



Song, by Toad

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Really Basic and in No Way Authoritative Guide to Releasing an Album

For Startup Labels and Bands Who Want to Self-Release

1. Introduction

First things first - I am a beginner too.

Please remember this. I run a tiny record label and am not very experienced, so please for the love of God don't take this too seriously, and do get advice from other people beforehand. Qualified people who know what they're talking about would be good. And the best of luck to you.

What this document is, and what it isn't.

What I am hoping to write here is a simple and fairly brief guide to the actual process of releasing a record, along with a couple of checklists to make sure you can be relatively organised, at least the first time out, after which you should try and refine these suggestions based on your own experience.

As implied above, this isn't supposed to be definitive or exhaustive, but I've been asked for a bit help on a few occasions now, and I thought a basic starting point might be some use for people.

The biggest, most important tip:

In one sentence: be really, really organised, really, really rigorous and have a shitload of stamina. Almost everything I am going to suggest you do here is going to be boring as hell, and often downright demoralising because, statistically speaking, most people you try and contact won't give a shit. Following this kind of process does seem to massively increase the chances of getting somewhere though, so the determination to plough on through the boring and demoralising aspects is all important.

By organised I generally mean to be prepared in advance and, particularly, to be coordinated. If you are

reading this I assume you don't have a lot of resources, and if you don't have a lot of resources then by far the best way to succeed with a release is by generating word-of-mouth publicity. Word-of-mouth publicity tends to work by the mechanism of peer pressure. If one random blogger mentions your album, the chances are people will ignore it. But if, in the space of a few weeks, a few pals and a couple of bloggers mention it and then they hear a song on the radio, the chances of them following up on the recommendation are massively increased. So you don't have to be militaristic about it, but being really well-coordinated in your PR effort makes a really big difference.

The music industry is so full of flakes, chancers and people who could talk a great game but deliver nothing, that if you work hard, you are organised, and you keep plugging away you will automatically have a big advantage over most people. Almost no-one is prepared for the slog and the drudgery of trying to make a breakthrough in music, and most people give up after a couple of years. If you want to get anywhere, don't be one of those people.

Finally, NEVER judge yourself by other people's standards.

How many times do you find yourself looking at other people's music collection and thinking 'fucking hell, that's shit'? Remember this, because as people start rejecting you, you will probably start taking their opinion far more seriously than you need to.

Certain types of music do better in certain media than others. Upbeat pop songs do much better on radio, so if you write downbeat stuff, don't worry about getting fewer radio plays, it's inevitable. Also, if you think the NME writes about shit music, don't get fed up if they don't cover your album, you just have different taste.

Statistically speaking you are unlikely to ever make a living out of this – you are unlikely to even make a profit, depending on how you budget – so you are writing, recording and playing to make yourself and your fans happy. If some random writer or blogger or even the world at large doesn't like your stuff, then balls to 'em, they aren't who you're making it for.

2. Pre-release Checklist: Before You Even Start

The whole PR process takes about four months, but before you even start you will need the following things:

1. **A finished album.** Not nearly finished, absolutely, definitively finished. This means recorded, mixed, sequenced and mastered. I am just talking about releasing an album here, not making one, so I am not going to give you any advice on actually making your album, or how to budget for it. I am going to assume you have done this bit already – and it should be done before you even start any of this stuff.
2. **An album artwork concept.** It doesn't need to be fully laid out in the right format and all that jazz, but you need to know what you want to do. You also need to know in what format you wish to release – digital only, CD and digital, tape or vinyl with a download code, or some combination of these. To help decide, try having a look at some of these places for pricing and stuff like that (an asterisk means we have used these guys and they were good).

DIY Options:

<http://www.stumptownprinters.com/> *

<http://www.groovehouse.com/shop> *

<http://www.acdsleeve.com/products> (not really DIY, but the aesthetic is similar)

<http://www.getagripstudio.com/flatstock.html>

Full Service Options:

<http://www.euro-disc.co.uk/> *

<http://www.discmanufacturingservices.com/> *

http://www.hdc.uk.com/cd_packaging.shtml

<http://www.recordindustry.com/vinyl/samples-packaging>

3. **Promotional photos.** You need to have about half a dozen pics, in high resolution. A couple of these pictures should be of the band (beware football team-style lineups, I am told), and at least one should be a closeup of the lead singer's face, preferably in the act of singing.
4. **Select your two 'singles'.** These songs will probably be given away as promotional mp3s and so on, to try and get people excited. They don't have to be the pop hits necessarily, but do beware that these are the songs which will get the most listens, and often they will be the only ones which get listened to.

Also be aware of the fact that most people who listen to your music will give you no more than about twenty seconds, if that. So select something which gets to the point pretty quickly, and generally I would recommend something fairly representative of the album as a whole. If you do have a pop hit, of course, by all means pick that one.

5. **Videos.** These are the days of Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook. One good video, preferably of one of your two singles, can get you a lot of traction in the world of blogs, online magazines and, most importantly, social media. You can get away with a live video, just make sure the sound is good, and that the whole thing is worth actually watching. The BBC has a really good guide to doing this kind of thing yourself here:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/introducing/2010/12/making_a_music_video_part_1.shtml

6. For the promotional copies for press, you'll need the following:

- **Blurb.** It saddens me the number of times I see bloggers in particular just copy and paste whatever old shit I write in a press release (and I am a blogger myself, first and foremost), but they do, so you'd better write one and it had better be done sensibly. Don't be cocky and try the hard sell, don't apologise for yourself and don't try too hard. Simply write down who you are, a bit about the band and what you are trying to achieve and leave it there. Quirky details are great, but don't force it if they aren't there, just be concise, to the point, and not laboured. This is going to be really hard to do, and I recommend you get help from someone who can write, and who has little to do with the band.
- **Press quotes.** Whatever you've got. Good quotes are good, and reputable sources also seem to make a huge difference, but just work with what you have. A friend of mine had his music described as “snobby, art school jazz pish” by the NME, so he used that. A whole pile of quotes describing your music as just plain awful isn't ideal, but if it's all you've got, you never know, it might actually pique enough interest to be worth chancing. They don't need to be all that long, either, just one good phrase or sentence per quote, and if you don't have a lot of quotes just use what you have and don't try and fluff them up unnecessarily.
- **Biography of the band.** This can be quite basic, and can even be integrated into the blurb if you want, but it is worth noting that whoever you send this stuff to will probably want to know who is actually in the band and a bit about either you or the genesis of the group.

7. **A press list.** Or as good a one as you can manage. You can do this as you go along, but certain things, like finding a list of bloggers and podcasters and so on, can take absolutely ages, so I would recommend sorting it out before you even begin. If you're using someone else's press list you get in touch before bombarding people with stuff. Just a polite email introducing yourself, telling them where you got their email and asking if they would be interested in receiving a copy of your album. If they say no, then respect that.

I'll get more into the ins and outs of the press when I describe how and when to actually contact them later, but I really recommend you start your list well before you have to contact anyone, because waiting for replies can take ages and might throw your whole schedule out of whack.

8. **A mailing list.** Get a signup sheet out at your gigs, add your pals, and start one asap. Try <http://www.mailchimp.com/> or <http://www.fanbridge.com/> if you want, but just a plain old Google Mail address book is pretty servicable.

Now, it may sound ridiculous, but I think you will need all of these things before you even start. If you don't get all of this sorted out, then you will be forever playing catch up. Song, by Toad Records has released music people have loved and music people have ignored, but without fail the PR campaigns which have generated the best results have been the most organised ones.

There will be more than enough chaos to knock you off the rails once you get going, so I strongly recommend you start with everything as complete and ready and under control as possible.

Done? Good, now you're ready to pick a release date!

3. The Promo Process: Four Months at Minimum

For the purposes of this, I am going to divide the promotional process up into two main chunks: a one-month preparatory period, and a three month release prep period. Whilst still in the former there is still some wriggle room, but once the latter has commenced you really are committed, so have a really good look at what I am suggesting you do in that first month and make sure you think a month is actually enough. If you need longer, take longer, because doing it well is more important than doing it quickly.

3.1 The Promo Prep Month

White-label promo copies.

A white-label promo copy is what you send to radio and print press for them to review your album. Tom Robinson has a really good guide to putting a white-label together on his website here: http://freshonthenet.co.uk/?page_id=68

As you can see from that article, many of these are not 'white' labels any more, and if you want something a bit smarter, most labels who submit albums to Song, by Toad for review are now sending me their promo copies in colour printed card sleeves with the full album artwork, such as those supplied in the “*CDs in Cardwallets*” bit on this page:

<http://www.discmanufacturingservices.com/cd-prices.htm#extras>

Whatever kind of sleeve it comes in, the CD itself still has a functional black and white design containing all the relevant release data, because often *everything* bar the actual CD gets thrown away. It should still have the wee sticker thing on the front with a couple of good quotes and your recommended songs, and be accompanied by a promo one-sheet.

And it needs to look professional – no handwritten CD-Rs or anything like that – or a lot of the shinier publications will lob it straight in the bin. Personally I think this is bollocks, and have found a lot of my favourite music from the most half-arsed press releases, but remember that a glossy magazine or commercial radio show is a product itself first and foremost. Genuine interest in artistic merit is a distant second to their need to regularly present a nice, consistent product to their audience, so unless you look as professional as they need to be then you've no chance. This may sound mercenary, but if they didn't do this, they'd be out of business really, really fast.

To make these promo copies you will need to set some things in stone like the release date, which needs to be printed on the CD, the promo sticker and the one-sheet. Once this date is set, there is no hiding from it, so you'd better be confident that you can actually hit that date.

If you are on a tight budget just go to somewhere like here: <http://www.datacatch.co.uk/> and ask for fifty CD-Rs in plastic sleeves. Then photocopy the one-sheets and the inserts, get the stickers printed somewhere like here: <http://www.selfadhesivelabels.com/> or just buy specialist label sheets for your own printer if you have one, and assemble it all yourself.

You can get by with no more than fifty physical promo copies if you have to. In fact you can do entirely digital promotion if you want, but it means you'll probably have to give up on magazines and major

radio play, unless you have good contacts with freelancers or people working on production teams at radio stations.

Alternatively, if you have a bit more cash and have prepared a big press-list, get a couple of hundred in nice, colour card sleeves. Anyhow, whichever way you choose to do it, by the end of this month you will need a nice, neat stack of promo copies, ready to be idly tossed into dustbins, sold on eBay and leaked onto the internet by ethically scrupulous journalists around the country.

Upload your digital promo materials.

Somewhere on your band website (and if you don't have one, get one, now – try <http://wordpress.com> if you're really stuck) you really need a press or info page containing the following things:

- A high res version of the album artwork (called a packshot) so that anyone who decides to review your album can access it easily.
- A downloadable zip file of your press photos, maybe with one or two actually displayed on the page so people can see what they're getting.
- Most of the information from your one-sheet, like release date, a bit of a band bio and so on.
- Your free promo mp3(s) and the video(s) you intend to use to promote the album can be uploaded now and set as private, but you can always do this later on – more of this in the three-month release prep period.

Digital distribution.

Nowadays you don't need a professional distributor to get your stuff on everything from Amazon mp3, to iTunes, to Spotify. Whatever your scruples about the devalued nature of digital music, the relatively low cost of listing on these services means that any cash you generate is pretty much just free money, and I strongly recommend you make your music as widely available online as you can. Places like iTunes are the default first stop for many music purchasers, and you want to give your fans every opportunity to give you money that you can find.

There are loads of places that will get your music into digital stores for you. We use Tunecore, and they've been really good so far, but there are plenty of others:

<http://www.tunecore.com/>

<http://www.emubands.com/>

<http://www.awal.com/>

<http://www.cdbaby.com/> (these guys will sell physical CDs for you too, if you can't be arsed doing it yourself).

You can set your release date when you upload your album, but it takes quite a while for them to process and distribute it, so now is the time to upload your music to whichever of these services you choose to use.

Manufacture.

You'd be absolutely bloody amazed what can go wrong with the manufacture of CDs and vinyl, and by Sod's Law, the finer you cut it, the more the whole process seems to find new ways to go tits up.

If you decided in what format you wanted to release and got your basic artwork concept together before this month even started, which you should have, then now you should be arranging quotations, deciding on a manufacturer, ordering your raw materials if you're doing a DIY release, and laying out

your artwork into the final templates so that at the end of this month you are ready to say 'go' to whoever is actually making the album for you.

By the end of this period you'll need fully laid out and approved artwork, a full quote from the chosen manufacturer and an audio master CD of your finished album to post out to them.

So, before the final push you need to be sure that:

- Your promo copies are complete and ready for posting.
- Your digital distribution is ready and set for the chosen release date.
- Manufacture of the actual album has been initiated.
- Your promo material is all uploaded and readily available for any press people who want it.

3.2 Three-month Release Prep Period

By the time this part starts, you should have absolutely everything ready to go for your album launch. I'll leave booking a launch party up to you, but it's worth doing. You might also want to consider getting really nice posters or t-shirts made, because at this level a lot of people who want to support you really do want to go the whole hog and buy everything they can. They aren't all that cheap, but these guys do really nice, short run, screen-printed posters and t-shirts, assuming you have the money to spare to get them made:

<http://www.getagripstudio.com/index.html>

<http://www.idressmyself.co.uk/>

Before you send press material off to anyone, be they the most high profile magazine or lowly blogger, always bear this in mind: it doesn't matter how influential they are, if they tend to be into different stuff, there's little point getting in touch. I would 'like' to have the records we release covered on Radio1 and in the NME, just because they are two of the biggest outlets going, but they really don't cover the kind of music we release, so I don't bother too much about trying to get through to them.

3 months in advance: national glossies and the broadsheets:

Firstly, yes, it needs the entire three months. If you think about it, it will take about a month to print and distribute a magazine, a month to edit and lay it out, and a month for people to open your letter, listen to your music and decide if they want to review it. So do not ignore this time frame, because it really is necessary.

Now, as a caveat, I have to confess that I have not been the most successful at getting our bands reviewed by the national glossies, so I am probably not the right person to ask about this, but I will tell you what I know, and hopefully it will be better than nothing.

As far as I can tell, the best way for a relatively low-profile band to get reviewed in a national glossy or broadsheet is to have a freelancer onside who loves your stuff and pesters their editor to let them review it. This is actually the same for places like Drowned in Sound and Pitchfork as well, and is a nightmare for a new label or less well-connected band. Nevertheless, getting a couple of good freelancers onside is a very valuable thing, because they often write for a few publications, so if they can't get you the NME they might get you something else good if you're lucky.

If you don't know these guys, there is no easy way to do it, I don't think: you have to buy a few copies of each magazine, find the writers who write reviews you broadly agree with in each publication and try and track down contact details on the internet.

This is, frankly, a bit stalky, but if you're nice about it most professional writers have blogs or Twitter accounts these days, so you can email them, telling them why you're getting in touch and asking if they would be interested in reviewing your album. Be brief, and plain – probably best to include a link to somewhere (Bandcamp or Soundcloud would be ideal, or one or two of your promo mp3s discussed earlier) where they can listen to music immediately. Don't oversell, don't apologise and don't try and be clever, then if they ask for it post them a copy of the white label, as above. And above all, *do* graciously take no for an answer.

If you don't have the gumption for the above hassle, and if I am being honest then I must confess that I personally do not, then you are left with the Spray and Pray technique of just posting things to the reviews editor and hoping for the best. For monthly magazines, like Mojo, Uncut, Word, simply post a package to the reviews editor with enough copies and a nice letter including a list of the people you think will enjoy the album – or so I heard from the assistant editor of Uncut, anyway.

Magazines like the NME have dedicated new music people listed on their website, so where possible, address copies to these people. There are other, more selective magazines, like Filter and Wire and so on, and I do still send things to these guys but I have thus far had no success from doing so.

Broadsheets like The Times and The Guardian have really good online music coverage, and I think it's always worth sending stuff to these guys. More specialist publications like Artrocker and The Stool Pigeon, and more locally focused ones like The Skinny for those of us up in Scotland, are probably your best bet though.

Just as a warning, you can burn through a lot of valuable promo copies and many hours of your life courting reviews in these magazines, but I have to say that I think that *a*) they are extremely unlikely to materialise, particularly if you are doing your own PR, and *b*) whilst these reviews are great for your ego if and when they do appear, and assuming they're at least vaguely positive, I honestly think you can get much better value for your time by focusing your energies elsewhere. So send stuff out to them – not to do so would be a bit negligent – but I wouldn't worry too much about the results, and I wouldn't neglect other avenues to pursue the glossy magazines, either.

6 weeks in advance:

Copies to online magazines like SoundsXP, Music OMH, The 405, The Line of Best Fit, Drowned in Sound, God is in the TV and so on.

Deciding what is an online magazine and what is just a posh blog is a bit of a random task, but you can usually tell from a quick look at their submissions procedure how big they are. The bigger they are, the longer it will take a review to be assigned, written and posted, which is why I tend to allocate the bigger sites six weeks. Again, with places like DiS and so on, knowing a freelancer or two is often the best way, but we've had some good writeups from all the above websites in the past, just from posting a white-label to the address they give.

A lot of online magazines prefer digital submissions these days. This is good for small labels and self-releases of course, because it's cheap, and this is where all that uploaded promo material comes in. A digital submission is something it is worth having in a text document somewhere so you can copy and paste the bulk of it into an email easily, because there will be a lot of links and it is tedious as hell to write out from scratch every time.

A digital submission should include:

- basic data, like band name, album title, release date, format, stuff like that.
- a one-paragraph introduction which is simple, not full of sales shit, and gives a vague idea of what genre music you make, so they know roughly what to expect.
- a link to your website or online profile.
- a link to a zip file, hosted either on your own ftp site or somewhere like <https://www.yousendit.com/> or <http://www.mediafire.com/> which contains:
 - a copy of the full album in high quality mp3s,
 - a pdf of your one-sheet,
 - and a high-res image of the album artwork.
- a direct link to your <http://bandcamp.com/> or <http://soundcloud.com/> page where they can immediately listen to music – direct links to downloadable mp3s are also very good.
- a link to any videos, as mentioned earlier.
- a link to somewhere the album can be purchased is also helpful.

Make pre-orders available around this time – all you have to do is use a simple Paypal link or your Bandcamp page. The rationale is this. Print press will take ages to do anything, of this you can be certain. Online magazines, however, vary wildly in their turnover from submission to posting, so from the minute you start submitting material to them, you might start seeing reviews pretty much immediately.

The internet has a massively short attention span, and you only spend a day, at most, at the top of someone's RSS feed, blog page, Twitter feed or whatever it might be. You need people who read these reviews to be able to act on them immediately, or that impulse may well be lost. In the old days, when people had to go to a shop and remember to buy what they'd read about the previous weekend, a certain disconnect was inevitable, but now if you expect people to read about your album and then remember to buy it at some later date then, unless you are very famous, I think you will be sadly mistaken. You need to maximise your opportunities for impulse purchases, so as soon as anyone 'might' write about the album, it needs to be available to pre-order, if just to keep potential fans away from the torrent sites.

The other benefit of pre-orders is of course that you start generating revenue as early as possible. With one album on Song, by Toad Records we sold so many pre-orders that we paid for the PR, the white-labels and the first pressing of the album before it had even been released. That might be a rare thing, but even selling ten copies can generate a hundred quid, which could potentially be the entire cost of your PR effort, or maybe a slush fund to get some lovely posters printed.

4 weeks in advance:

Copies to radio stations. You can spread this out a bit if you are doing singles, but that's a different story. You'll need to make white-labels up of the singles themselves, over and above the ones for the album, and send them into radio stations and out to bloggers at staggered intervals before the release of

the album. As you get to know radio producers for all the relevant shows you might be able to do this entirely by email, but that might take a while. It's a good idea, but going into it in any depth here would make this even longer and more boring, so I won't bother for now. You get the drift, I'm sure.

Tom Robinson says to give it six weeks here http://freshonthenet.co.uk/?page_id=68 but every time I have sent anything to the BBC to play, they have either played it within a couple of weeks or not at all. Again, you don't want to shoot your bolt too early, so I tend to aim for within a month of release.

Basically, go through all the BBC radio stations and find the presenters you like the best – pick as many as you like, but remember to include the ones who make a big deal out of finding new music, like Vic Galloway and Ally McRae here in Scotland and, more broadly, Tom Robinson, Huw Stephens, Gideon Coe, Rob DaBank and Marc Riley, just to start with.

Then phone up the BBC themselves and try and get to speak to the producers of these shows – the switchboard should tell you who they are – and ask about sending material through, and to whom you should address it. Then post a white-label copy to the presenter themselves, the producer, and anyone else they suggest. On most of the shows we've had success with I've just addressed an envelope to, say, 'Music Submissions, Gideon Coe, BBC 6 Music etc etc.' and it seems to work. If you are a label with relatively distinctive stationery, like our wee toad logo, people will recognise your stuff after a while. With bands, you aren't releasing music as regularly as a label, and producers tend to pick the vast majority of music which goes on their shows, so I'd recommend trying to phone if you can.

BBC Introducing shows now focus largely on online submissions, which is something you can do here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/introducing/uploader/>

For anyone other than the BBC, the procedure is much the same as that for online music magazines: track them down on the internet, check their submissions policy, and post them a white-label, or email something through. Try this list: <http://www.mediauk.com/radio> and this one: <http://www.listenlive.eu/uk.html>

Local community radio stations are great, as are university radio stations, and any online ones you can find. With these, however, it's usually best to find a specific show you like, and get in touch with them directly, as there is often no centralised music manager for these stations (less so with student radio).

4 weeks in advance:

Social media. This is where you have to get a bit spammy. From about four weeks ahead of your album release date (roughly – the timing isn't so crucial with this stuff), and potentially to coincide with the promotion of an album launch party or an album launch tour, you should start leaking material out into social media circles. People get tired of this stuff quickly, so don't overdo it and don't start too soon. Just keep it brief, don't harp on too much if people aren't passing it around and don't annoy people – generally I reckon just play it by ear though.

If you use something which will embed and play direct from your Facebook feed, like Bandcamp or Soundcloud, then you and all your bandmates and boy/girlfriends who fancy helping out can post/share/retweet the thing and try and get it out to their friends. Don't push this stuff too hard, or you'll put people off, but it's certainly very much worth doing. It's also worth posting links to any good reviews you get to your various feeds and pages with a simple 'Wow, thanks, what a nice writeup' or something like that – it just helps get people interested if you don't overdo it.

Roughly speaking, I reckon if you release the first mp3 with a month to go, a video with two weeks to go and a second mp3 on the day of release then that should just about do it. Now is the time to email your mailing list too. There's no exact science to it, but I reckon you can get away with hitting up social media more frequently than you can get away with bothering your mailing list, so maybe one email to say 'hey, here's a free mp3 and a video from our new album' a few weeks in advance and another to say 'hey our album's out, and here's another mp3 because we're so nice'. Although I'd be more circumspect if you're a label and will therefore be sending more of these things.

2 or 3 weeks in advance:

Bloggers. I think there are two ways to do this. You can do what I do for Song, by Toad Records, and create a massive mailing list and send them friendly spam with lots of free music whenever we release something. I use the basic digital submission email I mentioned earlier, and we get pretty good results, but it can be a little impersonal. Alternatively, it might be more suitable for a band who only does this once a year or so to email all the bloggers individually with a 'one-click to music' link, a link to your website and a friendly but short sentence or two about why you're getting in touch with them and an invitation to download the album for free.

It's worth bearing in mind that every blogger is a bit different, and no matter how careful you are with how you approach bloggers (and, I suppose, all press people), someone will always think you are a total idiot and are doing it completely wrong and so on and so forth. No matter what you do, someone will think this, so I wouldn't worry about it too much. As long as you are polite, brief and make it really easy for people to get access to your music you should be fine.

Finding bloggers is probably easiest done by trawling aggregators, finding blogs who post music you like, and looking up their submissions procedure. This is a long, slow, tedious job and best commenced well in advance of actually needing the list, but the results can be excellent. Here are some aggregators to poke around – search for bands you like, click through to the blog post and poke around the blog itself:

<http://hypem.com/>

<http://elbo.ws/>

<http://shuffler.fm/>

<http://wearehunted.com/>

Another way to track down good blogs is by looking at the blogrolls of blogs you already know and like.

Podcasters. I am still unsure as to the best way to track down decent music podcasts, honestly. UK company <http://www.mixcloud.com/> has a really good selection, of online radio shows which is well worth investigating, but apart from that I am clutching at straws a little.

There are searchable directories on places like Podbean, here: <http://www.podbean.com/podcasts?s=hit&c=music&t=month&p=1> and <http://www.blubrry.com/> but I've never had much luck using these things, truth be told. In terms of timing and approach I would probably recommend treating a podcast much like a blog.

Day of release:

Oh, I dunno. Say something on Facebook, tweet it, announce in on your blog, then fuck off down the pub and get pissed I think. And be glad you don't have to go through all this crap for at least another year or so.

4. A Couple of Final Points

As I said at the beginning, the best way to make all the above work for you is to be incredibly thorough and incredibly organised. Don't worry too much about the results though, because longevity is more important in the music industry than making a massive splash with your first record.

Also, the results we've been getting with social media – sharing videos and song streams on Facebook and Twitter and so on – have really increased recently, so if you manage that stuff properly it might end up being irrelevant what the press think, at least at a DIY level anyway.

And finally, nothing you can ever do with your PR effort can ever make up for playing as well and as often as possible. Neither a label, nor a manager, nor a PR company can make a band famous – that is something only the band themselves can do.

About me:

My name is Matthew Young, and I am not an expert on the music industry by any stretch of the imagination. I write a blog and I have a very small DIY label, and that's about it. Both are underground, small time concerns, but I like them a lot and try to make them as good as possible.

Song, by Toad

My music blog, where I blether on about all things music

Song, by Toad Records

We aren't EMI. We're not even Fence. But we try.