

What Makes a Great Artist Website?

By Pinky Gonzales of [Artist Media Group](#)

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Great Artist Website from IndieBiz.com!

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By Pinky Gonzales of Artist Media Group

Working in the New Media space professionally, I'm often asked what makes a great artist website. Being the humble man that I am, I thought I'd plaster my name on this article and tell it like it is, once and for all. ;-)

From my experience, these are the basic elements of a great artist site:

PERSPECTIVE – NEWS AND VIEWS

If there's one thing a Website facilitates better than any other medium, it's communication. Where else can an artist's unfiltered opinions be expressed to so many people?

Post any late-breaking info, give fans an inside perspective or provide the media with an official sound byte. It's the perfect place to announce a new tour, CD or even info on how fans can request the latest single to be played on local radio and television programs.

VIEW – VISUAL STIMULATION

There are three things to remember when posting a photo section:

1. Any photo that appears on your site today can be copied and posted all over the Internet tomorrow, so choose your selections wisely.
2. When online press runs an article about you, they'll want an image to associate it with. Unless they have stock photos of you, like album covers or official PR shots, they're likely to search your website, so again, be selective with the photos you put out there.
3. If you know who took a picture on your site, so should your fans. Be a sweetheart and give credit where credit is due.

That being said, an assortment of official and quality amateur shots should provide everyone with the photos they're looking for. I recommend at least 10 shots, and as far as I'm concerned, a site can never have too many.

MY LIFE – YOUR STORY

Any true fan is going to need all the facts. If you've already written a bio for your press kit, use that. If not, this would be a good time to write one.

Who were your influences? What did you want to be as a kid? Where'd you get your first big break? You'll be amazed at how often a reporter will research your site before doing an interview, so be careful not to embarrass yourself. If the bio is long, navigation providing shortcuts to key career milestones is effective.

As an added touch, invite users to ask questions about the artist's life on the message boards. (See [COMMUNE](#) below)

LISTEN – IT'S ABOUT THE MUSIC, MAN!

Whether you're streaming clips from a few album cuts or providing full-length downloads, it's important to show fans what you're all about. After all, this site wouldn't exist if it weren't for your music, right?

If there's one element a musician's site **MUST** have, this is it. The music section should contain song and album info, lyrics (if permitted), production credits, links to buy merchandise and any other detail relevant to the recordings you're posting.

The more content you have on your site, the longer people can hang around to read through it.

TRAVEL – LIFE ON THE ROAD

Just as the News portion should keep fans in the know, the Tour section should be current and accurate. Nothing says, "I don't pay attention to my own site," like an outdated tour itinerary.

I like to include links to venue websites when they are available. Some artists post archives of past shows and tour journals. This can be a little tricky to maintain, but it's a nice touch.

COMMUNE – SOCIAL INTERACTION

This is one of the most important, yet most overlooked, elements of a great artist site.

As Bonnie Raitt once said, "...give 'em something to talk about."

As Pinky Gonzales says, "Give 'em SOMEWHERE to talk about [you]!"

Provide your fans with a forum. You'll be amazed at how many people come back to your site just to gab! InfoPop.com provides one of the most effective and least expensive message board systems currently available.

For a custom message board, [try Elance](#).

CONTACT – WHERE TO SEND THOSE LOVE LETTERS

This is another very important area, too often left out of an otherwise great site. You should provide a way for users to contact the artist and/or webmaster using a simple form.

Visit www.countryartist.com and click on "Contact" for a great example. Not only does this artist receive messages without giving away his address, he's also capable of storing user info in a database for future email announcements. Talk about killing two birds with one stone!

FAMILY – JOIN THE CLUB

Saving your best content for those ravenous fans that'll buy anything you throw at them is the key to turning your site into one of the most potentially lucrative portions of your career. (no... seriously.)

Thousands of artists have fan clubs, but very few provide an official fan club online. In addition to the elements listed above, you can entice users into joining a fan club by offering message boards in which the artist participates, autographed paraphernalia, a space on the guest list at select shows, custom or autographed CDs, private chat sessions with the artist or even streaming audio and video recordings not available anywhere else.

The Web makes it very easy to accept people's credit cards in exchange for exclusive access to an artist. Consult your Website hosting provider or www.Indie411.com for additional info on credit card processing and secure pages for your site.

TRICKS AND GIMMICKS - USE YOUR IMAGINATION

There are all kinds of products and services available for your site that cost little or nothing at all that will draw an audience back to your site. From user surveys to chat, greeting cards, FAQs or even games, there's really no limit to the add-ons available.

Need a place to start? Visit www.bravenet.com for some great ideas.

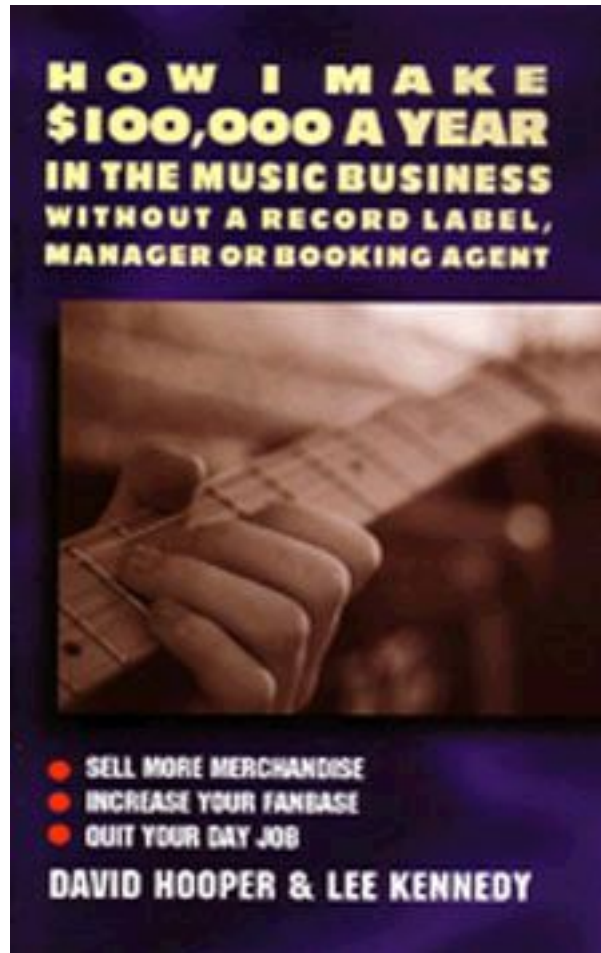
CONNECT – THE GREAT BEYOND

I like to use this area to link to other sites featuring the artist, fan sites, press features, and online retailers selling the artist's music. You can use it for whatever you'd like!

Pinky Gonzales is the founder of Artist Media Group, an online music marketing resource based in Nashville, TN.

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