



MUNK

DIGITAL BY EVIE NAGY

PODDING ALONG

Podcast Growth Creating Viable Marketing Route For Artists

In the early part of the decade, Boston-based independent musician Munk spent several years trying to promote tracks from his two albums through traditional PR and college radio. In 2004, he sold scarcely 100 single downloads, according to a CD Baby digital sales report. That number reached 2,500 in 2005, and by the end of 2007, after not releasing an album since 2003, his paid downloads totaled more than 12,000. Munk has now also found success with publishing deals, and he is unequivocal about how he gained exposure: "I know that it was all driven by podcast plays," he says.

Indeed, while the media attention devoted to podcasts in 2005 and 2006 may have waned, Munk is one of many musicians and companies finding that the opportunities around them are steadily growing.

When iTunes launched its platform for free podcast distribution in June 2005, the directory included 3,000 audio programs, most independently produced. Today, there are 125,000 podcasts available on iTunes, 35,000 of them video, with increasing numbers coming from major media companies. Consumption is keeping pace—about six million Americans listened to podcasts in 2005, and a

February eMarketer report estimates that the total U.S. podcast audience reached 18.5 million in 2007. That same report predicts an increase to 65 million by 2012.

And with so many potential customers, advertisers and sponsors are flocking to the format—revenue for ad-supported podcasts more than doubled from an estimated \$80 million in 2006 to \$165 million in 2007, and eMarketer projects growth to \$435 million by 2012.

A major player in the monetization of podcasts is online media network Mevio (formerly Podshow), founded by Ron Bloom and former MTV VJ Adam Curry, sometimes known as the "Podfather" for his role in developing and promoting the format. Mevio markets and brokers advertising for thousands of podcasts, and since March 2007 has seen a 781% growth in unique visitors, reaching more than 5 million in March 2008, according to ComScore MediaMetrix. Curry says that because podcasts are episodic and available to subscribers on demand, they earn a level of audience engagement and loyalty that makes the medium increasingly valuable to advertisers looking for reliable properties.

"Brand advertisers want to move online, but aren't interested in showing up on a video of

someone shooting a firecracker out of his butt,"

Curry says. "But we can say, 'OK, Dove, you want to have 50 million views of women's programming? Here are the five shows and 15 episodes your commercial will be featured on.' And we can guarantee the views because we'll spend money to market it." Mevio's biggest growth is in video podcasts, reflecting advances in production and portable player technology.

VoloMedia is another advertising and media services company that has grown in the past year because of its focus on episodic, downloadable media. Thanks to proprietary technology that tracks user information and stitches ads to podcasts, "we can follow an advertising campaign all the way through the iPod and bring back the measurement that makes a viable business proposition for advertisers," VoloMedia CEO Brian Steel says. "Last year we spent a lot of time in evangelism mode, where people were saying, 'I'm hearing about this growth but I don't get it.' This year we're in the order-taking mode."

One such well-matched order was with Timex, which launched a campaign for its iCon-



CURRY

trol sports watch (which wirelessly controls an iPod). Ads were integrated with Podrunner, a weekly podcast of fixed-BPM dance music mixes for workouts.

"We're just at the tip of the iceberg," says Steel, who predicts the biggest growth in monetization will be among major media companies that are repurposing episodic content for podcasts. "These companies are going to start looking at their archives and realize, 'Wow, we're sitting on a gold mine here.'"

SAFETY FIRST

For artists and labels, the promotional value of reaching podcasting's growing, discovery-hungry audience has now started to outweigh concerns about giving away music for a downloadable format.

With approximately 130,000 tracks from 25,000 artists and labels, Mevio's Podsafe Music Network is the largest source of pre-cleared music for podcasters, which counts Munk as an early guinea pig. Because most podcasts are consumed after download, the performing rights organizations charge much higher royalties for music played on podcasts than for traditional broadcasting; this is prohibitive for most podcasters, so PMN

gives copyright owners a way to license their music for all registered podcasts at once.

Curry says that before he co-founded PMN in 2005, early podcasters stayed away from playing music on their shows, many of which were technology focused. "We all agreed that the last thing we needed while we were messing around was for the RIAA or anyone to start calling us pirates," he says. But after years in broadcasting, he knew that the promotional value to artists could be huge.

"We view it as an artist development tool," says Jason Spiewak, president of Rock Ridge Marketing, which uses PMN to promote tracks from acts including Collective Soul and Buckcherry. "It's directed file-sharing, it's a calculated risk. Research has proven that giving away music doesn't inhibit sales, if anything it's the opposite."

Spiewak adds that indie labels were initially more open to releasing promo tracks, but majors are coming around. "We used to work with major label people on the DL, but the work is becoming less subversive," he says. ●●●

MAKE IT WORK Five Smart Approaches To Marketing With Podcasts

1 MAKE FRIENDS

After John Taglieri posted his first songs to the Podsafe Music Network, he spent several days e-mailing podcasters to get a few spins. "I did that in the beginning, and now I get added to more and more shows that I've never contacted," he says. If you find a good match, offer an exclusive, as the Gin Blossoms did with podcast Pacific Coast Hellway.

2 LEVERAGE YOUR HISTORY

For the 40th anniversary of the Monterey International Pop Festival in 2007, Razor & Tie and Starbucks Entertainment teased the festival and a compilation album by releasing licensed tracks from the Who, Buffalo Springfield, Jefferson Airplane and Otis Redding to podcasters.

3 PIMP YOUR RIDE

In addition to producing his own series of regular podcasts, '80s icon Howard Jones released four tracks, including a live interview, to the Podsafe Music Network to promote the U.K. Hitmakers tour in 2006 and his world tour in 2007. Podcasters were free to play the tracks with the request that they direct listeners to tour information online.

4 TAKE CONTROL

For They Might Be Giants' "Here Come the 123s," Disney Sound launched a weekly family video podcast containing footage from the DVD and prior album "Here Come the ABCs," hosted by sock puppets of the two band members. The idea was to create marketing that is also quality content, which parents could, for example, hand to kids in the back seat of the car.

5 FIGHT THE POWER

On March 22, 2007, a group of podcasters held Bum Rush the Charts, an effort to see how far they could "move the needle" for an unsigned artist up the iTunes charts by rallying their listeners to purchase Black Lab's "Mine Again" on the same day. (It reached No. 11 in the United States on iTunes' rock chart.) —EN