

MUSIC LICENSING – BROADJAM COMMERCIAL LICENSING SERVICE

Broadjam aims to link songwriters and music industry

If Roy Elkins had his druthers, he'd be writing music for a living. But since that endeavor wouldn't pay the mortgage, Elkins figures he's got the next best job: connecting singer-songwriters with music publishers and others in the industry.

"There is nothing I'd rather be doing," said Elkins, a former marketing executive. "It would thrill me if some 18- or 19-year-old could become a big success. ... This is a for-profit business, but I don't think you start something like this solely for the money. You do it because you have a passion for it. Providing opportunities for songwriters was the main incentive."

WisBusiness editor Brian Clark spoke with Elkins recently.

Brian Clark: How did Broadjam come to be?

Roy Elkins: I was involved in two start-ups prior to this. One was Sonic Keyboards, where we made synthesizers and electronic keyboards from the early 80s to about 1997. I left just before the company was sold to Creative Labs. Then I was recruited by Sonic Foundry to come here and be VP of sales and marketing and we had a good run there. I started in January of '97 and left Aug. 31 of 1999.

My background is building instruments and technology for musicians and marketing that technology. I've always been a song writer and I loved song writing and the composition and production process.

I really wanted to figure out a way to combine my background in technology with my love of songwriting. Obviously the Web was evolving with Napster and MP3.com and those kinds of sites and I decided that --

Well, actually when I left Sonic Foundry I had no idea what I was going to do, though I kind of knew where I wanted to go. I got an office on Sept. 15 down in New Glarus because I have a farm down there and I wanted a place to come into every day. This is what evolved. I had three or four ideas that I wanted to pursue, but this was really where my heart and my passion was.

My wife and I put the initial seed money in and we hired our first employees in March of 2000. Of course then the markets crashed and all hell broke loose for the next four years.

Clark: What did you do during that time?

Elkins: Well, if we had waited 60 days, we might not have started the company because we didn't know how hard it would be to raise funds. But we were already making a lot of progress and we'd hired some good people – in fact, two are still with us. We just kind of invented for the first four years. We tried to find some consulting gigs and we did, one with Warner Chappell Music, one of the largest music

publishers. But we never took a consulting gig that did not support our long-term effort, which is building one of the world's largest independent music sites.

We always wanted to gather as much content (songs, videos and bios) as we can, provide services for those content holders who are independent artists and their music. We created a bunch of services so independent artists can come in and have their Web site hosted with us and sell their downloads on the Web site. They really don't need to know anything about Web construction or e-commerce. If you can use Google and search the Web, you can build a Web site at Broadjam and you can have your own URL.com and manage it from the Broadjam profile account.

For some, it's a place where you can get reviewed. On any given day there are 1,000 to 1,500 reviews on Broadjam. So you put your songs out and as soon as you start reviewing, you start getting reviewed. If you don't review, you don't get reviewed.

Clark: To be reviewed, you have to review others?

Elkins: Exactly. If you want to put a song in the cue, you have to review five others. We always have a pool of reviews coming in. It's been a great feature and it's free.

Clark: How do you make money from that?

Elkin: We don't make money from that. That's just part of our network. For Broadjam as a whole, people pay us to host their Web sites. We take a little piece of the download sales and we have advertisers. This month, we will have close to 800,000 visits to the site and 8 or 9 million page views. We are starting to get to the point where advertisers see us as a legitimate entity.

Another thing that musicians can do is submit to radio stations. We have a network of about 1,500 program directors who have opted in and listen to our musicians, who pay us to distribute their work. There are a lot of little services like that.

Recently, we launched a new service – and it's incredible how fast it has grown – that features a group of music supervisors from film, television and advertising who give us their opportunities for destinations for the content. They call us and say we are a reality TV show that is looking for hip hop or they are daytime soap that needs a country ballad. Then our members submit to that and the supervisors can review what's there and see all the ratings of the songs and learn more.

Just recently, our first artist was placed. And in the past, we had an nurse from Philadelphia who wrote the Kwik Trip jingle that was run until recently. And then the Hiebing Group ad agency here in town called me and said they were looking for a jingle for one of their clients. We put a challenge on our site and within six days we had 36 custom pieces of music for them. We have about 72,000 artists and 350,000 songs – almost all original. We also had a Konami (Dance Dance Revolution) song contest that was won by a 19-year-old from Kenosha who is a big fan of the DDR game. They wanted electronic music for inclusion in their games. We did it for them last year and again this year and the kid from Kenosha won. Kwik Trip also chose a couple of other jingles as a result of the contest.

It's the type of situation where the advertisers don't want to pay \$10,000 for a jingle, but they can come here and find original music that fits exactly what they are looking for and doesn't pay the advertiser anything?

Clark: The song writer doesn't get paid?

Elkins: I mean Broadjam doesn't get paid. The writer does. I spoke recently with Liz Miller, the lady from Philadelphia and she told me she'd never been paid anything for her songs. She earned \$3,000 for her jingle and she was in tears. She'd been writing for years. She told me she was going to buy a keyboard. Since then, she has won several other contests. And I know she has some songs signed to publishers in Nashville and she's doing very well. When I was in Los Angeles recently, I introduced her to some people in the business and I think she will be writing songs for a living soon.

I wouldn't say this is because of Broadjam because all we are is a conduit. I could take a song in to one of the biggest people in music, but if it doesn't cut the mustard, it won't fly. The song is what sells it. We don't sell anything. We try to match writers up. We never want to claim that we placed a song. We help, but the artists and their creativity are what do it. If they get placed because of their interaction with us, that's great. And it's good for our business, too, and the people on the other end, too. They can come in and use our search engine to find whatever kind of songs they are looking for – from country to reggae to classical. Because of the rankings or reviews, they can find the best stuff that is specifically what they want.

That is one of the most popular parts of the site for the supervisors and people who are looking for music. But fans use it too.

Clark: What do you charge to host a musician's Web site.

Elkins: \$20. But we don't charge anything to help them build it, if they want to use our free templates. We have several hundred that they can pick from. They just have to fill in the text, register their URL.

Clark: How does a musician sell downloads through Broadjam?

Elkins: We believe we have the highest payout on the Web. If you sell your downloads for 99 cents, we take 19 cents and you get 80 cents. If you sell it through iTunes, I believe you will only get about 50 cents. Most people take 40 or 50 percent. We are not interested making a lot of money off artists. Now if someone sells a million songs, that's nice revenue for us. Right now, we are primarily a musicians' site, though we hope over the next few years more and more fans will use us. And in fact, we see download sales growing faster than anything.

We have lots of contests and we probably get approached by a contest company every day. But we don't go with just anyone. We make sure they are all ethical. We have two types, our own internal songwriting challenge for our members and external contests by groups such as the Dallas Songwriters Association. This is the fifth year we have done that for them.

We've also worked with the Academy of Country Music and our consultant group built their Web site. We also handle all their electronic voting for their show. It all comes through Broadjam and this year was scheduled for CBS on May 15. As part of that, we plan to fly out five of our best writers out to sit down with top publishers and do a round robin where each one will get 15 minutes with each publisher. That kind of access is virtually impossible in the music industry.

Clark: Are you able to set this up because of your connections?

Elkins: Yes. And the Academy has helped us and endorsed this. We've done other contests for some of the biggest names in the music industry.

Clark: Have you had any success yourself with song writing.

Elkins: No, I haven't. (Sigh) But I still love song writing. And since I started Broadjam, I really don't have the time. Though I try to write a little every day. Lately I've been into piano ballads, but I write according to whatever I'm feeling. I have a rock opera I wrote in college and I have some Willie Nelson- and Zappa-like stuff, too.

Clark: Are you doing this to give others opportunities, perhaps, that you didn't have?

Elkins: I guess. Yes, it would thrill me if some 18- or 19-year-old could be come a big success. Like, perhaps, that kid from Kenosha. This is a for-profit business, but I don't think you start something like this solely for the money. You do it because you have a passion for it. Providing opportunities for songwriters was the main incentive. Because of the technology, people are writing songs with others from all over the world. That's pretty cool.

Clark: Do you also have something that is like MySpace for musicians?

Elkins: On our site, we have an evolving social network system where people have a profile page where I can pick my favorite artists. It can be kind of addictive. We are going to expand it this summer so it will be a little more fan friendly and there will be blogs and communication.

We recently had the lead singer of Chicago who signed up and he's now selling hundreds of songs a day and just loving it. He has a MySpace account, but he is telling people to come to Broadjam. That one person is driving quite a bit of traffic to us.

Clark: Do you have a band now?

Elkins: No, in fact I haven't played live in 20 years. But I love to write and produce. In fact, I just produced a record for Jimmy Voegeli, who is nominated for Madison Area Music Award. It's the first project I've done in a long time and it turned out great. To be honest, it got my juices going again.

Clark: What else does your site offer?

Elkins: Something we have just launched is music deliveries. You can go to film and television opportunities and find a major cable TV series that has 14 episodes to fill with about 20 songs per episode. ... This would be for people who want to submit their music to the show producers for \$5. That goes to us, it's how we get paid for this. If we don't charge, everyone submits everything. This makes people pick their best stuff. We have to make sure there are screening processes along the way.

We also have professional reviewers, people who are known in the industry, doing reviews for us. They might be session players, radio hosts or jazz players. You can submit your songs for these guys to review. That's another service we offer that is above and beyond what we offer to radio and television. If you are a musician who will be playing in Toronto, you can find all the Toronto radio stations to get them to play your music. You can also send them a message and let them know in which clubs you'll be playing.

Clark: Are there enough independent radio stations left to submit music to?

Elkins: There are probably 10,000 and we have 1,500. Our partner, who is called DMDS, has gone out and found all these stations. There are also thousands of Internet stations now and there will be a lot more coming.

You can also, on our site, find the top 10 reviewed songs in different categories and for different regions. If you find a songwriter with three songs in the top 10, you have to figure he or she is pretty good. We probably get 400 songs a day submitted to us. And that is just growing. A couple of years ago, it was 200 a day.

Every morning we update this list, so you can almost listen to it like an online radio station. What thrills me most about this site is the diversity I find. I love original music. I love to just come in and listen to new music. If I can help these people find an outlet, then I'm happy.

Another thing is that original classical artists have almost no outlet other than the Web. When people buy classical music, the writers are 300 years dead. So this is a new outlet for them. If you want to find more about the artist you are listening to, you just click on their name. And then you can listen to all their music.

Clark: Anything else special about the site?

Elkins: Yes, we also break out the songs by age group, so you can see what 25- to 36-year-olds like from month to month. That's pretty cool, too.

Clark: What do you see Broadjam doing five years from now?

Elkins: More of the same, connecting songwriters with publishers and helping them find outlets and success.

<http://www.wisbusiness.com/index.html?Article=96465>

Music licensing is a highly competitive area of the music business, but everyone deserves a fair shot. All music licensing opportunities on Broadjam are open to every musician that wants to be considered, making it a level playing field for all. Every day on Broadjam you can find over 100 music licensing opportunities for your music, covering every style and genre.

Our music licensing submission mechanism is completely transparent. You submit your songs and track the decision making process: see when your song is heard, when your profile is viewed and find out which songs are selected or under consideration for each project. If your song is not licensed for a project, but another Broadjam member was, we'll give you a link to that song so you can hear what song was licensed so you can learn from the process. All music licensing submissions will be heard by the person providing the opportunity before they make a final decision - we guarantee this or your submission fee will be refunded.

<http://www.broadjam.com/services/musiclicensing.php>