



THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE RESOURCES

PR tips for artists and arts organizations

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WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER HIRING A PUBLICIST?

Publicists serve as the channel between you and the media. They have great relationships with the media from dance critics and music editors to radio program producers. They work on maintaining and understating the media's needs, they meet their deadlines, give clear, informative material, "make things happen". Publicists help you get attention in the media, which can lead to more CD sales or increase ticket sales for your upcoming concert or performance, and also help you spice up your press kit so you can get more, and better, gigs.

You should do your own PR in the beginning. Initially, you probably can't afford to hire a publicist. Plus, you'll have a more realistic understanding of what to expect from a publicist in the future. Usually, artists you have never done their own PR generally believe that if they sell out Joe's Pub that SPIN Magazine should be writing a feature about your band. This is not the case! Coverage like that takes a great deal of time and work. You have to start gaining coverage at a local level in your community newspapers, your alumni magazines, online blogs, etc... Only then will you get a second glance from the national major media.

HOW COME MY PEERS GET COVERED AND I DON'T?

Either they have hired a publicist to capture the media's attention, or you're just not on the reporter's radar screen yet. Artistic merit still holds some weight in what gets covered. Some of these reporters receive 40-50 CDs a week, or 30-something press releases about upcoming concerts. Oftentimes, it's a struggle for them to get thru half of their mail. As mentioned above, coverage depends on your past press coverage and "buzz", timing, relationships, and an impressive press kit.

HOW DO I TRY TO DO MY OWN PR?

Depending on what you're promoting, i.e. cd release, concert, etc..., the process, timeline, and media contacts differ. For example, if you're hoping for Jazz Times to review your news CD, it needs to be mailed to the reporter who be most likely to appreciate your style of music (this entails a great deal of research of past reviews on your part), and even if the critic receives the CD today, s/he might not listen to it for another month or so, and even if s/he listens to it next month, the review might not appear in Jazz Times for another six months. For performances and concerts, here are a few tips and advice to follow:

- Do your research. Review your local radio programs, newspapers, tv stations, and magazines and determine which reporter would me most likely to cover your performance. In addition to contacting the music editors/critics, be sure to contact the ARTS calendar editors; they ensure your performance is listed and previewed ahead of time.
- Write a brief, simple "to the point" press release that includes the "WHO", "WHAT", "WHERE", "WHEN", "HOW" (ticket price, box office info, etc..) and telling the critic details about the show- i.e. time, location, venue, website, contact info. Also include some information about your band or group. A press release (with or without an enclosed CD) should be sent at least one month before your show date.
- Follow-up your written material with a phone call or e-mail. Don't take rejection personally. At least you started the dialogue with the reporter; it's a step in the right direction.

WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN A PRESS KIT?

Press kits do NOT need to be big and flashy and made with expensive materials. Reporters are not impressed by the presentation but instead the substance. Be sure to include both photos, either black and white or color, a one page bio, a page of quotes or reviews from past articles, copies of a few past articles, and a press release announcing what you're pitching, and include a CD if applicable. It is imperative that you have your press kit available digitally as well. More and more reporters prefer press kits to be emailed as attachment when requested. Also, be sure to have nice color photos in hi-res resolution, at least 300 dpi.

WHAT CAN I DO YEAR ROUND TO HELP MY PR EFFORTS?

Collect and copy your media coverage. Whether it's a local community feature story or an online cd review, make nice clean copies of all press coverage—both hard copies and scanned digital copies (to eventually post on your website). Ask your teachers, mentors, collaborators, etc.. to provide complementary quotes about your work; this list may be compiled into your press kit. Continue researching the media, especially the Internet. The online world of blogs, e-zines, and newsletters is constantly growing. Become familiar with your trade websites, your alumni websites, and your local blogs.