

These days, in order to grow a profile for your music you have to get the online media onboard first in order for the rest of the world to follow. The key is an attention-grabbing Electronic Press Kit. **By Craig Hayes**

THE PERFECT KIT

- ✓ ALBUM ARTWORK OR BAND PHOTO (SCALED DOWN AND EMBEDDED)
- ✓ ARTIST NAME, RELEASE TITLE, LABEL, RELEASE DATE
- ✓ FORMAT (CD, DIGITAL DOWNLOAD, VINYL WITH GATEFOLD ART)
- ✓ CATALOGUE NUMBER, IF YOU HAVE ONE (I.E HEADLESS HORSEMAN HH005)
- ✓ CONTACT DETAILS AND SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS (EMAIL, FACEBOOK)
- ✓ SNAPPY BIO INCLUDING MUSICAL INFLUENCES/VISION & BAND MEMBERS LISTED
- ✓ LINKS TO MUSIC (SOUNDCLOUD, BANDCAMP, REVERBNATION), PREFERABLY EMBEDDABLE OR LINKING TO A FREE DOWNLOAD. WEBSITES LOVE FREE DOWNLOADS.

How To Create the Perfect Electronic Press Kit

[and why they're important]

The world is teeming with bands shouting for attention from online media, and many of them are wielding professional public relations loudhailers too. However, there's a publicity tool that can raise the volume of your voice in that crowd, and all it's going to cost you is a little imaginative elbow grease, and a few hours of your time.

An electronic press kit (EPK) can be as crucial to your band getting heard as any stack of amps. An EPK contains items like release artwork, band photos, and a one-sheet biography, with all your contact details and various site links included. It's a highly effective way of communicating everything the online (and offline) media need to know about your band, in one easily accessible format.

Why is that important?

Well, online media are inundated with bands battering down their doors, and an EPK is a media-friendly, time-saving device that signals you're serious about your music. An EPK means the media don't have to collect information about your music from a raft of different sources. That's going to count in your favour, and it also means your

music has a greater chance of being represented more accurately because your explanations about your music are right there in *your* EPK.

The most important element in any EPK is the one-sheet biography. It's one page of text, capturing the essence of your band and the nature of any release you're promoting. It's your opportunity to explain who you are, and why the media *need* to investigate your music.

However, writing a succinct EPK biography can be difficult, so here are a few simple pointers.

Think **animated**, **abridged**, and **awesome**. Remember that the media are busy people, so listing every member that's ever passed through the ranks and every Battle of the Bands placing isn't important. Explaining what's happening right now is. Also, be sure to mention your artistic inspirations, so no one has to take a wild guess at your vision or influences.

Make your one-sheet look good. Add your artwork, and/or a band photo. Simple tweaks help too, like bolding your band's **name**, and bolding your

release **title**. If possible, include a few snappy quotes in your one-sheet. Be creative with your writing, but don't over-complicate things with monotonous detail or overly flamboyant prose. Be honest. If a DIY/underground ethos is important for your band, make that explicitly clear. If you're aiming for chart-topping glory, don't be afraid of highlighting that. Keep in mind that cultural interpretations differ, so think about the language you're using, and what your EPK might say about you to someone on the other side of the world.

Most importantly of all, before you send your EPK to any media outlet, get some feedback so you know how it looks and reads to others, and *listen to that advice*.

Some people find it difficult to write about their own music. No problem. Get someone else to construct your EPK. Collaborating with others often reveals insights about your band.

When your EPK is finished, and you've checked and rechecked the grammar and spelling, then you're set for the all-important next step: contacting online media.

There's one rule of thumb before you send any emails to anyone: *do your research*. Don't waste your time or energy contacting everyone; target media outlets or specific writers that you know cover music like yours. Make a list, and when you're set to email your picks, keep it punchy, personable, and stick to the point.

Some of the websites and blogs that are open to receiving music from new or unknown artists, and indeed pride themselves on discovering them, include: Pitchfork, Tiny Mix Tapes, The Line of Best Fit, Pop Justice, Consequence of Sound, Drowned in Sound, PopMatters, The Quietus, Stereogum, The Burning Ear, Aquarium Drunkard, Gorilla Vs Bear, Brooklyn Vegan, Noisy, Cheese On Toast and UnderTheRadar.

You don't need to fill your email with screeds of information, because your EPK will be attached. Music writers receive untold emails from bands every day, and believe me, we're more likely to follow up on bands that can concisely summarise why they're emailing.

You've only got a brief moment to

hook a media representative's interest, so don't waste words pleading or grovelling. Be proud of who you are, tell us about your sound and aesthetic, and why it's imperative that we talk about your music. Remember, for many overseas writers, New Zealand is exotic. Internationally, we're known for being quite musically authentic, and for being risk-takers that aren't afraid to experiment. Maximise the benefits of your roots here. When it comes to marketing yourself to the world, forget about 'cultural cringe' and Tall Poppy Syndrome and just go for it.

To summarise, think of it like this – if you worked at a music website and needed to post a news item about a band's album release, what resources would you need? Because there's every chance a website might do this without even replying to your email to say they like your music. Content editors absolutely love it when their job is made easier for them.

Don't panic if it takes time to hear back from anyone; the media are swamped in press releases. The reality is that you'll hear back from fewer sites than you'd like. But keep trying. And note that publishing on larger websites is

often scheduled in advance, so plan ahead, and email accordingly.

If you get a response, be professional and courteous. Develop relationships based on mutual respect, and do your best to be lucid and timely in all dealings with the media.

It's a big old noisy world out there, and the onus is on you to work really hard to ensure the media are talking about your music. An EPK can help enormously in that process, as can an understanding of how to approach the online media.

Craig Hayes is a Wellington-based freelance writer, radio producer and PR consultant. He writes for print and online media, and is a former contributing editor, music and book critic, and columnist for US site PopMatters. Craig contributes reviews and feature articles to a number of sites worldwide, and he is the metal correspondent for Music 101 on Radio New Zealand. 