

# The DIGITAL GRAZE

The internet certainly offers opportunities for marketing and promotion, but the sheer range of options can be bewildering. MediaSnackers is here to help you pick and choose, writes Jack Holloway

**B**logs, vlogs, wikis, diggs, pokes and tweets are all phrases that have invaded our day-to-day language seemingly from some exotic, far-off planet. They are indicators of the explosion of social media, or user-generated online material, which has taken place within the last decade. With approximately 10% of the world's population now connected, and over half of the UK online, the internet is swiftly becoming the medium of choice for musicians seeking to promote themselves to a global audience. But inevitably, in a time of such quickly-evolving technology, it is easy to get left behind.

Enter MediaSnackers, an organisation set up in 2006 whose founders have established themselves as the 'go-to guys for companies and organisations who want to understand & effectively use social media'. The impressive list of people that they have done masterclasses, keynote speeches, training and consulting work for includes the BBC, Channel 4, BT and most recently the Association of British Orchestras. In short, if anyone knows how you can make the most of social media to get your orchestra, ensemble or even just yourself into the global online community, it is MediaSnackers founder DK. (The DK is his initials, which became a nickname and then 'it just stuck'.)

'Social media enables everyone to have a global voice instantly,' he says. 'It creates fantastic opportunities to communicate your stories, music, ideas, events etc, mostly for free as well.' The question that begs asking is will younger generations of music fans, being more accustomed to hearing rock bands and hip-hop outfits on social networking sites than symphony orchestras, really accept classical organisations and musicians into their online world? 'If you are transparent and authentic in your offerings then there are no reasons why you shouldn't try these sites. Failing that you can always start your own

social network by using Ning.com – I did a quick Google search and found several online communities of interest. It's that simple.'

Given DK's extensive knowledge, I asked him for his top five tips for those in the music world that are new to using social media:

- 1 Simply *start* using social media: sign up to a couple of popular platforms, click around and explore the functionality and potential of them.
- 2 Focus on the process not the product: build relationships by engaging your audience in the stories 'behind-the-scenes' or 'as-it-happens', not simply the end product of 'come-see-this-concert'.
- 3 Outcomes not output: why do you need that Facebook page / Twitter profile / YouTube channel? What are you hoping to achieve? Which leads us on to...
- 4 Monitor and evaluate: 30% of all the website traffic to mediasnackers.com comes through our Twitter stream. Where is yours coming from? If you don't know what success looks like you won't know when you achieve it.
- 5 Have fun: seriously!



Although the mercurial nature of social media means that the big website of today might be the butt of next week's jokes, there are a few sites worth highlighting because of their enduring popularity and usefulness to the enterprising self-publicist. Wordpress and Blogger are both blog (or weblog) sites where you can create your own online journals, logging your latest news and experiences along with videos, photos and audio files for the world to see. Some music organisations even have a photo blog online using sites like Flickr or Photobucket; a picture, after all, is worth a thousand words. Along the same lines but for video and audio is YouTube, where users can upload their own video clips and even create their own online 'channels' of clips, as well as the various podcast-hosting sites, such as Ourmedia, which allow you to upload pre-recorded video and audio broadcasts for anyone to see/hear.

It is worth mentioning that all of these tools could easily be used to put across what DK describes as 'behind-the-scenes' details: 'Post-show, pre-show, during-the-show – explore ways to augment and positively embellish what you are already doing (not replace it). We call them "digital takeaways" – the idea that people, young and old, are walking away from the experience with something other than a memory – enabling people to tell your story to others which you would never have reached.'

Perhaps the most well-known of the social media websites are the social-networking sites, whose aims are to create online communities which link people together according to their personal interests and backgrounds. The two biggest of these are MySpace and Facebook, which, with their features such as mailing lists, update alerts, as well as similar photo, video and audio tools to the aforementioned sites, are already being widely used by musicians to get concert dates, photos and info about themselves out to fans. Aside from these, Twitter, which is similar to a blog but with a remit that you can only post entries or 'tweets' of up to 140 characters long, and Ning.com, which allows you to create your own social networks from scratch, also have massive potential for people wanting to raise their profile online.

As with all forms of media, one issue worth bearing in mind when spreading your name across the world wide web is that of over-exposure. 'One of the main pitfalls is thinking social media is just broadcast. Be considerate of your audiences and don't bombard them with messages.' Growing pains aside though, the future is looking distinctly bright for those musicians willing to embrace the online social media revolution. 'No industry has stayed the same over time,' says DK. 'To constantly try and focus on maintaining the status quo is exhausting and counter-intuitive. It's incredibly refreshing to know things will change and we'll be doing things differently in the next couple of years. I know I will!'



'Social media enables everyone to have a global voice instantly' – DK





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