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TIP JAR 10 WAYS to Be A GREEN MUSICIAN

Green is everywhere these days. You probably recycle, and you may eat organic. But have you considered how to green your music business? From artists to agents, producers to promoters, venues to vendors—everyone has a part to play. To help you get started, here are 10 things you can do right now to greenify your music:

RYAN MINTZ is a musician on a mission with a vision. When not touring or recording, Mintz speaks, blogs, consults and writes on greening the music industry. His book *The Green Musician* is planned for a 2011 release. Until then, join the e-list, Facebook and Twitter feeds for regular eco-tips. As a special offer, *MIC* readers can e-mail Mintz for free greening advice at ryan@thegreenmusician.com.



1. Switch to Eco-Friendly Packaging

CD packaging is one of the biggest culprits of the music industry's carbon emissions. According to eco-music nonprofit Julie's Bicycle, an order of 1,000 CDs in jewel cases spews over 2,200 pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere, with a third of that coming from the jewel case. Instead, try digipacks for a 66 percent CO₂ packaging reduction or cardboard wallets for a whopping 95 percent reduction! They cost only five to 15 percent extra, and the cost is coming down quickly. Some vendors even charge less than jewel cases for the eco-friendly wallets. So, what's stopping you?

2. Trim the Touring Footprint

By far, touring is the biggest worry for artists. With all the miles we drive, it's easy to feel guilty about all that tailpipe exhaust. But take hope. Many eco-conscious musicians have found ways to keep the gas bill down—saving both money and the planet. Bands can make sure they're carpooling to gigs. Session players can try taking the bus to the studio. And songwriters can try booking a tour with another songwriter. Not only will you both cut your touring footprint in half, but you can split the booking and promo responsibilities. Start small, and feel good about your earth-loving action.

3. Makeover Your Marketing Plan

There are two things to consider: greening your materials and greening your message. Try a green printer next time you print flyers, postcards or business cards. Many have easy online ordering systems and feature frequent discounts. It may cost a few cents more for each, but it goes a long way for the planet! According to Alliance for Environmental Innovation, switching to recycled paper not only saves trees, but cuts energy use by 27 percent, greenhouse gases by 47 percent, and solid waste by 54 percent. Announce on your website what you're doing to be a green artist.

4. Try Download Cards

It's the new low-carbon way to release songs! You've probably seen download cards around. It's the size of a credit card with a website and redemption code on the back. And at a fraction the cost of CDs, they're taking off with indie musicians. Planet-wise, we can celebrate that they use up to 50 times less materials than CDs. Even better, they come in a range of earth-loving options: recyclable plastic, recycled cardboard or even biodegradable seed paper your fans can plant after they download. Try them for an EP, a promo giveaway or your latest demos.

5. Go Organic, Baby

The ubiquitous tour t-shirt is every fan's ideal concert memento. But did you know that cotton is a major pesticide crop? About 25 percent of the world's insecticides go to the fuzzy plant. So, choose organic t-shirts for your next order. And be sure to promote it at the merch table. Your fans will love you for it.

6. Get a Greener Guitar

Even our guitars may not be earth-friendly. Many instrument makers use wood from endangered tree species, such as rosewood, mahogany and ebony. But it's actually consumers who demand these high-quality tone woods, so it's up to us to change our habits. Luckily, some guitar companies now offer forest-friendly options. The options are sparse for now, and a bit pricey. Think \$1,000 and up. But I can tell you from experience—they sound excellent.

7. Eco-fy your Web Presence

As musicians, we are constantly sending messages to our listeners, especially online. So why not use your website, newsletter and social networks to shout out your green values? Fans care about what we think. They visit websites, join e-lists and add fan pages to learn more about their favorite artists. And—they don't want to be spammed about your next show every day. Try using this platform to talk about issues you care about. Post an article about global warming to your Twitter feed. Ask your Facebook fans for advice on planting an organic vegetable garden. Give green tips in your newsletter. It's more fun for everyone, and gets fans feeling more connected to you and your values. Plus, it's free!

8. Support a Nonprofit

Another free way to help out is to support your favorite eco-cause. Many artists perform benefits, donate songs or pass out info on green nonprofits at the merch table. Some artists even form a partnership with an organization. You can be their local spokesperson, and they can reach a hip music audience. It's a win-win.

9. Write an Earth-Loving Song

Hey, if Melissa Etheridge can win an Oscar for a song about global warming, we've definitely come a long way! For a no-cost green action, write your own love song to the planet. Sing it at your shows, and you'll be spreading the good green grooves.

10. Carbon Offset

Sometimes, you've done as much as you can to help Mother Earth, but you're still not carbon neutral. That's when you purchase carbon offsets. There are several carbon calculators online. Basically, you enter your driving, flights and electricity for the year; the calculator spits out a total; and then you buy your way to carbon neutrality.