

From The Editor

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COVER PHOTOS

Keith Zimmerman

Photo courtesy Keith Zimmerman

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Mr. Koh Saxman

Photo courtesy Mr. Koh Saxman

AND THE WINNER IS!

Including music sound on a website is a nice way to welcome folks to your home page, and if you have a recorded CD to sell, sample listenings of individual tunes. Even though individual tunes (songs) can be sold via iTunes, or CDBaby, using their "contracted" proprietary software, it is also possible, and getting more plausible, to sell your own product online (individual tunes from your recordings), using pre-packaged and designed "shopping card" software. Or even a whole CD, to be mailed to a customer, the old-fashioned way.

I believe it is only a matter of time before all musicians will be inclined to take advantage of this "individualized" marketing, using ever-more affordable and easy to use shopping cart software; in essence hosting your own mini song-selling company online through your personal website. The advantages are simple to understand, you keep all the profits. No more "middleman" or "endman," if you get my drift. Heck, you could also sell your friend's music too.

One neat thing about online payments is the ease with which you can purchase (lease), and set up an online payment processing service that transfers VISA or Mastercard funds from a customer, securely and directly, into your bank account. Any plastic payment vehicle (such as PayPal) can be utilized, still VISA or Mastercard are the most widely used. There is a small fee a seller pays per transaction, for using online payment processing (like any business).

I suppose it is a fair question to ask, "How much of a Geek do I need to be to do this?" Hey, it's getting easier and I would suggest we're at that stage where anyone can do this type of marketing for your own music, with reasonable ease.

WHAT FILE TYPE SHOULD I USE

A question you might ask yourself is, "What type of "digital" file format should I use to sell my music online, using MY OWN website." Before giving you the answer I'll summarize the file types for music that are available.

MIDI (file extension .midi): Short for Musical Instrument Digital Interface, MIDI files are extremely small and are supported by many different software versions and Internet browsers. This flexibility of access allows it to be used in amateur as well as professional music making. However many people do not enjoy listening to the limited amplitude of midi music files.

RealAudio (file extension .rm or .ram): This file format was developed to play internet streaming audio with low bandwidth. A common application includes internet radio. It is also popular with websites that allow users to listen to on-line music. However, because of low bandwidth, you will experience reduction in audio quality.

AIFF (file extension .aif or .aiff): Developed by Apple, AIFF is short for Audio Interchange File Format. These files are not supported by all web browsers or all platforms.

WAV (file extension .wav): Developed by IBM and Microsoft, WAV stands for "waveform.". This file format does not compress audio. Therefore WAV files are very large in data size. However, this "lossless" format is CD quality audio that can be used for broadcasting, or distributed through DVDs and CDs. An added advantage is that the WAV format is easy to transform and compress into MP3 or other formats. And importantly, it runs on any Windows or Mac computer as well as most web browsers.

WMA (file extension .wma): WMA is "Windows Media Audio." This format compares in quality to MP3, and is compatible with most players, except the iPod. Another plus is that it can be delivered as a continuous flow of data, which makes it practical for use in Internet radio or on-line music.

AND THE WINNER IS

MP3 (file extension .mp3): This is the most popular music sound format for usage online in a variety of ways. My July/Aug editorial will talk specifically about MP3 files: how they can help your website, and help you sell your music. §