

SELL

MORE

SINGLES

How To Sell Music By The Single To
Make More Money More Often

By Corey Koehler

musicmarketingguy



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Preface

Before we get into the meat of this ebook I just wanted to take a minute to introduce myself and give you some insight as to why I am writing this ebook.

I am Corey Koehler. I am a 47 year old singer-songwriter, music and marketing junky from Minnesota. I have been a music fan since I can remember. I am old enough to remember there being record stores everywhere and I was one of those kids trying to butt up a “tape recorder” (remember those) to the radio to make mix tapes from radio broadcasts (that's old school as in pre boombox, pre internet, pre Soundcloud or Garageband on the iPhone).

Singer-songwriter wise I am a bit of a late bloomer since I didn't write or release any music until after my 32nd birthday. I always wonder what would have happened if I discovered my talent when I was a younger with less responsibility but it is what it is and there is no time to waste.

I've been a marketing junky for about 10+ years. In the beginning I didn't think it was possible to make money with music so I looked to other places in the hopes to finance my music itch (Multi Level Marketing anyone? Yep, I tried it a few times. Eeek!). But eventually I woke up and realized what I should be doing is combining my itch for marketing with my itch for music.

Which brings me to today.

This is the 7th update to this ebook which I first shared back in 2013.

I've watched a lot of bands and musicians make good music but then shoot themselves in the foot by not having a website, a mailing list or even a simple marketing plan. I figured I could help in some way.

As a lifelong music fan, a musician, and someone who wants to help others, I simply want to see good music get heard for the benefit of the parties involved. My goal is to be sort of a matchmaker - as in "Hi musician with cool music, meet fan who loves cool music" - because I think that makes the world a better place.

And since, being a musician myself, I am constantly trying different things to get my music out there and connect with people interested in hearing my stuff. I figured that I could use MusicMarketingGuy.com to pass on any information I come across to help me/us reach that goal.

I do not have all the answers but I am on the lookout for them. And when I find them I will pass them along to you on MusicMarketingGuy.com or via ebooks like this one.

So, with that said, lets make our lives as music fans and musicians more enjoyable and more profitable. By learning how to release our art into the world one single at a time.

Why Singles?

In 2012 I started launching singles on a monthly basis for an entire year. Yes, that was awhile back now but it is pretty much the standard today. For musicians like you and I, I think it is the best approach to releasing music and building a career.

Why you say?

Because of these very good reasons:

Stay top of mind

These days everyone is bombarded with so much. Not only is there a crap ton of music being released every day but there are more TV series being made, more movies to watch, more video games to play, etc, etc.

If you and I only release an album once or twice a year we risk being forgot. If we can hit them 8-12 times a year with something new and fresh we increase our chances of staying top of mind when they are looking to push play.

Builds and strengthens relationships

This kind of relates to what I just said above. The more often you and I reach out to our fans, the faster we and our fans get to know each other and the more likely we make new friends and loyal supporters.

Builds momentum

Releasing a song per month forced a deadline, raised expectations and in the end forced me to deliver. There was little room for procrastination.

That delivery schedule also brought more fans, more sales and a “sense of purpose” that was constantly being replenished. With each passing release, the feedback and reinforcement I received from both the fans and the sales being generated really kept the creative juices flowing.

Add to that the constant feedback from fans telling you how much they love the song, or they know where you are coming from or how it made their day.

I looked forward to each release as sort of a fix. That rush of anticipation you get when you are about to release your art into the world is intoxicating. Why not feel that once a month instead of once a year?

Increases overall sales

When you release each single on its own, all your marketing is focused on that one song - it gets all the attention. The chances that someone will hear it are greater because it is not buried in the album somewhere. Being in the spotlight increases the amount the song gets purchased and/or streamed.

And because of the marketing hoopla that was created with each release, new fans will get pulled in. Then those fans dive into my back catalog and many times purchase even more.

Also, I was able to increase the average price people would pay for a song

download all while building up to an album that I could release (for even more revenue).

For each release I would offer the single on a “Name Your Price” basis with the promise that if anyone donated within the first 30 days, I would add their names to the credits as associate producers. Each month I averaged between \$2 and \$3 per download with some fans giving up to \$10 for a download. And seeing as how I doubt they would do 3 to 10 times the price for an album, I came out ahead.

Then, after releasing 9 or 10 songs, I took the best of the bunch, did a few simple remixes and created an album (note: besides remixes you could throw some live stuff on there too). Not only did this give me another reason to reach out to my fans but it created even more revenue – with very little investment mind you - because I noticed that some of my biggest fans bought the album version (download and physical CD's) even though they had some of the same songs. They were just happy to support me.

Music buyers prefer singles

When I first wrote this ebook in 2013, the writing was on the wall.

According the [2013 Nielsen Billboard Music Industry Report](#) in 2011 Singles sold 1271 (in millions) as apposed to 331 (in millions). And in 2012 the gap widened, Singles sold 1336 (in millions) as apposed to 316 (in millions).

Singles were out selling albums nearly 4 to 1. The people have spoken. Today, it is more obvious (just look at the new releases on Spofity). Here's why I

jumped on this trend back in 2011 before it went mainstream.

The Beatles did it

Ok, maybe not the best reason but just sayin'. Back in the day (50's and 60's) singles where the shiznit. That is how The Beatles and nearly every other artist of the time built their audiences. Pretty safe to say that it worked for them.

Anyway!

With *why* out of the way, lets get into *how*.

The System

Over the course of a year I released singles as often as possible (once per month on average). During that time, I developed an efficient system that helped me add over 200 fans and increase overall music sales across many platforms (Bandcamp, iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, etc).

Systems can be scary for creative types like us BUT they are great for two reasons:

- 1) They can speed things up - so we have more time to make music.
- 2) They can be incrementally improved upon and tweaked – so we can get more bang for our buck with each future release.

The system I created breaks down into 3 parts; Preparation, Distribution and Amplification.

Here is a breakdown of each one of those parts starting with preparation.

Preparation

I usually create videos, credits, lyrics, album art, and a blog post up front and have them located in a single folder so when I get to start uploading and filling out album data. Nothing slows you down faster than having to stop everything to

dig around for stuff.

Here's a quick list on what to have ready (for a handy, printable cheatsheet, also see the checklist at the very end of ebook):

Song files - I make sure to have both wav and mp3 files ready to go. This means that your mp3 have all the ID3 tags embedded – including [ISRC codes](#).

Album Art – I usually create it myself these days. But sometimes friends and fans have kicked in. I've also used [Fiverr](#) and had a cover made for \$5. I usually have a few sizes ready to go like 1000 x 1000 px and 300 x 300 px to accommodate the various places I am going to use these.

If you really want to go out, you could swap out some of the artwork on all your social media locations too. [Canva.com](#) is a great tool that will help you do that quickly and easily.

Credits – Who played on the song, who wrote it, where did you record it, who do you want to thank, etc, etc?

Blog Post – Start a draft and include text, video, album art and the song. For text, I will usually tell the story behind the song (which also doubles as a script for a video), add the lyrics, links to merch, describe my promotion, encourage sharing and whatever else I can think of without blabbing too long and boring the hell out of them.

For an example of one of my new release blogs [click here](#).

I try to involve as many types of content as possible. In this case audio, video and text. Not everyone likes to read or watch video. The goal is to improve the chances I am catching them on their terms. It also lets you engage your fans through a variety of senses (I read somewhere that that is a good thing).

Video – I create two videos for maximum effect.

- In video #1 I like to take a few minutes to talk about the song and explain what I am doing. It is pretty easy to do and I just think it adds a nice personal touch and another step toward strengthening a relationship with the listeners.
- In video #2 is the actual music video. Feel free to make the next Thriller if you'd like but if you don't have the time, know-how or budget a simple album cover or lyric video will be sufficient for now. The bottom line here is to get your song on the 2nd largest search engine on the planet.

Tip 1: For you internet savvy types, use redirects for links so you have the option to change links in the future. For instance maybe you want to send all traffic from the video to blog during the release but down the road you might change the redirect to send to an online store or a page built around that song.

Tip 2: In the video notes, even though I encourage they use Bandcamp to get the song free, I like to link to all the places they can get the song (Spotify, iTunes, etc). Not everyone wants to use Bandcamp – even if they have to pay elsewhere – and not everyone wants a download but will stream your music. This has really bumped my sales and exposure on many different platforms. For a living, breathing example of how I set up my video notes [click here](#).

Tip 3: There's a pretty cool tool that can help you get more eyeballs on your videos. It's called [TubeBuddy](#). It's a tool that helps you build up more view and more subscribers in less time than it would take to do it organically. If you do a lot of stuff on YouTube, [click here to check out TubeBuddy](#).

Distribution

Now it is time to upload songs, videos and whatever else for distribution. This should be fairly painless if you did your job in the preparation phase.

Upload Song Files

For my song files, I did use Bandcamp as my main store and for the initial launch (please note: I am migrating to [Gumroad](#) for future releases). At first I hold off on your distribution for a week or two. Why? I did this a few times to create an exclusive feel and to direct fans to downloading the song from the store I make the most money with. Plus it gave me another reason to reach out a week or two later and create a little more buzz (something like “My New Song” now on Apple Music or Spotify, Amazon, etc!”).

You don't have to do that but it is something to think about.

When it comes time to distribute music, I used CDBaby. They send it out to places like Apple Music, Spotify, Amazon, etc and for some publishing services. But they are not the only service out there.

Here a breakdown of the top distribution sites that you could use as well.

Please note that when it comes to comparing these services, it isn't always apples to apples. I will throw out a few facts for each below to get you rolling but then you can take it from there. It is a pretty mixed bag on what the better deal is and it really depends on your personal needs when it comes to licensing, publishing and distribution. Look them over good before making your final selection.

All of these digital distribution services are pretty solid and are well respected services in the industry:

- [CDBaby](#) – The service I use. They have been reliable, I have had zero

technical issues and I like their dashboard. The dashboard keeps a great record of where your music is being streamed and purchased. They also have Sync/Publishing licensing built in to track plays on YouTube and a few other site (this is pretty handy). There is a set up fee and they keep roughly 9% of some of your earnings. UPC codes will cost you extra but ISRC codes are free. One issue I have is that it seems to me that they're prices seem to keep going up and up. Used to be less than \$10 to upload a song or under \$30 for an album but now its \$12.95 and \$49. [Click here to learn more about CDBaby.](#)

- [DistroKid](#) (Preferred) – Fandalism's fairly new service gives you your first upload free and then a straight \$19.99 yearly fee for unlimited uploads. With no set-up fee they are pretty reasonable if you are going to be doing a lot of releases. I am not sure what they have for publishing services or offer in terms of codes (UPC and ISRC). I did reach out to them via Twitter and their contact form but haven't heard from them yet – been a few days (not very responsive which is a tad concerning). [Click here to learn more about DistroKid.](#)
- [SongCast](#) – Offer a monthly and yearly distribution plan with a one time set-up fee. The have free UPC and ISRC codes. You get to keep 100% of your royalties. There is monthly fee \$5.99 and a set-up fee of \$9.99 for singles and \$19.99 for albums are \$19.99. [Click here to learn more about Songcast.](#)

Those are the 4 most popular services. Note that there are others and I think Reverbnation even offers this service too so if you want to look beyond the

above, have at it.

Videos

I currently just use YouTube. In the past I've added videos to other sites like Vimeo. Just takes more time and I am only a one man operation. For now, I get enough bang for my buck on YouTube. Really depends on how much time you have and what sort of presence you will have on the other platforms.

There are also some genre specific video platforms popping up out there too so be on the look out for those.

Also, there are services out there that can streamline video distribution across many platforms. Just Google "video distribution service" and you'll get a bunch to choose from.

Once everything is live on your distribution channels, complete and publish your blog post.

Amplification

Now that everything is set up it is time to start telling your world via what I'm calling Amplification (not to be confused with those devices you use to plug your instruments into).

Mailing List

I kick off my release by sending to my biggest fans: my mailing list (this is where all your hard work building that email list really pays off). I send out one email

the day of the launch. Then, over the course of a week, I send out emails to those who didn't open the previous email. I try to send at different times of the day. For example, someone who may have missed the previous email because it came on a Monday morning might see it on Wednesday in the evening or when they are sipping coffee or popping Advil when catching up with email on Saturday morning.

This technique makes a HUGE difference and it can literally double and triple the amount of opens, clicks, plays and sales that you get. It is one of the reasons I use a premium email providers like [Aweber](#) and now [ConvertKit](#). They aren't free to start like [Mailchimp](#) BUT they have very handy tools that make it easy to do this type of Ninja Rockstar marketing (BTW, Aweber did a case study on me [Click here to read it](#)).

BTW, the coolest most bad ass thing about [ConvertKit](#), and the reason I made the switch, is they provide landing page templates. You don't even need a website and you can get a campaign running fast without having to be a technical wizard.

Bloggers, Writers and Radio

If you've been making media contacts, let them know whats up and cross your fingers that they will dig it, play it and write about it.

Social Media

Next I get out there and talk, share, kiss baby's, shake hands and whatever else. Take your blog post and videos and start bookmarking, Tweeting, sharing on Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, etc.

Tip: to get a little more bang for my buck, I have what is called an “online release party” (real clever huh?) and then create a Facebook or YouTube Live event with a short description and a link to my blog post to invite anyone I know that I think would like to hear about it.

Streaming Radio/Podcasts

There are free and paid ways to accomplish this. First, to get some free plays you could reach out to any internet stations or podcasts that played your stuff in the past.

If you had a few bucks, you could upload the song and buy plays on a site like [Jango](#).

Terrestrial (Old School) Radio

If you have any relationships with your local, college or community radio stations, by all means, let them know what is up.

Press Release

Some artists use press releases which can really ramp up the traffic but I personally have not used them because they can be costly (as in the *hundreds of dollars* costly) and I didn't have the budget at the time.

That said, there are some free press release services out there that may not be linked to the mainstream media but do get noticed by smaller blogs and news channels ([here's a nice list](#)). You could also check [Fiverr](#) because there are a bunch of people offering these services for as little as \$5.

Bonus Ideas

Here's a few outside the box but worthy ideas (props to Andrew over at TuneCity for bringing these to my attention)

Photos

When it comes to social media, photos are king. Releasing production photos (and video footage) is a great way to promote your upcoming release.

Instagram, Pinterest, your Google Business Profile and other photo-centric platforms could be quite useful.

Crowdfunding

Not applicable to every situation. But crowdfunding can draw additional attention to a music release. The funds could be used for additional distribution and promotion rather than the production of the song.

Conclusion

There ya go. Now you know how to release a single. Remember, Preparation, Distribution and Amplification. Start simple, add your own twists and constantly be improving the process and good things will happen.

Good luck! Oh, and if you have any questions about *anything* at all, feel free to [contact me](#). I'm always happy to help.

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