By now you know the elements you should have on your MySpace page, website, and/or off or online press kits. Hopefully you’ve got the band and a demo together, and you’re going to play out (covered in Chapter 12). So this is a good place to cover what you probably want to do most after you record: share and sell your music. The fastest, cheapest way to do that—and with the widest reach—is online.

Before we get into it, it’s important to qualify that while the web puts the means of global distribution and publicity in the hands of you, the artist, the web is not a magic bullet for band exposure and success. It still can’t replace the kind of publicity and buzz and opportunities you’ll get by writing, practicing your instrument, making great records, playing out, and networking with real people. Bands are still better off pushing their music to fans, other bands, industry types, and press instead of tweaking their online promotional sites and tools all day in the hopes that medium will pull new listeners. It helps to think of your website(s) and the web as a medium in general as a media repository, storefront, and calling card that helps keep fans and generates new ones, but even established bands need to be active (i.e., writing, recording, and performing) and, most importantly, very, very good to drive traffic to it. (No one makes the “It all starts with you” (not the web) point better than Mark Kozelek; see the following sidebar).
Mark Kozelek is the singer/songwriter and bandleader of Red House Painters and more recently, Sun Kil Moon (SKM). He also had a stereotype-bending role as a fictional bandleader in the film adaptation of Steve Martin's novella *Shopgirl*, which also features a few actual SKM songs.

What was the best thing you did to attract label attention? (Networking with other bands/side projects? Focus on making great records? Constant touring?)

Honestly, we (Red House Painters) didn’t do any of that. When we signed to 4AD in early 1992, it caught us by surprise—I hadn’t even heard of the label or played a show outside of San Francisco. I did my own thing—purposely avoided seeing shows, because I wanted to focus on my own thing. That was what it was about, developing my own voice, my own sound. Mark Eitzel from American Music Club became a fan, and gave one of our demos to a journalist, who passed it onto Ivo at 4AD. That was the only label that paid us any attention. But the best way to attract attention is to lock yourself away, learn your instrument, write; then get out and play as much as you can.

What’s the best way to maintain creative control and make money at the same time?

(Regarding) creative control: you do what you want, focus, and don’t let others influence you. Making money? I’ve made enough to get by over the years, to pay my bills, create my own label, but I’ve never compromised in the name of making money. I’ve licensed songs to Wal-Mart, Target, various films, and tons of TV shows, but I’ve never given them anything beyond what I’ve already recorded. I do what I’m comfortable with. It’s good to push yourself, to do as much as you can, but not to the point where you have people nagging at you and telling you what to do all of the time. You just have to do what you’re comfortable with. If you can make a lot of money being yourself, that’s great.

What’s the biggest myth or lie about being famous and making music for a living?

Probably that it’s an easy life. People are misinformed. A lot of people think “How can you complain? You get to travel, meet girls, sleep in.” That’s true maybe on your first tour, promoting your first album. But there’s a discipline that’s necessary with staying in the business for a long, long time—like 12, 15, and 20 years. If anyone thinks it’s easy, then quit your desk job, make 15 albums, tour for 15 years, then give me a call and tell me about how easy it is.

What’s your proudest moment as a musician and why?

Probably getting my first record deal. There is a lot of doubt that surrounds you early on. People don’t know what to think about what you’re doing. Your friends, employer, family, and even the guys in the band have their doubts. So that first record contract is validating.
Sharing, Socializing, and Selling Your Music Online

CHAPTER 11

Now that your expectations of what the web can do for you have been qualified, let’s look at some of the better known sites and applications you’ll want to take advantage of online. Although some sites are best at one or two main things, there’s increasing overlap in terms of what certain sites can do based on partnerships and because more simply offer more “one-stop” services to the independent artist. The important things to consider are what services you want, any associated costs, the site’s traffic and, yes, overall “cool factor.”

Most bands just starting out are well served by giving their music away to friends, family and of course, fans. Social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook are great places to start because you can build online “social networks” or communities of online “friends” (a concept most teenagers on the planet are already familiar with) and share your music with them in digital music players on your profile. MySpace also lets you sell your music directly on your profile page through their Snocap widget, which lets people sample or buy your music, paying out a royalty on MP3s sold. Because MySpace is so established and dedicated to the musician in terms of its overall artist profile template, it’s probably the most obvious place for new musicians to get online and start sharing their music (and news, photos, and videos). Because Facebook started out mainly as a social networking site creating artist profiles and running them feels a bit more “auxiliary” than a more musician-dedicated portal like MySpace. That said, you can use ReverbNation’s “My band” application to create an Artist Profile tab to your profile (Search “my band” on Facebook to get started, or get started from ReverbNation, covered ahead).

Next up are sites where the focus is on connecting with fans by posting your multimedia: YouTube and imeem.com are good places to start. Imeem takes YouTube’s “have your own ‘web TV’ channel” concept a bit further by being a space more for artists to post videos, photos, and music (…not that there’s anything wrong with ‘grandpa235’s funny dog-chewing-peanut butter videos).

Another site worth mentioning for bands that are looking for a more advanced, dedicated, expanded suite of promotional services is ReverbNation.com, which describes itself rather accurately as a “marketing solution for
musicians.” If that sounds rather all-encompassing, it is: the site offers web hosting, email list management, online press kits, and provides a way to link to any on- or offline retailers or online music stores (more on these ahead) you may already be set up with from your profile page and the Store section of your TuneWidget (music retailers include the iTunes Store, Snocap, and Amazon MP3, among others).

Before we get into selling, there are a couple more avenues for promoting your music online to consider. As is the case with the other digital services and promotional tools listed earlier, there’s increasing cross-pollination and integration between online music stores, sites, players, and music recommendation engines. The advantage to getting your music in certain digital retailers and recommendation engines is that it’s possible for these engines to recommend your music to listeners based on their listening habits. Some of the better known music recommendation engines include the “Genius” feature in iTunes, Pandora.com, and LastFM.com.

Another interesting phenomenon in terms of using the web to promote your music is remixing. Remixing used to largely be more a facet of club and house music but more mainstream bands seem to be getting into the act. Basically, bands can upload elements of their song, or “stems,” for fans to remix. With the web being such an interactive medium, art itself doesn’t need to be limited to one-way “push” communications anymore—now it can be a two-way collaboration between creator and listener. We see the same thing happening with information itself on sites like wikipedia.org, where everyone can contribute to site content. At the moment it seems to be tough to say if remixing’s going to take off, but for now it may be a good thing to do as a way to involve your fans in your creativity and creative “conversation” with them. Some good sites to look into for posting your music for remixing are SpliceMusic.com, MixMatchMusic.com, and IndabaMusic.com.¹

If you’re starting to gain fans and feel you have a big enough audience to start selling your music online, some of the more established and popular online music stores or digital music services include, of course, iTunes, Amazon MP3, Napster, and Rhapsody (visit good ol’ wikipedia for a good comparison on online music stores here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_Online_music_stores). Because the online landscape

### Share, Socialize, Sell: Sites & Services to Start with

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<th>Site</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Social Networking / <em>add friends</em></th>
<th>Sell Digital Music</th>
<th>Web Hosting</th>
<th>Email List Management</th>
<th>Online Press Kit (EPK)</th>
<th>Post Multimedia</th>
<th>Manufacture CDs</th>
<th>Sell CDs Online</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>myspace.com</td>
<td>Sign up for an 'artist page.' Showcase and sell (with Snocap) your music, post photos, receive emails, design custom online ads, send mass bulletins, post your tour schedule, post video and band info like bio, news, blog and more. MySpace has essentially everything you need to maintain and grow a band presence online, and it's free.</td>
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<td>facebook.com</td>
<td>Mainly a social networking site but you can use ReverbNation’s “My Band” application to create an Artist Profile tab to your profile. (Search ‘my band’ on Facebook to get started, or get started from ReverbNation).</td>
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<tr>
<td>reverbnation.com</td>
<td>Good “one-stop shop” for indie bands looking for distribution and promotional tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>imeem.com</td>
<td>Upload photos, music, videos (not just video). More for artists and musicians than normal people.</td>
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<td>youtube.com</td>
<td>Upload videos.</td>
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<td>constantcontact.com</td>
<td>Send and track emails to your fans (You can see what links they opened, who opened and when, who subscribed/unsubscribed and more). Reasonable fee options.</td>
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<td>sonicbids.com</td>
<td>Dedicated to hosting artist “EPKs (TM),” or Electronic Press Kits. You can do just about anything with an EPK that you can do with MySpace, but it’s a bit more robust and you can easily enter contests. All this for a reasonable monthly price.</td>
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<tr>
<td>cdbaby.com</td>
<td>Initially established as a service for indie artists to sell their CDs online, it quickly also became known as a great place to go to get you on a lot of the normally-closed digital distributors like iTunes. One of the best independent music retailers because it gets you on so many other digital distribution sites while enabling you to sell physical CDs at the same time.</td>
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<td>discmakers.com</td>
<td>Established, well regarded CD manufacturer dedicated to the independent artist.</td>
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**FIGURE 11.1**

*Tip:* One of the best ways to find out about how good bands are using the web to promote and sell their music online is to sign up for their email newsletters.
changes so often, it’s not worth itemizing every site out there and what royalties you get for sales—those terms are available on the individual sites. Ultimately, you’ll want to choose the service that best meets your needs and preferences and has the best reach on any given month or year.

Now that we’ve covered some of the sites and services that’ll help promote your digital music, let’s cover…

MANUFACTURING AND SELLING CDs

If the web makes it easy for bands to share and sell, and fans to sample, buy or steal (let’s acknowledge that great white elephant in the room) online, why would you want to manufacture a CD? CDs remain handy promotional giveaways for friends, family, and industry types who for whatever reason may not spend a lot of time, if any, online. You may want to manufacture CDs that include bonus material—whether it’s bonus audio tracks, multimedia, or both—for fans. CDs are a great takeaway/impulse buy for new and existing fans after you wow a crowd with your live show. Just realize that manufacturing CDs can be expensive, and although it’s certainly a fun, great experience for any enthusiastic band to put out a CD, you’ll want to consider whether it’s a cost you want—or need—to recoup.

If one of the more reputable and established CD manufacturers is Disc Makers (and you’ll find many more here: http://cdbaby.net/picks/1.html), then probably the best known online CD retailers is CDBaby (cdbaby.com). For a small setup fee, CDBaby gives your fans a place to buy your CD online while making your tracks available to buy on a wide variety of traditional retail CD stores and digital music retailers, including cdbaby.com, iTunes Store, Rhapsody, Napster, and Amazon MP3. If you’re trying to decide whether you want to press a CD or not, there’s probably no better person to speak to surrounding questions than CDBaby founder Derek Sivers, interviewed here…

Is the CD dead?

Not yet. We’re in transition times. A lot of people have iPods. But most still don’t. A lot of people get all their music online. But most still don’t. Don’t forget the true fact that more people are killed by pigs than sharks each year. We just hear about the sharks because they’re more newsworthy. So they’re not reporting in the news that “millions are still buying CDs”—but it’s true. If you just read the news, you’d get the impression that nobody is buying CDs, just as you wouldn’t know more people are killed by pigs than sharks.
With CD and record sales in general falling, do you think recordings will continue to be a viable way for artists to make money?

Absolutely. Independent artists are selling better than ever. Maybe Mariah Carey’s sales are hurt by downloading and piracy, but indies are on a more level playing field than ever, with more access to effectively reach people than ever before.

Like any business, artists need to ensure multiple sources of income. Be a multilegged table, not a one-legged pogo stick. You can’t do only sales, or only concerts, or only licensing. You have to have as many as possible to ensure a steady foundation.

How much music should new artists give away and why?

Give give give. Get it flowing. Make it easy for fans to copy and give to friends. Get thousands of free copies swirling around the ‘net. But also have it available for sale. Some will want to just buy it. Some will hear the buzz and only buy it, because they want to support you. As time goes on, and your fame develops, have new material that is only available for sale, now that thousands are excited about what you’re doing.

What is the best advice you can give new bands in terms of how to gain new fans outside their circle of friends, or beyond their hometown?

In short, read the last couple of books by Seth Godin. He says it in better way than I could summarize in a couple of sentences here. His books are an easy, inspiring read, and you’re foolish not to spend the $15 and one offline evening giving it your full attention.

Even though the web gives a band more power to establish a presence and distribute, would it be fair to say that label support is still critical to mainstream sales and exposure? If not, why?

If by “mainstream” you mean “media star,” then yes. To sell millions and have the millions in payola for every corporate FM radio station in the world, you’ll need the shady insider dealings at the major labels. If that’s the world you want to live in, you need to sign your life over to them and understand they will be your boss and control your career.

Luckily many are choosing to just make a good living, say $100,000 a year, by performing, recording, selling, and licensing. And that you can do independently.

You can’t do it all yourself. You need a team. But you can hire the team so that you’re the boss, not them. That’s the crucial difference. That’s the definition of independent.