamline it. We need a beginning, middle, and end. You need something your audience can follow easily.

When you can tell your story through your voice and these channels, then you're really putting the channels to work for you; instead of trying to do the spinning plates trick, where you try to keep everything up at once, develop a momentum and synergy through your narrative. It starts with a story, and the channels are just a reflection of the story. The strategy becomes much easier. To me, telling a story to your fans and giving them an opportunity to help tell it themselves and bring it to their friends is really what it's all about. That's how you get people engaged. Sales and transactions all come from having an engaged audience. When people are listening to the story, then they want to support and figure out ways to make it grow. There's a great book, which in itself is an interesting story, called *Crowds and Power* by Elias Canetti. Ultimately it says that when a Crowd is aligned to a goal or a story, they want to grow. The Crowd's nature is to grow. Give them ways to grow and you don't have to worry about anything else. A lot of that starts with a unified story. It gives people a place to rally.

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN AMPLIFYING A BAND'S STORY IN THIS NEW ERA OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

It's the role of the press to bring interesting things and stories to their audience. They are influencers of audiences. If you are being smart and not just trying to blast everybody at random, but being more focused, then it's a more fruitful conversation. If you say these are the influencers in the press that I care about going after because I know their audience is relevant, you can bring them stories that are relevant to their audiences. I do think the press is an amplifying force. Ultimately I would solicit *their* thoughts. They can help teach you what their audience is interested in. That can help in shaping your story before even going to them. You have to learn from influencers of the audience you are going after if ultimately you want to *be* an influencer of that audience. We are living in an age where people don't just consume one channel. It's a network of channels. It's a liquid market. Your story will enter there and if you do it in the right way it will engage them. And it doesn't have to engage them 24 hours a day for them to be an engaged fan. I'm married now and I love my wife to death. But I am not necessarily thinking about her every single second of my life. Engagement is not being there 24/7, it's about being a steady consistent force so that when you do have something interesting or something to tell within that broader story, they answer the phone.

The press is a partner in amplifying your story but you don't need something in front of them 24 hours a day. You will burn out your audience and yourself. Stories have chapters for a reason. Books are not one 300-page section. You have to develop characters and change scenes. You want them reading the book for many, many years to come, not putting it down because they are tired.

7. CAN YOU THINK OF A BAND OR TWO WHOSE STORY HAS HELPED THEIR CAREER SIGNIFICANTLY?

Dream Theater had an interesting situation where they had their drummer leave the group and they were looking for a replacement. What otherwise might have been a different chapter in their story, they turned it into something really exciting. They used our technology with Damn the Radio to do a sneak peak or insider access to who the next drummer was going to be. They got a lot of press around it. Then everyone wanted to know “Who is the new guy?” They turned the page by turning that experience into greater engagement with the band.

John Legend uses our Fan Questions, a tool where fans ask questions and musicians answer them. But to tell his story, he wanted to do video responses. We built that ability and that just exploded the acquisition of audience members for him. Just yesterday we launched video Fan Questions to the entire platform. So now anyone can do video responses to fan questions. Days Difference has done that on a smaller scale but very well. Within Fan Questions they have answered over a few hundred questions which is super exciting for fans.

Imogen Heap is one of my favorite examples. She used to be in Frou Frou and then grew into her own solo career. It's great to watch how she has used the tools and technology to build that engaged audience. She's proven the sustainability of her career and she does that by telling each of her chapters on the FanBridge platform. We've seen her audience grow as her career blossomed. The way she interacts with them helps inform the technology we built around it. We try to look at clients like her who sit on loyal and engaged audiences and see the kinds of things she wants to do with those audiences and make sure that ultimately the technology is invisible. You don't feel like you are working on an application. You feel like you are working on your story. She is an excellent example of someone who has grown that audience, has communicated with them effectively, and driven to success. We have learned a lot from her. You learn a lot by following artists like that who really know how to engage with their fans.

TRUSTED SOURCES AND THE SEQUENCE OF AWARENESS AND REVELATION

A Q&A WITH TOPSPIN MEDIA CEO IAN ROGERS

I. WHAT IS TOPSPIN MEDIA?

We are for marketing and retail, what ProTools is for production. We offer a professional tool set for building awareness, growing your fan connection, and making money.

We heard musicians saying, “If I could just get this music in front of more people,” and responded with the tools that help you do that. Then once musicians are able to *build awareness*, they want to *make real connections* with building and managing email and mobile number lists and Facebook and Twitter followers. From there, you can start thinking about *commerce*. So we think in those three phases.

You don't meet someone at a party, get their phone number, and then call them and ask them to marry you. There is a conversation loop. You have to become trusted. I think people overlook that that takes time. It's not as simple as “You watched my YouTube video, now buy my album.” That's not usually how humans work. More realistically, I might add your song to my running mix. Then I might go to a show next time you're in town. Then I might want to buy the vinyl and a t-shirt at the show if I'm inspired. That's a natural way to react and consume music. So Topspin provides tools to remove the friction between each of those steps.

2. WHAT IS THE IDEAL POINT IN A MUSICIAN'S CAREER TO START USING TOPSPIN MEDIA?

I used to think artists should use our tools later. But I think there is no reason not to start right at the beginning. Unless you have 2500 people on your email list, I wouldn't start to sell anything. But you can use Topspin to build email lists and Facebook and Twitter followers and manage them closely earlier in your career.

3. WHAT ARE THE FEES FOR USING TOPSPIN?

\$10/month gives you access to all the marketing tools. Then if you decide to do commerce with us, it's 15%, no set up fees. If you use our product fulfillment, there are small receiving and storage fees.

4. BESIDES MUSICIANS, WHO ELSE USES TOPSPIN AND HOW?

Labels, managers, and agents get involved. We have Universal Music Group, the world's largest label. We have venues that use us; big and small. All the way out to my daughter in college at MIT, who put on a show last semester and sold all the tickets through Topspin and checked everyone in at the door with our iPhone app.

Also, one of the key features is the ability to pay different people through Topspin. We have a lot of people who have complicated ownership rights. They can sell to the consumer directly, but in that bundle not only does the band need to get paid, the manufacturing company, the label, and so forth get paid too. We do all that reporting on the back end to simplify payment to each party.

We have also a lot of filmmakers, a few authors, and a few in the “other” category: yoga studios and child birth classes selling books and DVDs. We are a platform for direct to consumer marketing and retail. And direct to consumer marketing is a viable channel now. It’s a large part of the pie.

5. HOW IMPORTANT IS TELLING A GOOD STORY WHEN USING TOPSPIN?

I think it’s really important. The tools are just the tools. You’ve got to reduce the friction in the technology so the story can produce results. If you get featured in the Huffington Post, we’ve optimized the sharability. Twenty percent of people who download from Topspin will share it with a friend. It’s more that end of it. We can’t help you tell your story, but we can make it so if you are doing a good job telling your story there is a multiplier on the other end.

The tools are an instantiation of the story. You’ve got to start with the story. But you have to ask yourself which phase of my campaign am I in: building awareness, building fan connections, or selling stuff? You do different things at each one of those phases. And there is a story in each one of those. The people who do it best, create a story out of each one of those phases. Whether you’ve just got some new material and you are thinking about how to leak it out there, or you have a new album, and strategizing how to package and offer it to existing fans? By the way, every artist could do more work on tour marketing, building a story on why someone should come see you and what that experience looks like. If artists would put as much work into their tour marketing as they do into their album marketing, we’d have a totally different industry across the board.

We worked on that with the Get Busy Committee. We leaked some tracks. We made Uzi shaped USB drives. We did a Kickstarter campaign. We got MySpace to sponsor a tour of L.A. which was kind of a joke. We got press

for playing in a parking lot. The dudes from the band Mars Volta have a ZZ Top cover band so we had them open and we had the Kogi BBQ truck there, a Twitter-friendly food truck that's a staple of L.A. nightlife. Those are just examples of how we tried to build the story with one band. If you look at Yeasayer it was all about a 12 inch single, then a pre order, then a bunch of cool unique things around their tour. One of the most genius things they did was they had this live Belgium recording they released on Christmas day with the "pay what you want" model. Because it was Christmas week, it sat on Pitchfork for the whole week which was great visibility. It wasn't a great money-maker, but it reminded people what an incredible live band they are and showed they are a band with longevity.

At Topspin we encourage bands to organize their efforts into those three key areas: awareness, fan connections, and selling stuff. And you do something small every week, and you do something big every month. You ask how you can maximize and keep momentum and just be in a better place this month than you were last month in terms of those three areas.

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN AMPLIFYING A BAND'S STORY IN THIS NEW ERA OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

I recently read Cory Doctorow's article in *The Guardian* about the way the concept of "publishing" has changed in recent years. It used to be the role of publishing was mashed together with the roles of manufacturing and distribution. Because there was this implicit filter involved, not everyone could get their work published and manufactured. Similarly in the music industry, there was an assumption that if someone had paid to put someone in the studio, made a CD, and distributed it, it had some inherent value. It was worth reviewing because those three things had happened. I wrote a blog post about this, and I was looking at the button to the right of my blog post that says "publish" and I thought if your definition

of “publishing” is connecting content with an audience, as Doctorow said, this isn’t publishing at all. It’s more like manufacturing. There is something massive going on here not just in the music business but in all content creation. For a long time in the music business, we’ve been saying there’s a power shift from the label--or whatever middleman or gatekeeper you want to substitute here--to the artist. Similarly, there is a power shift from the manufacturer and distributor, to the publisher. And by publisher I mean Corey’s definition: connecting content to an audience.

Downstream of that, what we always say at Topspin is that the cost of production has come down (You should have seen what my four-year-old daughter was doing on Garage Band this weekend). And the cost of distribution has come down (so my kid could put out her music with Topspin or TuneCore, using the same tools as Trent Reznor is using). But the cost of marketing has gone up. If not in overhead, then certainly as a hard cost. You have consumers with infinite choices and reaching them is really challenging. The great part about the new world is there are fewer gatekeepers. I recently talked with Mike D from the Beastie Boys and asked him what excited him about the new media/new music world. He said he had just met an artist--a fine artist, not a musician--who did all the things she was supposed to do: went to art school, moved to New York, locked herself in a studio and worked on her craft, and went to every gatekeeper that was supposed to bless her work, and nobody gave her the time of day. So she gave up and put everything on YouTube and her career promptly blew up. The same people—these gatekeepers—are now hunting her down and asking how they can be involved. That story is not all that rare. There is a new way for things to get published if you will. I’m a publisher with my Twitter feed, and you’re a publisher with this book, and my daughter is a publisher with the radio show she has had since she was 13.

The flip side is that a lot of these publishers are not very powerful. So if all these things are true, then what you have is an increasing reliance on

trusted sources by customers. That is the key element. That means that we as an audience are going to be more reliant on publishers. There is a huge opportunity there that is unrealized. After radio, Pitchfork is the most powerful player and there is a gigantic gap between trusted sources.

There are four classes of artists: the long tail that is emerging (sometimes emerging forever), the middle class, mainstream artists, and heritage artists, who were mainstream and now have built-in marketing. I think the middle class is the most exciting segment; those that don't care about radio airplay but oftentimes are still successful, like Yeasayer and Beach House. There are countless people in that realm who are "successful" at 75,000-100,000 units. To get from middle class to mainstream, you have to make it over the hump in the mainstream media. There are a lot of interesting stories that have moved there; Phoenix and Mumford & Sons both started out as successful emerging artists. The Black Keys is a great example. They spent something like ten years in the middle class and then managed to get over that wall, mainly onto radio.

The point is that from a PR perspective you have to be practical in answering the question: what are you destined for? The one thing I have learned is IT JUST TAKES A LONG TIME. It never happens overnight. You want be Metric? Are you prepared to starve and take a mortgage on your home for 5-6 years plus? Because you are not doing it in the next 12 months. You have to come to terms with the fact that it will take three to four records to get from where you are. People dismiss the first four years or so that it took Bon Iver to break. Even the Mumford & Sons record; that thing came out in 2009 and really only broke here in the U.S. in the beginning of this year. A lot of people think they will release a record and its going to be huge. I don't think that ever happens. Not anymore.

Here's my mental mode for this shit now: we're all just nodes on a network. Some nodes are more valuable than others. I write about John Grant

multiple times on my blog, I get Bob Lefsetz to write about him and the guy still can't tour in the US. So clearly my node's not that strong and Bob's node is not that strong. If John Grant was written up as a top album on Pitchfork, he probably would be able to tour. And that John Grant record is better than a lot of the things that make the Pitchfork top list. But not everything can be there. There are only so many hours and so many writers. We are limited by our humanness.

Good music will find its high water mark. I asked Darius at Jagjaguwar what they did to make the Bon Iver record so successful. He said that record would have been successful on any record label; it's a great record! But I think at the same time if they tried to release it on Warner Brothers and it hadn't emerged the way it did, I don't think it would have had the same resonance.

If all the publishers are nodes in this network, the order that you pass through in the network matters. You want to get to the right people first. The order in which you are introduced to the public matters.

7. CAN YOU THINK OF A BAND OR TWO WHOSE STORY HAS HELPED THEIR CAREER SIGNIFICANTLY?

Yeastayer was where a lightbulb really went off for me. What Jason did with Yeasayer was that he was very methodic about it. He didn't just put the music out there. He said: this is the way I'm going to present the band. This is who I think the first fans are and I'm not going to rest until I have those people. It worked extremely well; much better than if he just dumped it out there. He knew an audience and he gave them a chance to own the band as theirs. I think he was just very methodical about what he put out; when, where, and how. He didn't even let photos get out for their first year of existence. It kept up a mystique and an image that worked with what he was

trying to accomplish, and it really did work. He got that audience to care deeply about the band. He gave them the chance to own it, the chance for them to say this band is part of our world and our scene.

The story of Metric is somewhat different in that it was about their independence. There was no reason their music didn't have mass appeal, but they showed they were still human beings who were going to approach the business on their own terms. That became part of their story, so people listened and connected to them, because it felt real. Fans realized the album was something that had broad appeal and they could share with everyone in their social circle. It grew naturally. Here's a band with no label and they would come to town and play and next time they would play to twice as many people. The way they unfolded that story over a period of five years was very deliberate and it really worked. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that band is truly beloved by fans, industry, radio stations. Everyone looks at them and says: that is how this should be done. They have great music and a great live show. It's the kind of thing you want to love and support.

CONNECTING YOUR MUSIC STORY TO THE PRESS WITH TECHNOLOGY

A Q&A WITH BANDCAMP'S JENNIFER ELIAS (BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT)

1. WHAT IS BANDCAMP?

It's a way for artists and labels to sell their music and merchandise directly to fans. It takes about ten minutes to set up a page that's stand-alone or integrated with your own website.

2. WHAT IS THE IDEAL POINT IN A BAND'S CAREER TO START USING BANDCAMP?

Anytime. We have artists all the way across the board: Artists who are just starting out and using it as their own website. Artists who are just sharing free tracks, not selling anything yet and artists who are midway through their careers, starting to sell merchandise, as well as fully-developed artists.

3. WHAT ARE THE FEES FOR USING BANDCAMP?

We don't make money until you make money. See our pricing page for more details as it depends on your sales levels: <http://bandcamp.com/pricing>.

4. BESIDES MUSICIANS, WHO ELSE USES BANDCAMP AND HOW?

Record labels such as Relapse, Asthmatic Kitty, and Everloving use it. Some individuals use Bandcamp to provide podcasts to fans. We have one customer using it to sell Irish lessons. That worked really well because they bundled a PDF with the digital audio. There's room for a lot of innovation in how you use our tools, and you can price things any way you want.

5. HOW IMPORTANT IS TELLING A GOOD STORY WHEN USING BANDCAMP?

I think it's hugely important. You need to do anything you can to get your music heard. Our role in that is making sure that when fans come to your website they know that they're buying directly from the artist or label, and that they can easily download the music in a variety of audio formats, all without a hitch. We'll take care of the technology so the artist can focus on making and promoting their music.

The other side of that is about marketing yourself and telling your story. Artists like Amanda Palmer are all story all the time. She is brilliant and has done very well on Bandcamp. She does "name your own price" and people are paying on average 50% more than her minimum because they love her. I think she is incredibly honest about who she is. Whether it is about breaking with Road Runner Records or about her sexuality. Every show is a story; it's like going to see a work of theater. So I think people know that when they are getting something from Amanda Palmer, it is really genuine. She is creating it for herself and for her fans, by being incredibly honest.

DubFX is another example. He's a beatboxer. Everything he does, he does by himself. He's a 25-year old who started doing this on the street in Australia. He eventually made it big, but hasn't changed his really interesting personality and style. His story is told through his music and his YouTube videos.

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN AMPLIFYING A BAND'S STORY IN THIS NEW ERA OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

Speaking from what I see at Bandcamp, there are certain artists that will see a huge spike and we'll look and see that a blog like Electric Mustache or Gorilla Versus Bear wrote about them and there are thousands of clicks as a result. We have embedded players to facilitate that. A blog can use a Bandcamp embedded player in any size and color and it works seamlessly. A lot of blogs are using these players so fans can listen to the music while they are reading the review. Then they can decide if they want to click through, download, and buy. Pitchfork used Sufjan Steven's embedded player and he got over a hundred thousand plays as a result. We want to make it easy for the media to cover an artist. There are certainly other artists where we see big spike and when I ask about it sometimes they've just sent out a fan email. Either way our technology connects the story with direct-to-fan sales.

7. CAN YOU THINK OF A BAND OR TWO WHOSE STORY HAS HELPED THEIR CAREER SIGNIFICANTLY?

Zoe Keating is fascinating. She is a classically-trained cellist who is also very technologically savvy and has combined both of those things in her music. She really interacts with her fans as individuals. She made it to the classical chart on Billboard from her Bandcamp sales. She was also on RadioLab, where she was creating different moods of music on the spot. You get that kind of NPR audience excited and it makes a big difference.

Homestuck have done really well too. It's somewhat of a webcomic in the format of a mock videogame, where loads of fans write in suggestions of where the story can go and volunteers write music to go with it. Two people run it, one based in Boston and one in Florida. They decided to sell the music to give back money to the artists. Their sales are really strong on Bandcamp, and now they operate almost as a record label for the artists that have risen up from their online community.

STORY SELF-PERPETUATION AND THE ROLE OF BRAND NAME PRESS FOR MUSICIANS

A Q & A WITH CD BABY PRESIDENT BRIAN FELSEN

1. DESCRIBE CD BABY'S SERVICES FOR ANYONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW.

We're the largest aggregator of independent music on the internet. We distribute 3.5 million tracks. We have over a quarter million artists. We've been around for more than 13 years. With CD Baby an artist makes the music—makes a song—and then sends in CDs or, using our uploader, uploads the music. We get the music to over 60 partners including iTunes, Amazon, Rhapsody, and Napster. The complete list is on our website. From there, if you have physical CDs, we will get them for sale on Amazon.com. You can sell the music on your own website or Facebook, and in our store.

2. WHAT IS THE IDEAL POINT IN A BAND'S CAREER TO START USING CD BABY?

The ideal time to use CD Baby is as soon as your song is done. You really don't need anything more. You just use our uploader and within 48 hours your music is available to everywhere in the world.

By the way, our albums are still selling well. The album is an art form and I adore it, but the model of going to the studio to record every twelve months, then lather, rinse and repeat is over. It's all about being continually in

front of your fans. That could entail engaging with your fans—building an audience—before you have released a single thing. You have to let the fans into the creative process through engagement on social networks, blogs, or however you reach your niche. Write stories about what you are doing, post videos of the creative process, from showing how you write music on your instruments to performing in your garage. Continue to have that dialogue, on your website or social networks. Then there can be an audience for your work even before you release a product. And then you can release a single and then release an EP of four songs. And then a few months later release a few more songs. And then at the end of the year you can have an album as a compilation of greatest hits plus maybe a holiday bonus track. You can be continually in front of the fans.

3. WHAT ARE THE FEES FOR USING CD BABY?

It's \$39 to get an album distributed. It's \$9.95 for single.

4. BESIDES MUSICIANS, WHO ELSE USES CD BABY AND HOW?

We have a ton of labels. But we also have our sister companies: FilmBaby, HostBaby, and BookBaby. They target different facets of the creative community. HostBaby provides website hosting for all creative types. BookBaby gets books onto the iPad, Kindle, and so on.

5. HOW IMPORTANT IS TELLING A GOOD STORY WHEN USING CD BABY?

It's extremely important not only with CD Baby but anywhere. Music has become like all content: commoditized. It's because of the barrage of information infiltrating our senses. Part of it is a result of piracy. But even legitimate streaming services like YouTube and Spotify don't put much money in artists' pockets. There is no shortage of music. If I add no more music to my collection, I will not be alive long enough to listen to all the music I have already. Let alone if I go on Pandora or Spotify or Rhapsody and grab an all-you-can-eat service. People are paying for it, but they are paying for it as part of an interaction. That interaction could be with other members of their social group real or virtual, or it could be part of supporting an artist. People want access and involvement, and that's why live shows are holding up. A story is a way to bring your fans into your world and hopefully be able to sell to them.

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN AMPLIFYING A BAND'S STORY IN THIS NEW ERA OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

It depends on what is is, as Bill Clinton would say. What is the press? The press can be the New York Times or the press can be Pitchfork or Brooklyn Vegan. The press could be microblogs. The press could be Google searches, or the press could be from your peer set which is more important than all. It's not that the press is dead. It's that the large media conglomerates no longer have a monopoly on it.

If you mean the New York Times and Pitchfork... for fans of a genre or for passionate people who are actively engaged and eager to discover music, recommendations by name brand entities or name brand critics (such that they exist anymore) are still important, and also the sites which get a lot of traffic have enough of a fan base that they could help jumpstart a critical

mass. The critical mass is the thing. There are record labels that can buy enough advertising or placement to put over something by Lady Gaga, but they also can spend millions and *not* put something over. There are no guarantees. Whereas someone like Rebecca Black can take over the world without any of that ad budget. The press can help amplify it but it has to have some critical mass for getting the press' attention. Then it becomes a self-perpetuating cycle.

7. CAN YOU THINK OF A BAND OR TWO WHOSE STORY HAS HELPED THEIR CAREER SIGNIFICANTLY?

Right now Rebecca Black is our biggest-selling CD Baby artist. Her story is she is a kid, 13 years old. She made a video and put it on YouTube and it got literally 150 million views and millions of *dislikes*. People went crazy over it making parody videos. Her song was performed by Stephen Colbert and The Roots on Stephen Colbert's show. It became a huge phenomenon. One hundred fifty million is more people than probably saw Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video when it came out. The story is that she was earnest but people said "who is this kid singing about the trouble of a kid that gets on the school bus or eats a bowl of cereal?" The scope of her musical talent and her tween angst was considered so limited that it was laughed at by enough people that it became a story in itself. There is the story, and then there is the story as to whether there *is* a story. I believe that she *has* caught on. The song—called "Friday"—is insidiously catchy. It's one of these things that becomes viral; the story *becomes* the story.

I've been traveling all over the world for Book Baby lately and there is not a country I've been to that has not heard of this thing. It's huge.

We have another artist, Lisa Lynn, who is a harp player. She basically performed in newborn wings of hospitals for mothers who have just

delivered. She licensed her music to hospitals. That's taking off in a more organic way as well.

Then there is the role of more traditional media, though in its new form. I'm talking about the role of *American Idol* and *America's Got Talent*. CD Baby always has a Jackie Evancho or Michael Grimm. TV itself amplifies.

One of our big ones is Joe Purdy, who did well enough to finance buying his own house through CD Baby. And that's kind of a story in itself as an independent artist. It didn't hurt that shows like *Lost* and *Grey's Anatomy* started licensing his music. He has taken off from there.

VALIDATION & LEGITIMACY: BREAKING THE ICE WITH A STORY WORKS... SOMETIMES

**A Q&A WITH ARTIST DATA FOUNDER
BRENDEN MULLIGAN**

1. WHAT IS ARTISTDATA?

It's a syndication tool for bands that allows them to publish their info to as many websites as we found with just one click. ArtistData was acquired by SonicBids in 2010.

2. WHAT IS THE IDEAL POINT IN A BAND'S CAREER TO START USING ARTISTDATA?

As soon as they have their first tour date. It has always been career-level agnostic. It's just as useful for a little band or a big band. It can be used by Cold Play or the Cold Play cover band that just started.

3. WHAT ARE THE FEES FOR USING ARTISTDATA?

It's totally free. It will be integrated with SonicBids at some point in the future.

4. BESIDES MUSICIANS, WHO ELSE USES ARTISTDATA AND HOW?

It was built for bands. Labels use it on behalf of musicians. If you are the artist or the label or management company or mom, you are still entering data on behalf of the musicians. There are also aggregated accounts for record labels who deal with more than one band.

5. HOW IMPORTANT IS TELLING A GOOD STORY WHEN USING ARTISTDATA?

Not at all, since it is more of a syndication tool than a marketing tool. The band story is not attached to ArtistData. Bands can put in a biography, but that's the only place that it's necessary. Otherwise it is meta data on touring. I had planned it to be a full platform, but there was such a strong need for tour date syndication, we kept the focus there. So in our case, the tour data is pretty much guaranteed to show up everywhere we syndicate, regardless of a band's story.

I worked for Aware Records in Chicago from 2003 to 2006, and I remember how some bands there had stories that helped their careers. Story can play a role, and when it does it can have a big impact. There are other bands where there wasn't much of a story there so we didn't talk about the story. We said listen to the music: it's good music. The music *is* more important than the story. However, a story is definitely a good icebreaker and it can make it easier to write a review about someone who provides something to write about. Every time you read about a band, you can see the writer is trying to pull a good story out of it.

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN AMPLIFYING A BAND'S STORY IN THIS NEW ERA OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

Because of the way that bands can market themselves on their own, I think that the press at this point *validates* the story. Bands can tell whatever story they want to. You can go to their website and read an intensive bio. Why have a bio, if it's not going to sound interesting. When legit press covers it, it legitimizes there might be something there to pay attention to.

7. CAN YOU THINK OF A BAND OR TWO WHOSE STORY HAS HELPED THEIR CAREER SIGNIFICANTLY?

At Aware, we signed a Jamaican singer-songwriter named Abdel Wright. He had a huge following in Jamaica, had spent a bit of time in jail, and generally had lived a unique life. What came out was a really interesting story we could tell to everyone when we signed him. Whereas some other artists we had were just suburban kids without much of a story.

TEASING OUT YOUR BAND STORY WITH BLOG INTERVIEWS

A Q&A WITH NEWROCKSTARPHILOSOPHY.COM'S AUTHORS/BLOGGERS HOOVER AND VOYNO

1. WHEN YOU MEET A MUSICIAN WHO IS NOT FAMILIAR WITH YOUR BLOG & BOOK, HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE IT?

HOOVER: It's a navigation tool for the changing music landscape with a good dose of philosophy to help you rethink what success means.

VOYNO: A music industry blog focused on songwriting, authenticity, and technology. The book is a solid look at how artists can market and manage themselves in this digital age.

2. WHAT IS THE IDEAL POINT IN A MUSICIAN/BAND'S CAREER TO READ YOUR BLOG/BOOK?

H: When you start thinking of doing music for real and not just as a hobby.

V: As soon as possible. Because the book deals with some finer details such as choosing band members, organizing shows, and the always important question of 'why are you doing music?' The sooner an artist can read our book, the better.

3. HOW IMPORTANT IS TELLING A GOOD STORY USING THE NEW ROCKSTAR PHILOSOPHY?

H: A good, compelling story about you as an artist makes you stand out. The songs are of course the core, but a story that helps create more interest in you always helps in getting attention.

4. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN AMPLIFYING A BAND'S STORY IN THIS NEW ERA OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

H: I think the focal role of the press should be at the blog level. The buzz seems to now always start at the blog level. There are many indie blogs out there that aren't Pitchfork that have influence in gaining you an audience.

V: The press plays a critical role because they can tease out better information about a band than a band can. A blogger will ask questions that a younger band won't about their history, tour stories, etc. Many new bands don't understand what their hook is. If the music is hot then a blogger will find a reason to write about you and try and find an angle that will help them get the blogger more hits. The press is the content control, the filter that audiences need to find out what is good.

5. CAN YOU THINK OF A BAND OR TWO WHOSE STORY HAS HELPED THEIR CAREER SIGNIFICANTLY?

V: The two bands that I think of are Bon Iver and Girls; both indie bands but two very different stories. Bon Iver's story is so classic that it almost is unbelievable. After the demise of his band, his relationship, and his health (mono), Justin Vernon retired to his father's cabin in rural Wisconsin to rest and recover. There he recorded what became *For Emma, Forever Ago*.

With his fragile, layered vocals and introspective lyrics, Justin was able to create a modern masterpiece without a professional studio. Every blogger in the world waits for such amazing music and an amazing story. Perfect.

The band Girls came to bloggers' attention in a different way. The band is fronted by Chris Owens who was raised as a member of the Children of God cult, where he was forbidden to listen to music. Once he escaped the cult, he became an adopted child of a Texas millionaire. It sounds outrageous and it was, which is why every indie blogger jumped on this story.

CONTEXT AND DIFFERENTIATION IN A SEA OF CHOICES

A Q&A WITH REVERBNATION COO JED CARLSON

1. WHEN YOU MEET AN INDEPENDENT MUSICIAN WHO IS NOT FAMILIAR WITH REVERBNATION, HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE IT TO THEM?

ReverbNation is a *one-stop solution* for the ‘business’ part of being in the music business, offering an entire range of products and services like FRM (Fan Relationship Management), digital distribution, sync licensing, digital press kits, gig opportunities, social media applications, e-commerce, mobile apps, online promotion, web hosting, and the world’s largest interactive venue database, to name a few. It’s everything you need to plant, grow, and harvest fan relationships, *plus* access to the music industry ecosystem that connects you with the people and opportunities that can move your career forward.

2. WHAT IS THE IDEAL POINT IN A MUSICIAN/BAND’S CAREER TO START USING REVERBNATION?

Our products are used by artists at every career stage. Less established artists tend to gravitate toward our free offerings, while more serious musicians tend toward the premium offerings.

3. WHAT ARE THE FEES FOR USING REVERBNATION?

Most of what we offer is free of charge, and the products/services that cost money start at \$2.95/month and go up to \$500/week for our promo/advertising product, if the artist wants to spend that much.

4. BESIDES MUSICIANS, WHO ELSE USES REVERBNATION AND HOW?

The other primary users of the products/services are venues and promoters (25,000 worldwide), and labels and managers (90,000 worldwide). They use the site for two reasons. First, because we make great products/services especially for them. Second, because they network on the site finding new talent, collaborating, etc.

5. HOW IMPORTANT IS TELLING A GOOD STORY WHEN USING REVERBNATION?

The most successful bands are experts at telling a good story about their music, and they do it with more than just words. Everything a band chooses to display to a new potential fan is an opportunity to tell that story. Their photo, the first song a fan will encounter (or video), their bio and PR—all of these add up to the first impression a fan has about the artist. And it's important to understand how the human mind works when discovering something new among a sea of infinite choices (like fans discovering new music). First, we look for something that gives context (comparing it to something familiar), then we look for differentiation (contrasting it with that familiar object). Often times artists choose to use more than one familiar thing and blend them together: "it's like Morrissey meets Iron and Wine, but on vacation in Cabo." These are very good tactics from a psychological perspective. On ReverbNation, we provide an optional profile

section called RIYL (Recommended if you like), so that artists can provide that familiar context to potential fans. We also provide a bio section and a section to display press clippings (things other people have said). The best artists are using all three in concert to make their first impression.

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN AMPLIFYING A BAND'S STORY IN THIS NEW ERA OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

Getting press coverage can be vitally important to an artist who is trying to break through and rise above the noise. But any PR plan needs to be coupled with an ongoing marketing/promotion plan—something that converts new fans every day, even while the artist is sleeping. We focus on the latter and let others focus on the PR.

7. CAN YOU THINK OF A BAND OR TWO WHOSE STORY HAS HELPED THEIR CAREER SIGNIFICANTLY?

I'm sure I could. But any example I list would simply prove the fact that artists need to *differentiate* themselves. If they do not offer something both unique *and* compelling (my definition of differentiation), then they will struggle.

WHAT NEXT?

AMPLIFY YOUR STORY!

Now that you know how to write a pitch to the press, check out www.StoryAmp.com for a free way to connect with journalists. Upgrade to a premium account to add even more features and directly submit your story to relevant music journalists. **AMPLIFY YOUR STORY!**

ABOUT STORYAMP, LLC

StoryAmp, LLC (www.StoryAmp.com) is a platform that connects musicians and journalists. Launching in August 2011, StoryAmp provides a new approach for musicians that are touring or releasing recordings to share their news with legitimate journalists in a way that is useful for them in the right time frame. Journalists are flooded with story pitches these days. By using StoryAmp, musicians and their team members provide information about concerts and releases in a format that allows relevant journalists to discover new music, listen to it for consideration, prioritize their next story, and cover it in their media outlet. Sign up at www.StoryAmp.com for a special invitation to join the free service at launch time.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DMITRI VIETZE has been in music publicity for thirteen years. Vietze spent his first twelve years in Nashville and his teenage years in New York City where he attended “the Fame high school” (LaGuardia High



School for Music and the Arts). He worked for Allegro Distribution in Portland, Oregon in the late '90s, where he helped set up their publicity department and handled PR and radio promotion for pop, jazz, classical, and world music releases by dozens of indie labels. In 1999, he formed rock paper scissors, inc. (rps) – a boutique music PR firm which quickly became known for combining aggressive use of technology with an emotionally-intelligent approach to story-telling. The PR approach gained Vietze and rps appreciation and regular feature coverage at influential media outlets from NPR to the New York Times. Vietze has represented projects by all the major labels as well as indie darlings like Nonesuch, Sub Pop, Domino Recording Company, Six Degrees, Crammed Discs, and JDub, and festivals such as Central Park SummerStage (NYC), Stern Grove Festival (SF), Grand Performances (LA), Calgary Folk Music Festival, Vancouver Island MusicFest, and globalFEST (NYC). Vietze is a regular speaker (and wearer of crazy pants) at SXSW, APAP, and WOMEX. Vietze partnered with SproutBox, LLC (www.sproutbox.com) in 2011 to launch StoryAmp, LLC, combining his music publicity expertise and relationships with their software engineering/design proficiency and tech business savvy.

TRISTRA NEWYEAR assisted in the writing of this book. Newyear is the lead writer for rock paper scissors, inc. Prior to that she worked as a rps publicist for two years. Though American-born, she was editor of the opinion page at the Moscow Times for a year while living in Russia. She speaks five languages, and holds a Ph.D. from Indiana University in Uralic Studies. Her research emphasis was Buryat Theater in Siberia. Seriously.

Visit
www.StoryAmp.com
to amplify
your story!