



which fans will respond.

3) Add Value. Speaking of value-added, in this day and age, consumers need more than 40 minutes of music. The standard of what constitutes an "album" goes back to the late-1960s LP days. For new studio recordings, bonus tracks should be included. Catalog greatest-hits compilations should run to 75 minutes. Short albums should be doubled up as a two-for at a single CD price.

4) Lower prices. CDs have been long overpriced. The \$18 suggested retail price has been kept artificially high for years, even though the hardware plummeted to the point that a portable CD player can be had for \$20 and the replication cost for a fully packaged disc is under 50 cents per unit. In fact, back in the early 1980s musicians

were asked to take a reduced artist royalty on sales rate. The going reduction was 75 percent of the artist's LP royalty. According to music attorney Bruce Colfin of the New York firm Jacobsen & Colfin, "many record contracts still consider CDs a new technology," and the record companies think they're entitled to the cut rate. "It becomes a negotiating point," said Colfin.

5) Don't Screw the Musicians. If major labels want to build good will in this industry they should start thinking about who is responsible for the music in the first place. Taking advantage of naive and under-represented talent just because they can be exploited is abhorrent behavior that unfortunately has always existed in the music business. On Oct. 17, a New York appeals court

ruled that 1960s girl group the Ronettes had no right to royalties based in their songs being used in movies and commercials. Recording Artists Coalition spokesman Jay Rosenthal commented that the ruling "will do nothing but embolden those who make a living out of exploiting recording artists." In the case of an album that the label regards to be not worthy of release, forcing musicians to buy back masters at a price well above recording costs (essentially holding it for ransom) is downright mean-spirited and immoral.

6) Bring back singles. Forcing consumers to buy a greatest hits album when they have the rest of the artist's back catalog to get the one new track (e.g., the just-released Nirvana retrospective) only drives fans to MP3 file-sharing services. So start putting CD singles on store shelves. Europe has proved it still can be a viable format.

7) Tread lightly with copy protection. The labels' desire to prevent massive CD-R copying is understandable. But releasing CDs supposedly protected with commercially unproved technologies is foolhardy, especially if the labels know that they won't play on some percentage of car CD or DVD-Video players, or on computer hard drives. That might be downright fraud.

8) Don't skimp on packaging. An intriguing package might be a further incentive for a would-be consumer to buy a new CD. In the case of a 25th anniversary release, there's an opportunity to dig up unpublished photographs and include liner notes that explain the importance of the album, rather than just reprint the same cover with a line of text or sticker noting that it's a "Remastered Edition."

9) Think visual. Music is already doing infinitely better sales-wise on DVD-Video than it ever did on VHS, which had a 20-year head start and still has almost a three-times larger player base. Song selectability, multi-channel audio and improved picture make all the difference in both concert performances and music video compilations. The labels have realized this, almost to the point that if there's a new CD release for a major artist these days it's almost mandatory to simultaneously put out a DVD-Video. Many artists not associated with a major label, such as Ani DiFranco, Cowboy Junkies and John Prine are also taking advantage of the economics of producing a DVD. Reporting on new DVD releases from bands Metallica, Staind, Slipknot, Nickelback, Korn and Marilyn Manson, *ICE* magazine observed in its November issue, "As the CD sales slump continues with no end in sight, record labels are pursuing an alternate course: the DVD format."

10) Allow CD-R burning. The major label's attempts at paid subscription services have been pathetic. A step in the right direction was the recent announcement from Listen.com to offer CD-burning of select digital tracks from Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group, as part of online subscription service Rhapsody. Clearly, subscription services' viability will be based on how much music is made available, coupled with the right to burn copies of the downloaded tracks, as well as output to digital devices. Anything less is ridiculous.

In a nutshell, music fans will respond to physical media offers if they're treated with respect, and the artists themselves should receive nothing less.

Sell Singles Everywhere

Convenience is the deciding factor for every consumer purchase. Americans may buy more music if they didn't have to journey out to a dedicated record store that may or may not have what they want.

They enjoy having physical copies of new songs to play for the few weeks they're on radio or TV. It's too much time and effort to search for free files and burn CD-Rs. But the alternative is paying \$15 for the single they want surrounded by a bunch of superfluous tracks and packaging.

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So try bringing back CD singles. Include two songs on them at the most. Conceive of the whole package to be disposable—more potato chip bag than jewel case.

Most importantly, make your new singles available literally everywhere—say, anywhere that sells soda. And price them to be a total impulse buy—99 cents.

I think you'll discover that the revenue stream this business was founded upon a hundred years ago has never dried up.

—Terence P. Keegan