



Over the last few years, videos have become an essential part of an artist's promo kit. They can also be a great way to promote your act in general. Today, in fact, video presentations can be decisive in drawing new fans, getting a gig, a tour and even a deal. Videos are so important that artists cannot overlook them and hope to compete. One video, however, does not fit all. You need videos for various purposes. So that our readers will understand what's really necessary, *Music Connection* investigated the ins and outs of video making, and what it takes to make a video that will boost your career.

THE VIDEO REVOLUTION

Videos are so omnipresent that you can hardly go a day without seeing one. Artists are expected to have at least one (if not more) at their disposal. Today, fans, bookers, promoters, talent buyers and label execs want to see videos. Photos aren't enough anymore; they want to actually see an artist in action. For better or worse, videos have become a vital part of every artist's package and promotions — both online and off.

If you don't have a video on your MySpace page, in your EPK or on YouTube you could be considered clueless. There's really no reason not to have one. With advancements in digital camcorders and editing software, costs have been greatly reduced. For only a few hundred dollars you can produce a decent video. That's way cheaper than most artists' recordings. There are even sources where you can get professional videos done for free.

With that in mind, *MC* probed the audiovisual world to see what kind of videos you need and how they should be used. We talked with artists, bookers, video producers, content providers and a couple of tech-heads who gave us the inside scoop about artist videos and their many uses. Their advice is something every artist should take to heart.

ONLINE

Almost 80 percent of U.S. internet users watch videos online, according to ComScore Networks, a company that measures how the internet is used. ComScore's most recent survey discovered that almost 134 million users watched over 10 billion videos a month.

This revolution is generally credited to YouTube and its video-sharing format. But it goes way beyond that. Nowadays music artists and major companies are featuring videos in news sites, blogs, social networks, online stores, and film, television and music sites. Videos are everywhere in cyberspace.

OFFLINE

There are many uses for videos offline as well, from reviewing your performance to submissions to the industry. Utilizing a video to see what you really look like onstage is an awesome learning tool, as long as you view it with an open mind.

More importantly, videos are required if you want to get booked for certain gigs, tours and to make submissions. **Chris Fletcher**, a tour booker and promoter, advises, "A video must be part of every act's package. Festivals, street fairs, out of town shows and college gigs require them." Truth is, Fletcher informs us, "The **National Association for Campus**

Activities (NACA) won't even consider you without one."

TARGETING YOUR VIDEO

There are several types of videos to consider: story, promo, performance and fan-generated. Each has its place for a variety of reasons, depending on what your target is.

Fans are easy — they'll like just about any video from their favorite act. Industry and promoters, on the other hand, like a polished, professional product. Fletcher explains, "They prefer a higher quality video that's performance-oriented with some information about the artist included."

Colleges and NACA in particular need to see a live performance, but also want to know as much about the artist as possible" Fletcher, who has successfully repped numerous acts for college gigs, notes, "The vibe and feeling they get about an artist is as important as the music. You have to remember," she says, "at colleges, decisions are made by students, not professionals, and they like to know the artist."

However, when submitting for college gigs (and many live gigs) a "story" video could be the kiss of death. "They don't care for them at all," Fletcher alerts. "In fact, for most purposes, a story video is unwelcome. They want to see you performing, not acting," she explains.

Fletcher recalls that a group named Raining Jane had a video everyone loved, and it got them a NACA showcase spot. "It caused quite a buzz." The band's **Becky Gebhardt** explains how they did it. "We talked with students who make the decisions and found out what they were like and what they look for." Gebhardt informs, "We discovered that student-promoters don't like anything too edgy or extreme. They want to see attitude but not arrogance. And most importantly, they want to see you performing and how you relate to an audience."

Raining Jane



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—BECKY GEBHARDT

Raining Jane

THE VISION THING

Story videos, however, often used by singer/songwriters and urban artists are not strictly forbidden. **Travis Allen**, CEO of My Record Label, cites, "A lot of our singer/songwriters have a story to tell, and their videos get a lot of plays. It just depends what you want to use the video for."

Camp Clovenhoof, a satirical pop-hip-hop crossover act, produced a story video ("A Day at The Office") that garnered finalist status in the International Video Music Awards. "We had a strong vision for that one," Hoof's **Brian Julianel** relates, "and it paid off." Their second video, however, bombed. "The reason," Julianel explains, "was that we took direction from someone else and it took us out of the creative process." With 20/20 hindsight Julianel believes, "Artists should always stay true to their vision. A video should be a visual representation of your sound." And, he advises, "A little planning goes a long way. Story boarding before you shoot is essential."

GOING VIRAL

Nikki Katt and **Mara** co-wrote a song last year called, "This Halloween." It was about how females dress up — or, more accurately, undress — on that holiday. It caught the attention of a video producer who offered them a free shoot. They completed it one week before Halloween and put it on MySpace. Twenty-four hours later they had over 250,000 views.

"That was a shock," Mara exclaims. "You can't plan for that sort of response." Indeed, when a video goes viral you go with the flow. Katt adds, "We learned a lot from that experience. We found," she says, "that we could tap a lot of resources for promotion." Indeed, Katt convinced a company to supply all the costumes for free, and managed to create a professional looking video on a miniscule budget.

Nonetheless, Mara and Katt are cautious. "Our first reaction was to do a song and video for every holiday," Mara reveals. "But we realized you can't force inspiration. And we really weren't sure if we could manufacture that magic again."

VIDEO PRODUCTION

You don't have to spend a lot of money to get a video that's effective. Many venues offer multi-camera shoots of your performance for a hundred dollars or so. Sometimes you can get a performance video for free by having a friend shoot the show.

Additionally there are production companies offering a variety of services for budget-minded artists. **Gary Garver**, intrepid reporter heard on Sirius Satellite Radio's *Howard Stern Show*, formed a company (Exscape TV) to promote up-and-coming acts on his show *Almost*

Nikki Katt



WATCH VIDEO



Camp Clovenhoof

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Live (exscapetv.com). He also offers pro performance videos for a few hundred dollars. “I’ll see what the act wants, and we’ll shoot it,” Garver says. If invited on his show, you’ll get a free shoot that includes an interview and lots of exposure.

“The important thing,” Garver stresses, “is to give artists what they want. We’ll make suggestions, but they have to be happy with it.” Garver even allows artists to sit in on the editing and will shoot on location or in his studio.

Brave New Radio is another outfit that shoots performance videos. **Brian “Dino” Dean** indicates the purpose of his company is to supply artists with a free video and provide entertainment for college outlets. “We’re both a radio station and video company,” Dino says. “What we do is a little different. We shoot acts in a recording studio while they play live and record both the songs and the performance.”

Artists have the freedom to use the video any way they want. BNR will play the songs on its syndicated radio show and provide colleges with content. “At the moment we service over 300 colleges per week, with a goal of 600 by the end of the year,” Dean reports. BNR also sells downloads, offering a generous royalty rate to artists.

Noah Clark of Station 22 is a video guru. He has shot videos for MTV, advertisers and large corporations. “But my passion is music,” Clark says. “There are so many artists on the market today, you need to be visually sold as a whole package.” Clark will shoot from scratch or piece together existing clips for an EPK promo video. Station 22’s fees have a wide range, from a few hundred dollars to thousands. “We’ll work with just about any budget,” he reveals. “We love musicians.”

My Record Label offers several opportunities for videos. Allen reports,

“We have a couple of options for artists. If they place in our Top 10, we’ll offer them a free video shoot. If an act needs a video immediately, we can accommodate that as well.” Additionally, MLR’s website will accept videos from artists and promote them.

(Note: All of these services generally have about a week turnaround time, from shooting and editing to the finished product.)

PRO TIPS (Warning!!! Techie Stuff)

When it comes to making a useful video, production quality is important. And, anyone who has uploaded a video to the internet has probably experienced some disappointment. **Elisabeth Thormodsrud**, web manager for The Composers Corner, a video-based music site, explains, “It depends on the quality of the video to start with, internet connection speed and the compression used. All videos are compressed for online use and there are many formulas for compression, called codecs. You just have to experiment to see which works best for you; and, there are quite a few converting programs available that support a variety of input formats.” Thormodsrud points out that H.264 is a standard codec for video compression.

(Note: Thormodsrud suggests checking out **H.264 and MPEG-4 Video Compression: Video Coding for Next Generation Multimedia** by Iain Richardson for tips.)

As a final check, TCC’s Thormodsrud recommends viewing your video in different size screens. “This involves re-sizing your video,” she instructs. “The most common aspect ratio is 4:3 (standard television), but 16:9 and 2:1 (wide screen) ratios are becoming more commonplace. Typically, you should encode the video using the same ratio at

which it was originally captured. Altering a video clip’s aspect ratio may result in a distorted video image.” The final test? Thormodsrud advises, “Check it out on a large screen format. If it looks good, you’ll be happier with the results.”

She also informs *MC* that there are several ways to determine who is viewing your videos. “Google Analytics and Yahoo Insight are two very useful tools,” she notes. They report viewers’ connection speeds, where they’re from and how many times they viewed your video.

Clark affirms, “All of those tools are good, but the key is the quality you start with. You shouldn’t cut corners if you want a professional looking video.” And, he says, “there’s no reason to cut corners today. With all the prosumer equipment on the market, you should be able to find something that delivers what you need.”

RELEASES (Important Legal Stuff)

There are two types of release forms regarding videos. The first involves people who appear in your video. They have to give you permission to film them and publish the video. If you or your act are the only people who appear and you’re paying for the video, you’re generally good to go.

The second scenario involves videos shot by pros for free, and videos that may be used for ancillary purposes, like Brave New Radio, The Composers Corner and Gary Garver’s *Almost Live*. In those situations, you will often be required to sign a release form. The video company will want to use the video for their purposes; they may even suggest a royalty rate should the video (or music) be sold. Unfortunately, there are no standard

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—**CHRIS FLETCHER**
tour booker, promoter

PLANNING & SHOOTING YOUR VIDEO



GENERAL PREPARATION:

- Determine the purpose of your video (i.e. fun, submissions, fans, gigs, etc.).
- Storyboard the shoot.
- Use the best equipment you can get.
- Use more than one camera, if possible.
- Make sure the lighting is adequate.
- Make sure the "sound" is clear. Don't just use the camera's microphone.
- Shoot more footage than you think is necessary.
- Get help from an experienced video editor.
- Collect fan-generated video clips (shots from the audience).
- Make sure your completed video is no longer than 3 to 6 minutes max.



SUBMISSIONS: COLLEGES & LIVE GIGS

(Performance Videos for Festivals, Street Fairs, etc.)

- Event promoters want to see a live performance (they hate "story" videos).
- They want to know a little something (a few facts) about the act.
- They want to get a "personal feel" for the artist.
- They want to know what people (media/industry) think about the act.
- They want to see how you relate to an audience.
- They want it all within 6 minutes.



STORY VIDEOS

- Determine your vision and stick to it.
- Make the story interesting and compelling.
- Listen to other opinions, but do not let others steer you wrong.



USES & OUTLETS

- Research various outlets for your video. The internet has many to offer, as does cable TV.
- Think of all the ways you can use your video for promotions.
- ALWAYS put your video online.
- Learn about "compression" so that the best video quality is achieved.
- Create your own YouTube channel.
- Check Google Analytics and Yahoo Insight to identify your viewers.



PACKAGING FOR SUBMISSIONS

- Use "printable" DVDs.
- Create an attractive package that includes photos.
- ALWAYS check every DVD for glitches before sending it out.

terms. As such, you should ask to see the agreement beforehand so you can have legal counsel review it.

VIDEOS TO GO

It's an audio-visual world and there's no getting around it. If you're a serious artist you absolutely need a video (or two) at your disposal. It may take some time and money, but Chris Fletcher has good news if you do it right.

"The beauty of it all," she concludes, "is that an online video will be seen by more people than any one of your shows. It's a great promotional tool." And, she emphasizes, "If that video gets you a gig, the promoter will usually bring you back again, because many promoters handle more than one event."

There is no good reason not to take advantage of the video revolution. Are you ready for your close-up? 

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