



SO YOU'RE PLANNING A CD RELEASE PARTY...

By; Kelly Warren

You would be amazed how often I get a phone call like this: *"We're almost finished mixing our songs and we have a release party booked for next weekend. How fast can we get our CDs made?"* Unfortunately this scenario happens all too often, and it's the reason why I decided to impart a few thoughts about it.

Don't book your CD release party until you've got your CDs in-hand and you've given them your stamp of approval, because having a CD release party without CDs is a disaster. Right?

If you're organized and well-prepared, the CD manufacturing process can be surprisingly quick but you have to be ready for potential delays such as graphic design issues or even data flaws in your content master. I certainly can't fault artists for being excited about unveiling their shiny new CD, but many times that excitement causes the artist to overlook important planning details.

Don't fall into the trap of thinking your CD Release Party is supposed to be the first time that anyone sees or hears your CD. Why do major record labels and movie studios promote their new releases in advance of actually releasing them? Imagine a big blockbuster production silently appearing in stores or theatres without the benefit of advertising, artist interviews, rave reviews, public appearances and press junkets. If the release isn't hyped in advance by promotion, who is going to know about it? Who is going to care? Who will be lining up to buy it? The same thinking applies to your CD release party.

Your CD is only new once so take advantage of this great opportunity to promote yourself and your music - the purpose of which is to drive loads of people towards your release party. The time you spend waiting for your CDs to be manufactured is the perfect time to create a detailed plan about what you're going to do when your discs arrive.

- Once you've got your CDs in-hand pick a release party date that gives you plenty of time for promotion (between 4 and 12 weeks is common for an indie-band) and doesn't compete with other major events in your town – because you don't need unnecessary competition stealing away your crowd.
- Write out a schedule for your event's promotional/marketing campaign. Set targets, goals and completions dates for different tasks with everything building up and hyping your big event - kind of like the election campaign prior to election day.
- "WIIFM": *What's In It For Me?* This is the philosophy to keep in mind when you're trying to attract new fans (ie: customers). Remember, the event is for the fans... not the band... so provide lots of reasons why people should be excited about attending.
- Targeting Fans: There is absolutely no point spending time, effort and money to promote yourself to people who won't like your music. Find out where your type of crowd is (on the street, on the internet, in print publications) and then saturate those areas with interesting promotions. Leave lots of reminders about your 'big show' using posters, handbills, display ads, CD artwork, band photos, banner ads, articles/reviews and interviews with local college or school newspapers, websites, entertainment magazines, regional radio and television interviews. Exhaust all potential avenues.

Please see the following page...

- Targeting Media – This takes a lot of what is called “advancing” and requires you to have your CDs in-hand. This is the most commonly missed opportunity by new recording acts.

Research local media outlets and figure out who the right people are to talk to for reviews, interviews and even personal appearances. Call them and ask permission to send them your press-kit for consideration. Be friendly and polite, and follow-up with them. Collect as many reviews/interviews as possible and constantly update your press-kit with them to make it even more impressive. Ask them if they would be available to attend your show as an MC or VIP and, if so, you can advertise this fact and gain additional credibility and reasons for fence-sitters to attend.

- Artist/Sponsor Alliances: There are local businesses who will want to take advantage of having all your fans together in one place at one time... music stores, clothing stores, skateboard shops, printers, etc. Contact them and see if they are willing to offset some of your promotional costs (like posters and hand-bills) or if they will offer some prizes or give-aways in exchange for advertising or on-site access. Even consider getting another band involved with your party to help sell-out the room and split-up the costs.

Keep in mind that the vibe at a sold-out show is 10-times more exciting than having every second chair empty, so if you do a good job creating awareness about you and your new music you should be able to create expectation, excitement and anticipation for your upcoming release party. Don't blow it with poor planning... and don't risk having your CDs show up a week after your party.

Kelly Warren is an independent musician and a Sales/Marketing representative at www.CDman.com. Contact Kelly directly at kellyw@cdman.com or call toll free 1-800-557-3347.