

A GUIDE TO THE NEW MYSPACE MUSIC

By Michael Del Rosso

So the new MySpace Music launched with the four major record labels — namely EMI, Sony BMG, Universal, and Warner Music Group — staking 40-percent equity. They will stand to reap any profits if the new music community is a success, leaving indie labels without a cut. This goes against CEO Chris DeWolfe's pledge that "Indie bands are really at the heart of MySpace."

OH NO! HAS MYSPACE FORGOTTEN THE LITTLE GUY?

From a money aspect, the outlook seems dire for indies. But this doesn't mean indie bands and musicians can't still capitalize on the new-and-improved music setup.

THE NEW FEATURES BENEFIT EVERYONE

The new and/or improved features can at least increase exposure to potential fans and allow musicians to sell songs directly.

The updated music player allows artists to put ALL their music on MySpace instead of selecting their top four tracks. The addition of a "featured playlist" bar makes this possible. A drop-down menu holds custom playlists which are set up by the artist, and can be composed of whole albums, mixes, or recently played tracks. Listeners can choose which playlist(s) to load and entire sets will appear in the music player.

Unfortunately, indie bands don't have the luxury of the "Buy" button just yet, which sits to the right of each track. MySpace has a partnership with Amazon MP3 that allows users the convenience of one-click purchasing as they sample the artist's playlist.

SELLING TUNES ON SNOCAP



Artists can earn money directly through SNOCAP MyStore on MySpace. This is a separate player — first introduced in 2006 — from the artist player. SNOCAP, though technically separate from MySpace, runs more concurrent with MySpace Music's initial indie-friendly MO.

"SNOCAP created a proprietary content identification platform

and Digital Registry to give unsigned and independent artists and labels control over the online distribution of their music," said a press release by Imeem, the company that acquired SNOCAP.

SNOCAP provides real-time management of online licensing, rights and distribution of digital music. This makes it easy for artists to sell music directly to their fans over the internet and cancels out the record companies as middlemen.

Songs are directly uploaded onto an artist's music page. Artists can redeem profits from SNOCAP once revenue has reached \$20 with a 15-percent rake. Songs are currently only allowed in MP3 format. This means no DRM protection can prevent users from distributing these songs once they've been downloaded.

What makes SNOCAP so versatile is its universal embed. Any program that supports HTML can support the SNOCAP interface. With deserved indie and now mainstream clout, MySpace is probably a good home base for the platform. Artists can put it anywhere they want on their band page.

MORE FEATURES!

The playlist feature works well with the new MyMusic page, as well. The MyMusic page allows the user to create a playlist of up to 100 songs and showcase 10 songs rather than just one on their profile. Though this is primarily more for fans than artists, from an artist's perspective, this means 10 times as many opportunities for your music to be on each and every MySpace user's page.

The improved music search engine in the MyMusic page, on which users can search by artist name, album, or song, has similar benefits. The easier interface allows for a smoother search for formerly not-so-savvy music fans. Once fans have found what they're looking for, the drag-and-drop search feature allows users to then seamlessly add their customized playlist(s) to their profiles. This improves the efficiency of getting artists' songs from the artists' music page to the fans' page. Even if the bands



Artist Album Scroll



My Music Page



Buy Button



aren't getting paid, at least they're getting heard.

Further features are a scrolling album list on the left side of the tracks list. When users drag the mouse over an album, information on that particular release appears. If they click on the album, the album's tracks populate the music player.

SELL YOUR MERCH TOO

If you're hard up for some cash and your SNOCAP sales are down, band merchandise is another way to go. A partnership with Zazzle allows MySpace artists to sell T-shirts, hats or whatever else their logo can be printed on directly through their band page. With the incorporation of a Merch Store Zazzle Widget that appears in the artist's profile, MySpace has again bypassed the middleman and allowed creators to sell directly to consumers.

Certain additions to Zazzle's merch platform are making the process of creating and selling a little easier.

"Model Realviews" "allows users to create apparel online by uploading images and designs directly upon real models," a 2007 Zazzle press release said. Real models give the consumer more options — the merchant has a wide variety of shapes and sizes to customize his or her merch — when ordering and more opportunity for the merchant to sell.



"Dark Apparel 2.0" helps out with screen printing and enables artists to upload designs with unlimited colors. These products are then made on-demand hours after they are designed on the website. Zazzle promises 24-hour turnaround for products.

"Name-Your-Royalty" finally puts the power of profit in the hands of the artist. Depending on the demand for their product(s), artists can choose from a range of 10- to 99-percent of the retail price, which can be changed any time. Real-time reporting of sales allows you to figure out just how much you may be able to earn for your band's T-shirts.

CHRIS CAVE, OPERATIONS MANAGER OF SIDEHATCH ENTERTAINMENT ON THE NEW MYSPACE MUSIC

Compared to the old MySpace interface, is the new format easier?

I wouldn't say that the new interface is easier to use, but it offers new services that are actually useful to artists. When MySpace Music launches for independent bands, it will eventually allow one-click purchasing of music through Amazon MP3, while being more streamlined than the current SNOCAP store. The real question is whether the new fees are similar to SNOCAP's \$0.39 per download. The new MySpace Music business model is based on streaming numbers and CPM (click per thousand) ad revenue. This could possibly take the place of the download fee that SNOCAP currently charges, putting more money in the artist's pocket. Advertising is a huge aspect of the new interface with pop-up ads interrupting streaming.

How is SNOCAP better or worse than other digital distribution companies?

Allowing artists to sell directly from their MySpace pages is a huge advantage. Independent artists these days use MySpace as their primary web presence and having all of these services within one site is very useful.

Is MySpace a better social networking site for music than say Facebook?

MySpace is a step ahead of Facebook. Not only is the MySpace profile more customizable than most other social networking sites, now streamlined e-commerce is being thrown in the mix. Facebook is rumored to be working on revamping their music section now that MySpace Music has launched.

Has the advanced playlist option helped musicians?

Yes! Free marketing! Fans can make their own playlists with your music, which is automatically displayed on their profiles. This free exposure for independent bands is huge! For example, friends in my network can listen, view and purchase music that I recommend from directly within my page. With the multitude of artists on MySpace, it has been increasingly difficult to find talented groups on MySpace. This feature weeds the good from the bad pretty flawlessly using public approval.