



Countdown to Maximum Exposure:

A promotion timeline brought to
you by IndieGuide.com
and CD Baby.



Releasing a new album takes more than just duplicating discs and throwing a party. You've got to get the word out if you want your music to sell. But with so many methods of promotion and so many outlets for music discovery, it can be difficult to know where to focus your efforts. Stay calm! This promotion timeline will guide you through, step by step, breaking it all down into bite-sized chunks so you can get out there and start generating press and buzz.

Defining the Three Types of Media

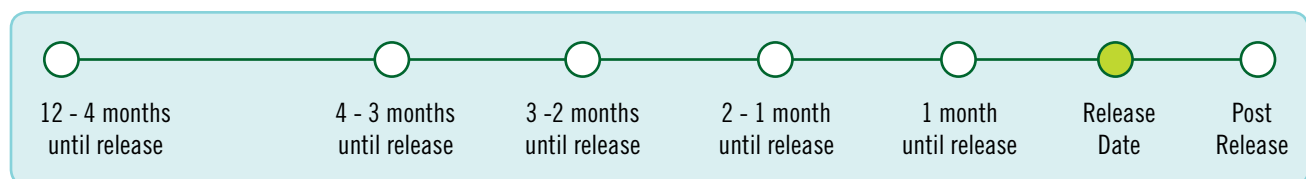
Traditional Media - Newspapers, magazines, zines, radio, and television. Getting coverage from these outlets takes time and connections, usually 3-4 months ahead of your album's release date.

New Media - Born out of the web, these media outlets include blogs, MP3 blogs, podcasts, video podcasts, and websites. These outlets crave immediacy. Getting on these outlets is usually about connecting with them right before and right after the album is out.

Social Media - Social media are promotional outlets built on word-of-mouth as documented over the web and mobile platforms including sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. Social media is all about what's happening now. Getting the word out about your album is a constant process that should happen all of the time.

Time is of the essence:

Promotion is time-sensitive, so we've organized this guide as a timeline with which to organize the release of your next album.



12 months to 4 months Until Release: Album Production



You can start promoting your album even while you're still making it. Fans today like to be let behind the scenes. They want to feel a part of the creative process. Using social media, you can let them in on your private artistic world.

Share photos and videos

Share details about the production process, your studio, a new instrument, etc. on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. Showing behind-the-scenes details will get the fans you already have interested in your next album before it's even recorded.

Share demos and rough mixes

To give your fans a greater sense of investment and involvement in the project, give your fans a voice to pick their favorites between alternate versions of a song.

Crowdfunding

If you're considering crowdfunding (or fan funding) your project, this is also the perfect time to prepare that campaign. For additional information, check out [CD Baby Podcast #98](#) for an interview with RocketHub's Brian Meece.

Assemble your street team

If you want to build a street team, check out IndieGuide.com's [How To Create and Manage a Street Team](#).

Getting your fans interested in what you're working on as it's happening will increase your chances of stirring up a real buzz upon the album's release. As the saying goes: you market *through* people, not to them.

4 months to 3 months Until Release: Album Preparation



Make sure you take care of these prep steps before diving into your promotional campaign.

Set An Official Release Date For Your Album

Between now and then, investigate distribution options, as well as looking into any outside radio promotion or PR help you'll be enlisting.

Decide on the Release Event

Most artists have a release party, but if you don't play live, you can set up a listening party instead. Don't let an internet fanbase stop you from having a party: you can perform live on webcam through a video service like [Ustream](#) or [Livestream](#).

If you decide to have a release party, give yourself time to publicize the show. Invite the media to come and add them to the guest list.

Receive the CD

If you duplicated or replicated CDs, have them in hand before starting the publicity process — long before you make it available to your fans. There are two reasons for this.

First, the goal is for you to organize your release so that media coverage hits around the same 1 or 2-month window of time. The traditional media takes months to cover a story. The new media takes just a week or so. The art is to time it so they both give you coverage at the same time your album comes out. You'll need to give both kinds of media CDs to review in order to get them to cover the story. Second, you'll want to make sure your album is available for purchase just ahead of the publicity. Otherwise, you'll waste all of your hard work.

Enter the CD into Gracenote/Freedb

If you've ever wondered how your CD player knows the album name and track info when you pop it in, it's because of Gracenote MusicID ([gracenote.com](#)) and FreeDB ([freedb.org](#)). These services scan the CD, and once they recognize it, pull down the track information. Of course, when it comes to your new album, there's no way it knows this information yet. So, when you first get your disc, you need to make sure that it is in this system, and enter it if it isn't.

Start the Digital Distribution process

Unfortunately, you can't control when digital music stores like iTunes, Napster, Rhapsody, and the others actually make your album available. Even major bands have trouble with this timing. Make sure to put it in well in advance of your release date so that when your press hits, people can buy it. This may lead to it being available before your release party, but the only thing worse than having it available too early is to not have the disc available for sale at all when the press covers you. To sign up your album for both physical AND digital distribution through CD Baby, click [HERE](#).

Prepare MP3s of Your Album for Press and Social Media

The New Media typically will want MP3s of your music emailed to them for review, not necessarily the CD. Once you have your CD, you should rip the files into high-quality MP3 format (at least 128kps). The key step here is to enter the ID3 tags--all of them. Don't just stop with the band name and song title.

For more information about how best to encode your MP3s, see IndieGuide.com's [How To Encode Your MP3s For Maximum Playability](#). And, to learn more about how to properly ID3 tag your music, check out IndieGuide.com's [How To Create MP3s So Your Fans Will Always Find You](#).

Update Your Press Kit

You'll want to update all of your press materials with the information about your newest album, including the artwork. For help in creating a press kit, see IndieGuide.com's [How To Make A Press Kit](#).

▶ *Next page: "3 months to 2 months until release: Reaching out to the Traditional Media"*



3 months to 2 months Until Release: Reaching out to the Traditional Media



Start getting the word out!

Launching the Traditional Media Campaign

Now that you're prepared, at three months, you are ready to target the traditional media. This includes music reviewers, editors, and reporters at newspapers, magazines, and radio. Assuming that you updated your press kit with the new album, you're ready to write your press release and run a PR campaign. If you'd like some help writing an effective press release, check out IndieGuide.com's [How To Write A Press Release](#). There's a lot to running a PR campaign, but it's completely doable. To learn all the steps, check out IndieGuide.com's [How To Run A PR Campaign](#). Also, you'll want to leverage [press wires](#), as well as sending the release to targeted journalists.

Announcing the Release Party

Start the buzz. Announce it on all of your websites, blogs, and social media outlets. Have your fans re-post and re-tweet the news, too. Also, don't forget to start including the date in all your newsletters. Lastly, you can start creating posters and postcards for your release party if you've arranged a venue for your show.

Social Media

If you are rehearsing for your release party, or have any related band activities happening during this time, be sure to take pictures, videos, and make recordings, so you can share it with your friends and followers now.

▶ *Next page: "2 months to 1 month until release: The Radio Campaign"*

2 months to 1 month Until Release: **The Radio Campaign**



Two months before the big release you should begin focusing on radio. You'll already have a head start on the traditional media and [press wires](#) and your street team should be active.

Radio Campaign

Radio likes to play albums ahead of their release dates. Give them a chance to hear it first by running this campaign two to three months out. Also, you should target radio stations near where you're planning on playing so that you can grant them interviews. The most effective way to do this is to call ahead of time before sending the album, then write "SOLICITED MATERIALS" on the envelope. Also, include the show dates that you're going to be playing in their area. Offer to stop by the studio for an interview or in-studio session.

If you are an independent musician, you should probably target college radio since it's the most receptive to new music. Especially college radio shows, which are usually run by students that love getting new releases before it hits the public. If you want to do it yourself, go to IndieGuide.com's [How To Run A College Radio Campaign](#) and also check out CD Baby's free guide to [Getting Radio Airplay](#).

▶ *Next page: "1 month until release: Reaching out to the New Media"*

1 Month Until Release: Reaching Out to The New Media



Now that you're in the last weeks before the big release, it's time to hit the new media.

Launching the New Media Campaign (Part I)

The New Media's turnaround time for stories is quick, so waiting until the release is only a month away is a good rule of thumb. Running these campaigns is much more simple than traditional media. No need for press releases; just send a simple email to them with an offer of a pre-release MP3 so that they can check your music out before the public gets a hold of it.

For podcasts, you'll want to start reaching out to them about 4 weeks before the release date, since it takes podcasters some time to produce their shows. You can start with music podcasts, but you should also consider a general podcast campaign. See IndieGuide.com's [How To Get Played On Podcasts](#) for ideas on how to do this.

For [music blogs](#), you'll want to wait about 2-3 weeks before the release date. Keep in mind that, while they do reviews, they often give away MP3s as well.

Target Your Local Media and Area

If you scheduled a release party, plug it again by contacting any local media and telling them you'll add them to your guest list. Also, this is a good time to make sure that the local neighborhoods have posters, postcards, or anything else that you distribute.

Reach out to your Fans through your Mailing List and Blogs

In the last month, plug the release party and the album release to everyone on your mailing list and blog about it on your website. Ask your fans and street team to help you promote your release and event. Have them talk about it online.

Amp up your Social Media

Social media should be used all the time, but with only one month until your release date and party, it's especially important to get the word out. Think about creating an event on Facebook, or have a contest and give away free copies of your album to those who promote the event. Ask fans to re-tweet and spread the word to their followers and friends.

The Day of the Release: The Big Event



Don't just sit back

Use this day to communicate. Try to angle your newsletter, blog, and social media updates to be about the fans. Fans look for themselves on these sites afterwards, and when they do, they share those links with their friends.

Take photos and video of the pre-event, the event, and post-event.

Be sure to focus the lens on your fans as well. When you post the content online, they'll be excited to see themselves and will be more likely to share the links with their friends.

Post-Release: Building Word of Mouth



After you've released the album, your work isn't finished. Post-release promotion efforts can be equally as vital as the lead-up.

Launching the New Media Campaign (Part II)

While the traditional media rarely covers albums after they've been released, the new media likes talking about new music all of the time. Continue to send your music out to blogs, podcasts, and websites to generate more buzz and accumulate positive reviews for your press kit.

Echo Good Reviews and Press Through Your Social Media, Blog, and Newsletter

Post and link to good reviews of your album, your songs, your release party, and any interviews you've gotten. Echoing this through the social media will help keep attention on you as an artist. Your fans will be more excited to spread the word-of-mouth love as you support your album with a tour or series of shows. Or, until you start working on the next album and start the process all over again.

CONCLUSION

You don't get a second chance to have an album release, so it pays to do it right. By following these steps, future album releases will be even easier since you'll build off your previous successes and the relationships you've established. You'll have an established press list that will cover your next release. Plus, you'll have even greater name recognition and accumulate more fans who can help you. And then promotional opportunities will start coming to you.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Randy Chertkow and Jason Feehan are columnists at [Electronic Musician](#) and authors of two books: [The Indie Band Survival Guide: The Complete Manual for the Do-It-Yourself Musician](#) (US/Canada – St. Martin's Press/Macmillian) and [The D.I.Y. Music Manual](#) (Europe/Australia – Ebury/Random House). They are also founders of the open and free musician resource, [IndieGuide.com](#).

They are also customers of CDBaby through their band, [Beatnik Turtle](#), which National Public Radio dubbed "remarkably prolific and fiercely independent." Beatnik Turtle has released 18 albums, released a song for every day of 2007 at [TheSongOfTheDay.com](#), and has composed music for TV, podcasts, theater (including Second City), and licensed music to companies like ABCFamily/Disney, AtomFilms, and SpikeTV – all without a label. They are currently working on their 19th album.