



MySpace's Newest Friend: The Music Industry

by
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Pepsi and MySpace have a lot in common - they are both the choice of a new generation. While this tagline may have fallen out of fashion with the Pepsi brand managers, it is certainly true (if unspoken) for the social networking site MySpace. The MySpace phenomenon is well documented; it demonstrates how Generation Y has changed the way it interacts. And yet MySpace is changing more than just the way young people communicate with each other; it is changing the music industry as well.

MySpace has been embraced by musicians (both professional and amateur) as a means for promoting their music, communicating with fans and the media, and attracting new listeners. When probing musicians for reasons as to why they set up a MySpace account, the most common answer given is to promote their music. "Gabe Rikard, a member of the Oxford, Mississippi-based band Absydom Rising, said his band uses MySpace, which is free, as an "Internet billboard" (Danello). Other acts agree, also citing the ability to post information, pictures, lyrics, and tour dates all in one place. "It makes it so easy to access your art," says Edgel Groves, a member of Sun Domingo, a band based out of Charlottesville, Va. (Danello). Even well established bands are using MySpace to communicate with their fans. Just this year, "the Smashing Pumpkins chose their official MySpace site to unveil plans for a new album...the news was disclosed via the band's friends list (currently 131,102 friends strong) on MySpace" (Mills).

Many musicians see MySpace as an inexpensive public relations manager. New bands that don't have major-label support utilize MySpace to communicate basic information to journalists, promoters, and other music industry people. "The Jade Stems' singer Kyle Scott remarked, 'If you are booking a show with a venue, you can give them one web address that contains everything they need to know about you, including what you sound like. A lot of bands can't afford their own website and MySpace provides all of that free.'" (Haines).

Using MySpace to promote music and communicate information doesn't seem that innovative. Stand-alone websites do both of these functions quite nicely, without the annoying artistic limitations encountered with the MySpace software. However, MySpace has one thing stand-alone websites do not – users – more than 60 million of them. The online community makes MySpace attractive to musicians because many of their fans are users, but more importantly, many of their *future* fans are users. Bands hope to attract new listeners by actively marketing their music on MySpace. This is especially attractive for young bands with small followings because it gives them the opportunity for broad exposure that they have not gotten in the offline world. Websites like "Electronic Musician" teach bands how to best utilize MySpace with step-by-step instructions on uploading songs, adding friends, posting comments, and promoting offline events (Vincent).

For all their benefits, music sites on MySpace have been heavily criticized by bloggers and detractors. One blogger writes, "Often a Myspace Music page sounds like a desperate plea for attention, rather than what I prefer: a professional package delivered for an enjoyable

inspection” (Open). Some musicians have been known to rely too heavily on their MySpace accounts, directing journalists there when a press kit or personal phone call would be more appropriate (Haines). And yet most agree that MySpace serves a useful purpose in today’s music industry – to promote, inform, and persuade. Julius Moriarty, guitarist for the Chicago-based Walking Bicycles, remarks that, “MySpace is important. You can’t build a career with it, but eventually, if you use it right, certain doors will open. It is one small tool in the tool belt for promotion and marketing. It’s not the end-all-be-all; it is what it is” (Haines).

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