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## Want A Deal? - By Wendy Wright

Here is an industry secret or shortcut that may help you to get a deal. An unsigned band or artist that sells exceptionally well on the SoundScan report can walk into almost any record label in the country with the power to negotiate a very good deal. Impressive SoundScan numbers are like an automatic open door to labels and can actually result in the infamous "bidding war." This is the surest way to get major label attention and a record deal.

The SoundScan is a report issued weekly that lists what every record in the United States sold last week and the total number of its sales to date. It is the most important report for record label executives because SoundScan results are reviewed and used to make major decisions concerning signed and unsigned bands. If a record's sales go up on the SoundScan label execs are happy. If a record's sales go down on the SoundScan the artist may lose their label's marketing support until the record sales go back up.

There is a serious Catch 22 at work here though. Most labels won't put much money in to promote a record unless the sales go up. But record sales can't go up unless the label puts money in to promote the record. This is where independent financing can be crucial. Unfortunately, most signed bands /artists get caught in this situation and end up sitting around with a deal, a release and a dead end record.

Another incredibly important industry secret or shortcut is that a record needs to sell well on the SoundScan in only 1 specific region of the United States in order to get major label attention. Forget about selling your record all over the country, you don't need to. Conquer one territory. An artist that conquers one territory will most likely be offered a deal, it's good business.

The SoundScan is divided into several territories: Northwest, Northeast, Midwest, Southwest, Southeast, big cities, rural towns, etc. You can select 1 territory i.e. Florida/Southeast, and focus all your promotion and marketing efforts on that territory to develop high record sales. Label Execs will take notice of any record that is charting and generating large sales in say, florida/Southeast and will unquestionably want to get in on and capitalize on the action. Bottom Line: If the label sees dollar signs \$\$\$ you can bet you'll get a deal.

Using this industry secret or shortcut there are only 3 steps you need to take to get a record deal:

### Q. Step One -Capital

You're going into business for yourself so the first thing you need is money or capital. Get an investor or invest your own hard-earned dollars and go professionally record your 2 or 3 best songs. Don't worry about recording an entire album at this point. Let the record label pay for recording the album later when you get your deal.

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With your capital, create a professional promotional package. Press your 2 or 3 songs on a CD with a CD label on the CD and a jacket inlay, album credits photos and/or artwork. Also, create professional marketing materials, including postcards, a poster and assemble a Press Kit which will contain the CD, professional photos, a bio, and gig reviews, if possible. Make 500-1,000 to start. Include your website/webpage address on everything.

#### Q. Step Two - Promotion

In real estate it's location, location, location! In the Music Biz it's Promotion, Promotion, Promotion! Promote and sell that record. MC Hammer sold his records out of his trunk and Metallica sold records at lives shows, both times record execs came sniffing.

Your only goal is to promote your record to radio and the public to get them to buy it and drive your SoundScan numbers through the roof! Quickly look at the word Music Business: Music is one 1/2 of the equation, business is the other. The better you are at business the more successful you will be. Madonna is an incredible business woman and the master of self-promotion, probably the greatest of all time. Self-promotion is crucial to the success of your career.

Here are the 10 ways you can begin to promote your record:

#### RECORD STORES

1) Visit record stores and give them copies of your record to sell on consignment. If they sell, the store will ask for more. These sold records will be reported to SoundScan. Contact CD Baby, CD Now or Amazon.com for information about selling your record on their sites.  
2) Do in-store performances at record stores for free, see if they'll hang your poster.

#### PERFORM LIVE

3) Play every Club and Festival you can throughout your target market. Plaster your poster around town to promote these gigs. Collect a mailing list, physical & E-mail addresses at your gigs. Send out postcards and E-mails to keep your fans updated on your upcoming shows.

4) Sell records at your own shows. Make sure you get a SoundScan sheet and record all sales and report it to SoundScan. Those sales count!

#### WEBPAGE

5) Create a professional Web page containing your bio, photos, press coverage, the dates of your upcoming shows and most importantly samples or MP3's of your music. Whenever talking about your band refer all contacts to your webpage, especially booking agents, managers, radio people, promoters and reporters.

#### RADIO

6) Hire an independent record promoter and/or visit every appropriate radio station and convince DJ's and Program or Music Director's to play your record. Give them your Press Kit. Do in-store performances at radio stations for free.

#### TV

7) Perform live for local television wherever possible. Get exposure!

8) Contact the Music Director of every show on that station and offer your music for free for use on any of their programs.

#### PIGGYBACK

9) Contact managers and local promoters and open for name bands or local bands performing in your target market. Becoming the opening act for another local band lets their record company pay for all the promotion, radio spots, flyers, posters, etc. that advertise your band on the bill.

#### THE PRESS

10) Contact all local newspapers and magazines and invite the press to review your CD and/or attend your shows for free. Arrange as many magazine and newspaper interviews as you can. If you can afford to, hire a publicist!

That's it. It's simple. Once your CD is recorded and your press kit is in hand, all you need to do now is to focus on promoting your record. Your goal is to generate as many units sold as possible. This whole process could take 1-3 years so be patient and don't give up. Overnight successes are possible, but rare. If you are serious about getting a record deal you need to prove to the label that you are an investment and a risk worth taking. Solid SoundScan numbers speak loud and clear.

#### Q. Step Three - Call Labels

Contact labels and tell them about your SoundScan results. Arrange meetings with all

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interested labels. Congratulations!

So that's all there is to it! Now you know a few industry secrets and shortcuts. You are armed with information that may make all the difference between you having a successful start in the music industry or being just another wannabee recording star.

Follow these shortcuts and you will have record execs opening their doors to you and serving you a deal on a silver platter.

If you are serious about getting a deal you have to be willing to work hard for it, but these secret shortcuts can make it a lot less painful!

GOODLUCK!

Ms. Wright has been in the music industry for over 15 years. She has worked for major and independent labels such as Virgin Records (Janet Jackson, Spice Girls, David Bowie) and Left Bank (Motley Crue, Meatloaf, Blondie, Cranberries), and also in public relations (Michael Jackson, Barbra Streisand, Lionel Richie, Neil Diamond). She is currently a Music Agent for her own agency Wendy Wright Entertainment. Wendywrightent@aol.com

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