

Not Just Kids' Stuff

Indie jazz musicians see pros, cons of social networking sites



As a non-pop music, jazz typically rewards the self-starter. And just as the Internet has put the power of the press into the fingers of the individual, so too does it allow independent musicians to effectively market themselves and maintain professional relations using such social networking sites as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter.

The Leavenworth, Kan.-based Artist Recording Collective (ARC) uses such technology as its foundation. The year-old group's mission statement states how it "emphasizes promoting and facilitating the distribution and utilization of the works created by our artists" through means such as Twitter updates and a Facebook group and fan page.

"The major labels used to be the gatekeepers with the studios and means of distribution. Technology has changed all that," said ARC co-founder and alto saxophonist Chris Burnett. "If you can use the technological tools, which are great, you can find an audience. The whole paradigm has shifted through sites like Facebook. It's empowering for an independent organization like ARC to be able to tap into that network of users."

Kitty Margolis, a San Francisco-based vocalist and co-founder of MadKat Records, added that it helps to distinguish the three main social networking sites.

"MySpace is mostly for music," Margolis said. "It's a good place for fans and other musicians to contact me, at least initially. MySpace is not widely used by my friends who aren't in or don't follow the music business."

Margolis is also clear about the sites' limitations.

"Facebook is fun. I try to use it for 'real' friends, people I actually know and like in and outside the music biz," Margolis said. "I don't think of Facebook for promoting gigs or CDs. It's a turn off when people use Facebook primarily for self-promotion. Most of the people contacting me on LinkedIn are on the 'business' side. Other than that, it is a pretty boring place to be."

When it was founded late in the summer of 2003, MySpace was a secondary site to musicians' own web sites. These days, it's frequent-

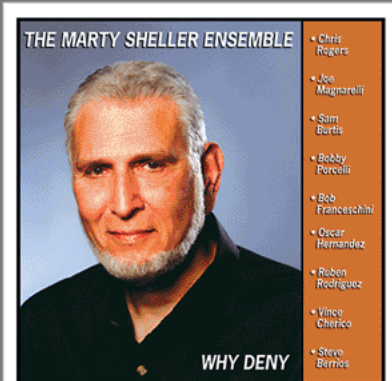


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musically. People don't always release albums, so it can be helpful to hear a recent live clip. The quality of sound can be not so good, but it's fine to get an idea of what's going on."

Twitter, a self-described "real-time short messaging service that works over multiple networks and devices," gives musicians an opportunity to reach subscribers directly in brief blasts. Petaluma, Calif.-based bassist Chip Boaz lets his fans know his thoughts on concerts he's attended and recent events.

But sometimes, older-school new technologies work better. Like Margolis, saxophonist Anton Schwartz uses Facebook to connect with whom he calls "actual" friends and other musicians, too. The one-time Stanford University doctoral candidate in artificial intelligence tends to stay away from MySpace, which he finds "unusably slow," and has found his best success with his long-running e-mail

ly the converse.

"I find it useful to find musicians and to find out who works with who and who knows who," said Justin Carroll, an organist and pianist based in Dublin, Ireland. "It's a great tool to get an idea of what someone is up to

newsletter updates.

"I find that e-mailing fans is invaluable," Schwartz said. "I try to make the e-mails conversational and include information that makes it easy for people to come to gigs, and easy for them to want to."
—Yoshi Kato

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