

THE STONER ROCK BAND'S GUIDE TO MARKETING

HOW TO TURN MAMMOTH RIFFS AND
GLORIOUS FUZZ INTO RAVING FANS,
RECORD SALES, AND SOLD-OUT MERCH

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
MONSTER RIFF AND POETICA MARKETING

Monster Riff

A QUICK NOTE BEFORE WE GET STARTED

The world needs more down-tuned guitars.

I started Poetica Marketing because I'm passionate about content and digital marketing, but I started Monster Riff because I have riffs spilling out of my speakers for 10+ hours a day—and I needed a way to talk about them.

While reviewing albums and interviewing bands over the last year, I've seen many great acts that are absolutely rudderless in their approach to marketing.

They've got an awesome sound, but no one knows about them because they can't figure out how to get their voice out there.

It's time to put an end to that.

If you're great, you deserve to be heard. Period.

This guide outlines—in plain English—some of the best, most straightforward strategies for getting more traction online.

There are no gimmicks. There is no theory.

These are all tried-and-true best practices swiped from years of marketing businesses all over the world.

I hope you'll take them to heart.

Because the world needs more down-tuned guitars. And it needs a chance to hear them.

-Pat
Editor-in-Chief, Monster Riff
Founder, Poetica Marketing

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YOUR BAND IS A BUSINESS. HERE'S HOW TO START TREATING IT LIKE ONE.

Your band might not look like a business, but it is.

You may have started your band because of your passion for music, but if you're reading this, you understand that there are bigger opportunities out there.

Your band is a business.

It might be a small one, but it has the potential to be a big one.

And if you want it to be a big business, you have to treat it like a big business.

Obviously, this means putting out singles and records and playing live shows, but it also means a great deal of marketing and networking.

For some, this means linking up with a PR firm or a label and hoping for the best.

For others, this means bootstrapping and figuring it out as you move along.

This guide is for those bootstrappers (and for those bands that are sick of their PR/label pros not pulling their own weight).

Once you understand how marketing works, you can increase your band's popularity, boost sales sales, and grow your small business into something much bigger.

HOW TO ESTABLISH YOUR BAND'S ONLINE PRESENCE AND EXTEND YOUR REACH

If you're active on every social media platform out there, great. But it doesn't replace an actual website.

Your website is important because it gives the press and labels (your friends on the other side of the industry) a one-stop location to learn everything about you. Building and maintaining your website is a key piece to making your band (your small business) something bigger than it is today.

Building a Website

It's never been easier to build a website. Sites like Wix and Squarespace are overflowing with beautiful, preloaded templates that only need copy changes and new images.

Many of the options out there are free, though you'll pay a little more to attach your domain to it. Speaking of, you *should* have your own domain, and, ideally, it'll be your band's name plus dot com so that anyone can find it.

What Your Website Should Have

Your website doesn't need to be flashy or complex, and most bands can get away with one or two pages. (If you're selling merch, you probably want something a little flashier.)

Here's a checklist for your website:

1. Tell us who you are. From a quick glance at your website, a visitor should know:

- Where you're from
- Who's in the band
- Who inspires you
- Who you sound like
- Where people can see you live
- How people can follow you

2. Link to everything. That means *everywhere* you have music or content, including:

HOW TO ESTABLISH YOUR BAND'S ONLINE PRESENCE AND EXTEND YOUR REACH (Cont.)

- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Bandcamp
- Articles/Interviews about your band
- Your merch site (if it's hosted somewhere else)

3. For the love of Kyuss, include an EPK (Electronic Press Kit). Many bands choose to place this on its own page of the website so they have an easier time sharing the link with members of the press.

Your EPK is critical to your longterm success. Remember: Writers are busy. While most of them are ace researchers, they don't want to spend all day digging for a decent image or trying to figure out who your lead singer is.

At a bare minimum, your EPK should include:

- High-quality images of your band
- Updated band bio
- List of band members and their roles
- List of past records and singers
- Contact information
- Music videos, if any are available

HOW TO LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL—NOT A CHORE

Social media is one of the easiest potential wins for your band, but most people don't know how to use it effectively.

I've consulted with many companies (and bands!) that had perfectly good content, but they always seemed to botch it one way or another. I won't go into everything here (we could spend a pages and pages talking about how to create a solid Facebook post), but I *will* outline some of the basics to help you get started.

Rules for Social Media

Here's how to hack social media:

1. Understand where you exist. Every platform has its advantages and disadvantages. Twitter is great for connecting with press. Facebook is great for connecting with fans and members of the community (especially in Facebook Groups). Instagram is great for sharing intimate behind-the-scenes moments. Reddit is great for having real conversations with passionate people.

Once you've figured out where you want to be (and you may or may not want to be everywhere, depending on your own circumstances), read up on what makes accounts successful on those individuals channels.

There are definitely hacks to using the @ symbol or hashtags and similar tools (and you should understand those), but that's not everything.

In general, people want to have human experiences with the bands they love. Understanding your platform helps you do that.

2. Stay active. You should post regularly. How you define "regularly" depends on you, your audience, and your goals, but some bands post multiple times a day and have tremendous followings.

The key, though, is creating content that people care about.

That's a difficult task for bands, when they might take years to craft a new album

HOW TO LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA INTO A TOOL—NOT A CHORE (Cont.)

and might not have any new tour dates or singles to share.

But there's always potential content available.

Show a pedal that helps you achieve your signature sound. Throwback Thursday a picture from your last tour and reminisce about the night it was taken. Say happy birthday to your bassist. Or get weird with it.

3. Make real, meaningful connections. When you're just starting out, every real fan is invaluable. Nurture those relationships. If they comment, respond. Ask questions to get conversations started. Give them free merch as a thank you. Turn them into superfans so that they continue to tell their friends about you.

Same deal with industry insiders. Pay attention to what other bands are up to and offer them words of encouragement. Follow journalists and labels and engage with their posts. Have an active voice and join their conversations.

Over time, your band will become a recognizable presence—and more people will listen to your music.

GETTING HEARD—EVERYWHERE

From Bandcamp to Spotify, put your best face out there.

You can publish your music in a ton of places to get in front of more people, but make sure you flesh out your profile as much as possible. Doing so gives you a little more street cred—and you'll look even more legit than you might feel.

We won't dig into every platform, but let's take a quick look at Bandcamp and Spotify.

Recommendations For Bandcamp

If you have a Bandcamp page, make sure you check these boxes:

- Put your best track first
- Turn on the "Pay More" option
- List your merch (and don't be afraid to push limited-only products)
- Flesh out your bio
- Include your social media links
- Include thorough product description (including credits for each album)

Recommendations For Spotify

If you have a Spotify profile, make sure you check these boxes:

- Upload high-quality band photos into your gallery
- Include a fundraising link, if appropriate
- List upcoming tour dates, if available
- Partner with Merchbar to list your merch
- Create and share artist playlists and use a descriptive bio to help Spotify optimize its Fans Also Like for your band

CLEVER WAYS TO STAND OUT: LESS-TRAVELED PATHS TO SUCCESS

Some of the best marketing techniques take a little longer to pull off. But they're worth it.

If there was a fast track to marketing success, every label would be obsolete. Since there are no "get rich quick" buttons out there, sometimes you have to be a little more clever than the competition.

With a little grit and time, you can pull off big plays.

1. Support charities. Want free publicity? Here's your chance.

There are many, many charities out there willing to partner with bands (many of them are already partnering with video game streamers), so reach out and ask about co-hosting some sort of event.

Livestream a 12-hour jam session and link it up to a donation service to collect money.

Hold a concert where the ticket sales benefit the charity.

Sell some of your merch at a discount and donate all of the proceeds to your partner charity.

Fans love seeing their favorite bands give back to the community, and the charity will reward you by promoting you through their social media channels and possibly even their website and email blasts.

As a bonus, your charity events give you a little more juice to write about in the press releases you send out—instead of relying solely on the merits of your singles and albums.

Final note: Think hard about charities you'd like to support. Ideally, you want to build a longterm relationship—not a one-off event. Find a charity that really aligns with your values and that you'd like to work with for a few years.

2. Spray and pray (but be smart about it). As a relatively small music website, Monster Riff receives a handful of inquiries a week, usually from bands who've

CLEVER WAYS TO STAND OUT: LESS-TRAVELED PATHS TO SUCCESS (Cont.)

recently released an album and are hoping for some extra coverage.

The easy way to do this is to compile a huge list of websites that cover your genre, find contact information for writers on each site, then blast everyone with an email.

I read everything that comes through, and I give everyone a fair listen if they send something in. But I can tell you as a marketer that the typical “spray and pray” technique has a very low success rate.

If you send out 100 emails and get coverage from 10 websites, that’s *awesome*, especially when you consider that many publications receive dozens of inquiries a day.

Improve your chances with a little more research. Here’s how:

- **Know your audience.** If you lean more toward Doom, don’t blast three writers at a Psych Rock website. It’s a waste of your time, and it’s a waste of theirs. Instead, drill down to find those websites that genuinely care about Doom.
- **Build relationships.** Writers are people. Follow their work and develop a relationship. Then, when you ask for help, they’re more likely to listen.
- **Personalize your message.** I recently received a blast from someone who had CC’ed all of the publications they wanted to hit along with Monster Riff. If you’re trying to build a relationship, that’s a poor way to go about it. Personalize your messages.

3. Look for podcast spots (and don’t forget about internet radio). We’re in the Golden Age of podcasting at the moment, and there are a ton of them out there hungry for new interviews and acts.

Similar deal to your pray and spray email tactic: Do your research beforehand.

Approach hosts with a story. Give them a glimpse into what makes your band unique or some of your latest activities.

Remember: You don’t have to get onto a podcast with a million listeners. Getting onto a few smaller ones to start can really bolster your presence—and they may give you some extra publicity after the episode goes live.

CLEVER WAYS TO STAND OUT: LESS-TRAVELED PATHS TO SUCCESS (Cont.)

While you're at it, look for some of those underground online radio stations streaming Stoner Rock and similar subgenres. (Cosmic Fuzz FM is a good place to start!) While their listener bases are often relatively small, they have devoted followings that really care about the music. Getting in front of them can spark a chain reaction that helps spread your music all over the internet.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE

I hope you've found this useful.

If you still need a hand getting your marketing off the ground, feel free to reach out. I'm here to help.

You can reach me at my agency address (patrick@poeticamarketing) or through my Monster Riff contact (pat@monsterriff.com).

Drop me a line if you want to talk more about marketing.

Of course, also reach out if you're working on some new tunes.

I love a good riff.

-Pat
Editor-in-Chief, Monster Riff
Founder, Poetica Marketing