


[Techdirt](#)
[CwF+RtB](#)
[IT Innovation](#)
[About](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[RSS](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Main](#)
[Submit a Story](#)
[Advertise](#)

<< [Once Again, Music Licensing Harms The DVD Release Of A...](#) | [Connected Nation Bails On Its Home State Of Kentucky](#) >>



Culture

by [Mike Masnick](#)

Thu, Sep 10th 2009
5:06pm

Share This

Filed Under:

[jill sobule](#), [josh freese](#),
[marketing](#), [moldover](#),
[music](#)



[Permalink.](#)

Music And Marketing -- You Need Them Both

from the *it's-not-just-one* dept

A couple people have sent over Bob Lefsetz' recent post, where he [bashes some of the "extreme marketing" efforts](#) from musicians lately. In fact, he picks on quite a few of the examples that we've set out as good examples, including [Josh Freese](#), [Jill Sobule](#) and [Moldover](#) -- complaining that these are all gimmicks that outshine the music. He asks how many people who have heard about these gimmicks actually heard the music from these artists.

I think he's both right and wrong on this. First, you have to say "compared to what." If Freese, Sobule and Moldover had just come out with an album in the traditional way, how many of the same group of people would likely have heard the album? I'd say a *lot* fewer. I doubt I would have heard any of them, and now I'm quite familiar with the music of all three.

But... his larger point is definitely dead on. At the core of all of this, it is the music that is key. But putting out good music and being a good marketer are not mutually exclusive. If you do something cool -- something fun or valuable or neat beyond just the music -- it's not going to matter as much if the music itself isn't good. This is why, I have to admit, the one area where I think all three of these artists could have done a better job is actually making the music itself free. All three offered really compelling reasons to buy, but they still hid away the actual music. Why not free up the MP3s, continue the cool "reasons to buy" and get the best of both worlds. Then you get everything: you get people listening to the music and feeling a connection there. You get people paying attention for the "marketing" part, and you still make money thanks to the "reasons to buy."

But that doesn't mean that doing a smart marketing promotion is a bad thing. It just needs to tie in well with the music. The existing "true fans" will already want to hear the music, but if part of the goal is to attract new fans, you have to go beyond just the marketing to give them more access to the core music -- and focus on selling them on real reasons to buy something above and beyond the content.

[10 Comments](#) | [Leave a Comment..](#)

Reader Comments (rss)

(Flattened / [Threaded](#))

1. There's only so much music...

Sep 10th, 2009 @ 8:34pm



by [The Dukeman \(profile\)](#)

After reading Mike's article about the Wired Vanish Project, <http://techdirt.com/articles/20090909/0111116137.shtml>, and the fact that he can only read so much,

I have to say that there is only so much music you can listen to, especially if you read a lot, or are a musician yourself and work on videos and recording. I am disabled and am part of an on-again-of-again group that performs classic rock tunes as a hobby for friends. I follow Mike's comments on the music business with great interest. It's absurd that my group should be required to pay license fees to perform the popular music of yesteryear for anyone in their own home, let alone the local nursing homes and senior centers (yes, they like to rock too) for free. Also, it's a double standard, since all popular artists learned their craft by emulating and then innovating on music they have heard. I'm sure they didn't pay license fees to Muddy Waters and the like. And don't get me started on Jazz Improv.

Thanks to Mike pointing out the projects of the above mentioned musicians, I have listened to some of their music. I never would have otherwise. That proves his point that their marketing efforts are needed. In this case, it got enough buzz going that it came to Mike's attention. And by trickle down effect to me. So the actual project only has to generate enough interest to get it mentioned elsewhere. It doesn't have to reach the whole world by itself. Thanks, Mike.

<http://thedukemanrocks.blogspot.com/>

([reply to this comment](#)) ([link to this comment](#))

2. More than marketing is needed for the major labels, too.

Sep 10th, 2009 @ 8:59pm

by [fogbugzd](#)

I think the same lesson can be applied to the major labels as well as the innovative groups that have been mentioned. In the last decade the major labels have relied too often on formulas and marketing instead of experimenting with new, innovative music. The major labels need to pay more attention to the quality of the music instead of just relying on marketing formulas that used to work.

([reply to this comment](#)) ([link to this comment](#))

3. by **Suzanne Lainson**

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 1:04am

What I continually mull over is to what extent does the music have to do with the stuff these artists are selling. Amanda Palmer could be doing what she is doing whether or not she makes music. She's become a personality that functions on its own. The music is almost just an aside at this point. She's a performance artist who happens to do music.

So why can't people do whatever they do best and which is the most lucrative for them as the way they make their living and pay the bills, and then just do the music for self-expression and as a way to bond with people? That's in essence what weekend musicians already do. They play music, but they don't make their living at music.

If Freese is selling the opportunity to have lunch with him, then he's selling a lunch date, not music. Perhaps that's his best skill -- being a great lunch date rather than being a musician.

([reply to this comment](#)) ([link to this comment](#))

4. **Re:**

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 3:29am



by [insider](#) Mike Masnick ([profile](#))

If Freese is selling the opportunity to have lunch with him, then he's selling a lunch date, not music. Perhaps that's his best skill -- being a great lunch date rather than being a musician.

I disagree. No one would want to have lunch with him if he wasn't a great musician.

([reply to this comment](#)) ([link to this comment](#))

5. by **Andrew**

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 5:24am

Sure, good marketing is required so people find out about your music. But these people haven't done particularly good marketing. Of course you're right that no-one would have heard of them without these gimmicks, but you need more than that.

Like Lefsetz, I watched Moldover's video. It's cool. And like Lefsetz, I felt no urge to listen to his music. There's no upselling in the video, there's no apparent connection between the Theremin CD case and his music. (Maybe it's the same style as the music in the video, but he could just as easily have been getting down to a backing beat.)

Compare it with [these two](#), as featured on BoingBoing recently. It's a funny, light, linkable song, but also one that gives a real insight into their style. It inspired me to click further and listen more.

And I really think they're great. I'm going to buy the album. In fact, this is the first time since Pandora was blocked that I have got this excited about new tunes. The other artists may well have offered "compelling reasons to buy", but they didn't offer compelling reasons to buy their music.

([reply to this comment](#)) ([link to this comment](#))

6. **Good call on all fronts...**

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 8:13am



by [insider](#) indeciSEAN ([profile](#))

I was turned off by the Lefsetz piece the second he said (to paraquote) "who cares about the drummer, anyway?!" - especially (as my friend pointed out), \$10 says Lefsetz is a fucking Phil Collins' fan.

Regardless, I'm glad you picked up on something he completely lost focus of in his blog and did so without talking down to your audience.

[\(reply to this comment\)](#) [\(link to this comment\)](#)

7. **Re: Re:**

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 9:00am

by [Suzanne Lainson](#)

"I disagree. No one would want to have lunch with him if he wasn't a great musician."

That's a reasonable assumption, but I'm following along with the comments by people who said the marketing caught their eye first, and then they checked out the music.

Freese set up a very funny collection of stuff he was selling. So it's easy enough to become a fan of his for his personality and not care a bit about his music.

In some cases clever marketing is going to be the thing that people like these are known for, not their music. And there's nothing wrong with that. In local music scenes, you often see people supporting bands because the band members are friends, neighbors, and family, not necessarily great musicians.

There is a blur going on between the music itself and the people who have created the music. If they give the music away for free, then the musicians are selling themselves as personalities and what other services they can provide. The music may contribute to their appeal, or not. It may turn out to be totally unnecessary. Or perhaps they can just have someone else's music associated with themselves and accomplish the same level of selling other services. Make a cool video, have another band's music playing in the background, and maybe you'll get your audience anyway.

I think that's where Lefsetz is raising questions. He's a music purist and thinks it should be about the music. But some of what is being done in the name of music marketing could be done just as easily and effectively without the music.

[\(reply to this comment\)](#) [\(link to this comment\)](#)

8. by [Leroy](#)

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 9:16am

It's hard for me to take anything Bob Lefsetz says seriously. He occasionally has some valid points, but the mechanics of the music industry are far from rocket science and easily understood and commented on. As far as I am aware, the man has never worked on or been a part of selling a single record in any capacity. He's a ski bum music nerd with a big mouth, who's only job seems to be talking shit on people. The idea that anyone even pays attention to this guy is so crazy.

[\(reply to this comment\)](#) [\(link to this comment\)](#)

9. **Not as good as free music**

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 12:25pm

by [Jameson](#)

I agree with Mike's assesment that these musicians should be giving away their music along with their other efforts, and here's why. I've read Techdirt for a while and they mention these artists quite often and the things they are doing to connect with their fans, but it doesn't every get me to be one of their fans since I've never heard their music. In order to hear it, I'd have to either buy it or get it off Limewire which is "illegal." Maybe if they gave away some of their music for free, I'd actually listen and then I'd be more likely to appreciate their creative marketing attempts. But for now, it's nice to read about, but I don't care to buy it just based off their unique marketing.

[\(reply to this comment\)](#) [\(link to this comment\)](#)

10. **Re: Not as good as free music**

Sep 11th, 2009 @ 1:02pm

by [Suzanne Lainson](#)

"I've never heard their music. In order to hear it, I'd have to either buy it or get it off Limewire which is "illegal." "

You haven't gone to their websites or MySpace pages to listen to it? I can find music by virtually every artist online to stream. Imeen has music. ILike has music. Lots of places have music. Just do a Google search for any artist you'd like to hear and you should be able to hear full-length songs online.

[\(reply to this comment\)](#) [\(link to this comment\)](#)

Add Your Comment

Have a Techdirt Account? [Sign in now](#). Want one? [Register here](#)

Name

Email

Get [Techdirt's](#)

[Daily Email](#)

URL

Subject

Comment

Options Plain Text HTML Save me a cookie

- **Plain Text:** A CRLF will be replaced by break
 tag, all other allowable HTML is intact
- **HTML:** No formatting of any kind is done without explicitly being written in
- **Allowed HTML Tags:** <i> <p> <a>
 <blockquote> <hr> <tt>

[Digital distribution](#)

Sell your music on digital Stores Worldwide
www.zimbalam.com

[BlackBerry® Storm™ 9550](#)

Be There. Be Part Of It All With The New
Touch Screen BlackBerry.



Ads by

<< [Once Again, Music Licensing Harms The DVD Release Of A...](#) | [Connected Nation Bails On Its Home State Of Kentucky](#) >>

[About Techdirt](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise On Techdirt](#) | [Submit a Story](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

Brought to you by [Floor64](#)