

## Chapter 1: When Should I Start My CD Promotion?

The best time to consider radio promotion of your CD is before you even start to record it! For some of you, this advice might be a bit late, please bear with me.

If you are still in the planning stages of your CD, best to start thinking of the kind of radio stations that would most likely play your music. Make sure your CD has the type of material that would make it to the playlist of these stations.

This early stage is also a good time make note of any contacts you might have with radio stations. Such a list could be like a pot of gold to you!

You should also take a look at your budget, even if you go the DIY promotion route you will have expenses.

It's important to consider all of your expenses as early as possible. You need to have arrangements written, you need to budget for studio time (even if recording on a home PC you'll encounter expenses), your musicians will expect a paycheck, not to mention packaging, design, printing and CD manufacture.

And this is *before* you've paid for song clearance or have had a single CD pressed or burned!

Depending on variables in your production budget, it's possible to shell out a hefty sum before you can ever anticipate a return on investment (ROI) on your album project. This can be daunting. By planning ahead, you can make sure all of your production, clearance and promotion costs are anticipated and recaptured by sales.

Making a profit isn't a bad idea either!

If you're at the start of your project, making sure you have a game plan for getting the word out about your product is very important. Planning ahead is best.

Regardless of whether your CD is complete or in the planning stages, you'll need to ask yourself: "Who is my audience?" The answer to this simple question is the foundation on which to build your record promotion and develop a target list of radio stations, whether you hire a promoter or go the D-I-Y route.

### ***IF I HIRE A PROMOTER, HOW MUCH WILL THAT COST?***

Hiring a promoter will cost you anywhere from about two or three-thousand dollars (and up) with you mailing out the CD to the promoters list. If you want the promoter to handle that, expect to pay considerably more.

Doing it yourself with the aid of this book and a list of stations, contact names and promotional collateral material will still have its own associated costs: postage, mailing supplies, mailing labels, printing/photo copy costs, etc.

It is imperative that you work these costs into your total budget, preferably at the earliest planning stages of your album.

You'll also need to set aside some time each week to contact the decision maker at each station. Sometimes it's the Host of a show, the station's Music Director or Program Director, to whom you'll be sending your material and following up with.

A promoter shoulders this responsibility and usually has a positive rapport with decision makers. It's always a plus to have a professional slugging it out on your behalf; but with some effort...you *can* do this!

As the saying goes: plan your work and work your plan.

## Chapter 2: How Do Stations Decide What Music To Play?

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of how to get airplay, some understanding of how radio stations actually select and program music might be helpful to you.

Most music formats on radio play a mixture of “Gold” tunes (oldies or songs not currently on the charts) along with “Currents” (songs that are new and/or climbing the charts in industry trades.)

Stations will play such a mixture of songs (older, new and newer) in order to appeal to the tastes of their target audience. The older tunes are proven to one degree or another, and add familiarity and comfort for listeners.

A newer, or less familiar song, is scattered across this musical landscape in a manner most beneficial to a station attracting the largest possible audience.

Where your music will find a spot on such radio formats is in the “Currents” category. You’re not likely an established artist with a back catalog of proven winners. If you are, there’s a great chance your music is heard in both generalized categories.

As a new artist, your goal is to first land in rotation as a “Current” and have enough appeal to audiences to make it up the ladder to a “Re-Current” (songs coming down the charts or just off the charts), to “Gold”.

If you’re in a “Gold” category, you’re likely an established artist with a catalog of back hits or choice album cuts. Think of it, how often do you hear older Bruce Springsteen or Aerosmith songs on rock radio?

If these, or similar artists, release a new single there’s a strong likelihood these artists will be well represented on music radio in both “Current” and “Gold” categories. That’s staying power!

In all cases, stations decide on their playlist or total list of songs they’ll actively play at any given time based on audience demand. This is why stations will go to great lengths to do music testing (in person, by phone or on-line) to determine audience tastes so the station isn’t veering too far off course and into the ratings cellar.

I’ve tried to boil the process down as best as possible in this chapter; and with due deference to my friends in radio, this really is the absolute bare bones explanation of an intricate process that is both science, art and "gut instinct" on the part of the Program Director at a radio station.

Usually this is the point where an artist says to me: "But don't you think if the stations did it THIS way...". This is when I would respectfully tell them (and you, if you were saying the same thing or anything similar), to stop it. Some things you can change, some you cannot. As a mentor of mine liked to say: "You can't get rid of January by ripping it off the calendar!"

See, we're not here to change the stations methods and routine. We're just looking for adds off a CD, your CD, whether an album track or potential hit single. That's all. Pretty simple concept, don't you think?

Now, sometime the Program Director (a/k/a: "The PD") calls the shots solo, in other cases they'll work with a corporate or outside consultant to build and maintain a station playlist and develop the stations overall programming direction.

As a new artist you're going for an add in the category with the fewest titles: "Currents". Within that category, your music can be dropped at any time or placed into a "Power Rotation" if audience demand warrants.

At this juncture, as an independent and unsigned artist, please know that some stations will willingly embrace what you do and will include you in their rotation. Other stations, still looking toward music industry charts for guidance, might not.

The bottom line is that in this new era of internet promotion, marketing, popularity and sales streams, it is possible to find an audience with exposure on just a handful of radio stations. You don't necessarily need the kind of exposure or adds garnered by major labels. You probably don't have the promotion budgets major labels play with, so don't get caught up in all that.

Just get started on the journey and enjoy the process of being discovered and embraced by fans far and wide.

## Chapter 3: How Do I Find Radio Stations That Will Play My Music?

If you need to develop a mailing list from scratch, get set to do some investigative work. This isn't a very sexy process, but the payoff can be huge for you once you've completed this procedure.

For names, phone numbers and addresses of over the air broadcast stations and contacts at the various formats at satellite radio operator Sirius-XM, a great starting point is the Industry

Directory at the radio and record industry website, All Access Music Group.

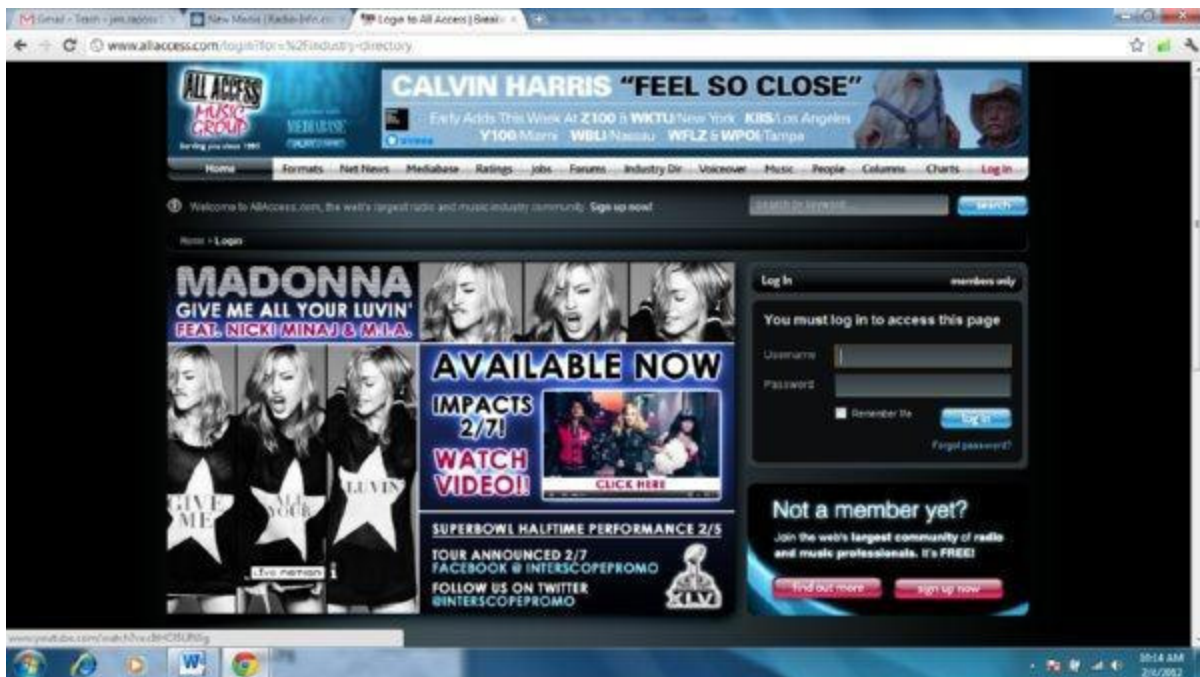


Figure 3.1: All Access web page.



Figure 3.2: All Access Industry Directory.

This site is rich with content including sales charts and airplay charts for various radio music formats: Country, Rock, CHR (what is traditionally called Top 40), Smooth Jazz, Jazz and AC (Adult Contemporary).



Figure 3.3: All Access Mediabase AC Chart.

In order to access the directory and chart information, you will need to become a member, which is free. The All Access URL is... <http://AllAccess.com>

The site is also an excellent source for record and radio industry news as it breaks.

Another site to gather radio station info from is: Radio-Info.



Figure 3.4: Radio-Info web page.

The site is exclusively geared toward radio professionals with ratings info, radio news, discussion boards and more. The discussion boards on this site are a wonderful way to reach out to radio personnel of all stripes, some of whom could become important in receiving airplay on their station.

The URL is: <http://Radio-Info.com>

Another site worth mention is: <http://Radio-Locator.com>. This is a pretty basic site that takes FCC database information and allows you to search for stations by City, Market, Call Letters or format. There is also a search command for finding streaming stations (please see illustrations below).



Figure 3.5: Radio-Locator web page.

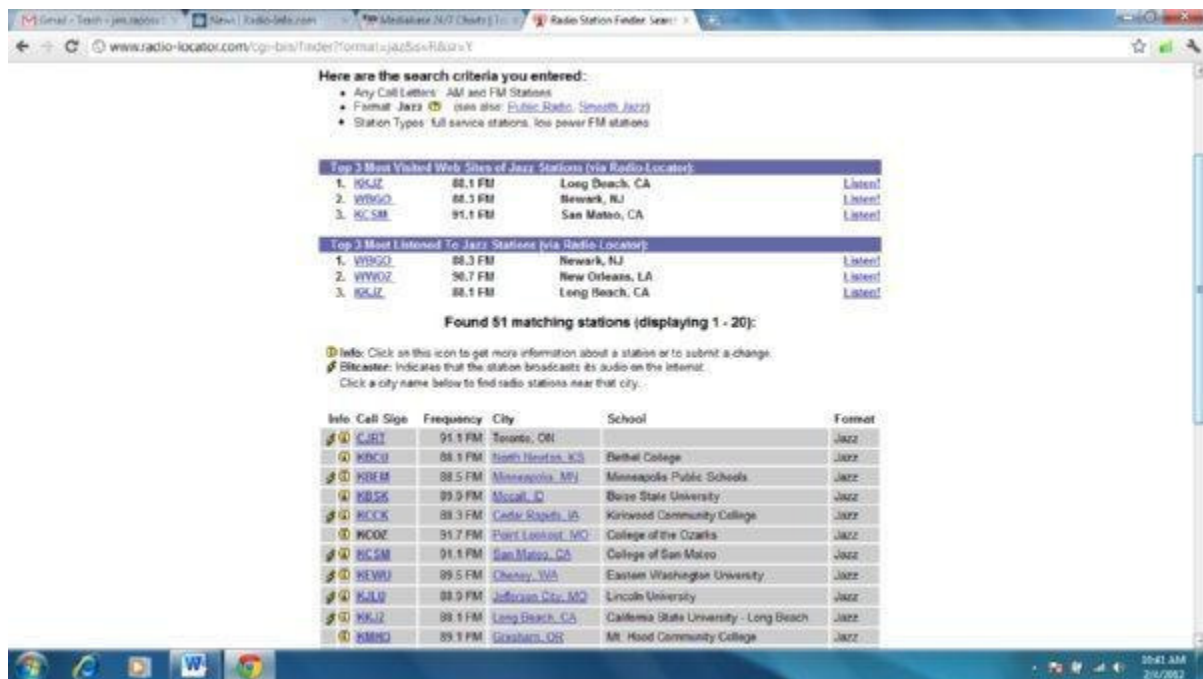


Figure 3.6: Radio-Locator search results for U.S. stations that play Jazz.



You may have to play detective with the information gleaned from Radio-Locator. As useful a tool as I've found it to be, stations can change format well before the info on this site is updated.

Caveat Emptor...in other words: do your homework and verify info from this site. That's sound advice for the information you compile from any website whether you've discovered it yourself, or you choose to use the ones identified here.

### ***ON-LINE PROMOTIONAL DISTRIBUTION:***

Many music producers and major and independent record labels have opted to utilize on-line distribution of their releases. The wisdom here is in shaving the cost of mailing out CD's to media outlets.

While this method has merits, the downside is that most decision makers tend to prefer having the disc in their hands for any number of valid reasons.

Now, if your reply to that is something like: "*screw them, they can download the album and burn their own CD*", I have news for you...you might be shutting more than a few doors with an attitude like that, my friend.

Make it easy for stations to sample your album...**YOU** put a physical CD in **THEIR** hands!

If you really feel on-line promotion distribution is the way you need to go, remember that you'll still need to have a targeted list of stations and media outlets to contact and follow-up with.

On-line marketing can be effective if you're targeting to smaller college stations (these stations tend to be open to music discovery on-line.) This can also be a very cost effective way to reach out to stations in other countries.

You should understand that on-line marketing to businesses (radio stations) can have drawbacks as many companies block e-mail with attachments or links considered disruptive to their inner-office computer network as "Spam".

That means your e-mail might never get seen, your music not heard and consequently not aired.

This is why I say it's best for you to get your CD into a decision makers hands.

Now that I've freaked you out a bit by playing Devil's Advocate, let's take a look at the long tail effect here. A few years ago, writer Chris Anderson wrote a book titled *The Long Tail*. In that book, Anderson explained how the internet has created an inexpensive storage and delivery mechanism to satisfy unlimited public demand.

In essence, as it pertains to music, we now have access to more than the "greatest hits of all-time"; we also have access to what are termed "non-hits". This is where the long tail is, according to Anderson. Thanks to our on-line world consumers are finding books, music, movies and more that they wouldn't have had access to previously.

I suggest you grab a copy of Chris Anderson's book. Since its original publication, he has released an updated version of The Long Tail, under the title: The Longer Long Tail. If you're going to market your wares (musical or any other kind) on-line, Chris Anderson's book is a must read.

With all of that being said, if you believe the Long Tail effect might work in your favor in reaching out for radio airplay and you wish to investigate this option, check out a service called Airplay Direct at: <http://AirPlayDirect.com>.

### ***SETTING UP YOUR MAILING LIST & ADDRESS LABELS...***

Once you've identified stations and media outlets, it's a good idea to set up a mailing list. You can do this with Microsoft Excel or create mailing labels utilizing the label templates found in Microsoft Word.

Before you utilize this feature, know which labels you'll be using. You can buy house brand labels from a major office supply store just know that the templates in Word are based on address label catalog numbers by the Avery Corporation. House brand labels will often say something like: "compared to Avery label #xxxx".

If you have a question about the labels, the store you buy your labels from will be able to assist you. I also suggest you use a smaller label, look for ones that come 30 to a sheet (the labels I use measure 1" x 2 5/8").

Prepare your mail out labels and do a template page of return address labels (print as many copies of this page as you need for your packages). I also print copies on plain paper as a reference for each client mailing for my files.

You'll need to have a follow-up system, too. Don't worry, we'll cover that in Chapter 5.

### ***SHOULD I BUY A MAILING LIST?***

There is some wisdom in buying a pre-sorted list. Doing so can save you a good deal of time and hassle; Adult Standards and Jazz lists are available from my company, Great Music Marketing. E-mail us for details at: [GreatMusicMarketing@gmail.com](mailto:GreatMusicMarketing@gmail.com).

If you decide to buy a list of stations for your mailing, make sure your purchase or list rental comes with actual contact names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses, if at all possible. Mailing list prices can vary quite a bit. An on-line search for "radio station addresses" will yield several options.

Okay, we've discussed several elements of how to build your mailing list, mostly centered on traditional radio as your target for airplay – but don't forget New Media. We'll cover this growing segment of listenership in the next chapter.