# Online Community and Fandom

Nancy Baym

by:Larm Oslo 2008

I'm here to talk on behalf of the fans, and in particular the online fans.

The internet has transformed what it means to be a music fan. Fans can and do build communities more rapidly and successfully now than ever before, with consequences not just for their own experience of music, but for everyone involved in the creation, distribution and promotion of music in any capacity. They're making a new kind of music scene that transcends place and shakes up long-standing balances of power between fans and the music makers. Though it gets all the attention, downloading is just one piece of this. I want to focus on the pieces that don't get discussed as often.

My goal today is to provide a big picture perspective on how it is that the internet has empowered fans in this way, what relational consequences this has, and offer some suggestions on how to foster relationships with fan communities from which everyone can benefit.

R.E.M.   *Think Tank Decoy*   Summer 1992

R.E.M.   *Catbutt*   Summer 1992
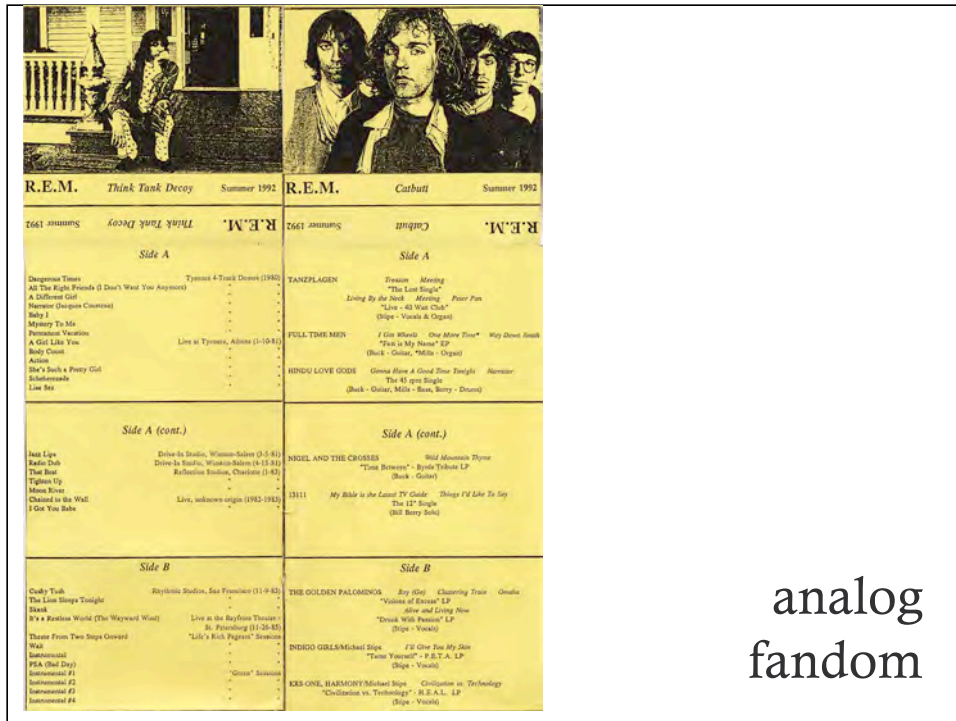
analog fandom

I want to start by going back about 25 years to the early 1980s and take a very quick walk through pre-internet fan community. There was an internet in the early 1980s, but most of us didn't know it.

I was a college student in the United States. It was a time when what we now call "alternative" or "indie music was first emerging from the tiny bars of places like Athens, Georgia. Like many of my friends at the time, I became entranced by R.E.M.

My friends and I spent hours listening to their records and talking about them. Their tours were the social highlights of the year – we'd throw our bags into a van with two seats and a mattress and take a movable party on the road to see their shows.

Along the way we met other REM fans in other towns. This broadened our knowledge base considerably: we could compare set lists, we could trade bootleg cassette recordings or leaked demos we'd made or traded our way into. Throughout the 1980s, working my connections, I amassed around thirty live REM tapes. This was considered an exceptional collection and I have to admit I was quite proud of both it and the social connections it represented.

We were something akin to a community. We didn't all know each other, but we weren't many degrees of separation apart. We shared values and we knew it, that was half of what it meant to be an REM fan.

For their part, REM fostered this fandom well. They combined accessibility and enigma so that fans could both identify with them and want to know more. The energy they and their fans generated created an entire music scene, one which launched many other bands.

That was my experience the 1980s, but fan community had been thriving for a long time before that. Deadheads had mastered the art of the distributed community, building a lifestyle around the Grateful Dead and setting up models of roadtripping, tape trading and social networking that thrive today.

Even before that, though, in the mid-1800s, American fans of Charles Dickens novels were said to gather at the docks as the ships arrived from England bearing new issues of magazines with new chapters of novels they were reading. It's hard to imagine these fans didn't come with their friends or take advantage of the opportunity to get to know one another.

These three earlier examples of fan community share qualities that the internet seems to disrupt:

They were firmly place-based, in that they rely on people coming together in physical space to form connections.

They were also reliant on media to which the fans simply did not have access -- magazines, book publishers, radio stations, the recording industry.

Fans did produce their own media before there was an internet. Fanzines and their equivalents go back at least to the early 1920s and probably earlier than that.They had very limited distribution, however.

fans were early internet adapters

When the internet became public in the 1990s, and even before then, music fans promptly recognized and took advantage of its potential to further their interest in music. They created mailing list and discussion groups in environments such as Usenet newsgroups, which are pictured here.

That the internet should prove hospitable to fandom is not surprising given that one of the first things those who were creating it did with it in 1972 (just 3 years after the first successful login) was to create a vibrant community of science fiction fans on the mailing list SF-Lovers.

parasol.com   urbana, illinois, usa

I want to personalize some of the ways the internet can superpower fandom with another tale from my own life as a fan.

A few years go, I logged onto a web record store based in Urbana Illinois, in the midwestern US. Parasol, run by a guy I grew up with, has carved out a bit of a niche for itself with a specialization in Scandinavian independent music. As you can see on the page here, they offer recommendations of "best Scandinavian releases" with full-song streams of sample songs.

I clicked on a stream of the song "Vocal" by Norway's Madrugada.

Hello, new favorite band.
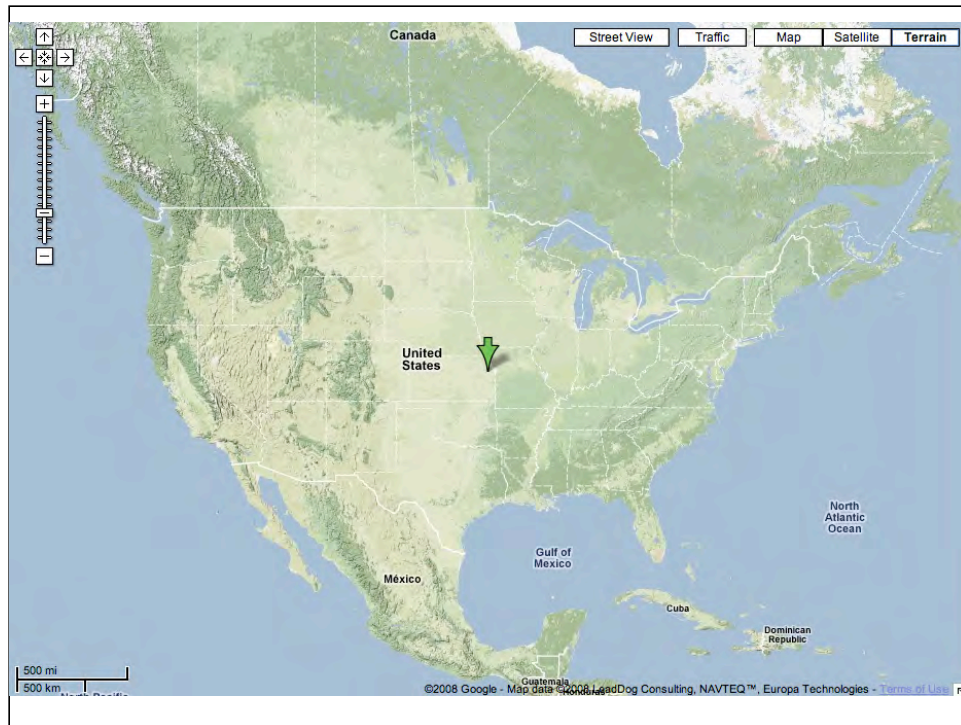
Consider my situation. I was in Kansas, the geographical center of North America.

No one I knew in my town had ever heard of Madrugada – the ones who have today heard about them through me. I couldn't buy any of their other records. And I was hungry to know more – what other records did they have? Were there unreleased songs? What were they like live?

madrugada fan site   berlin

I found a Madrugada fan site put together by a Norwegian living in Berlin and run continuously since 1999.

The fans involved in the site had built an incredibly detailed repository of information about Madrugada -- a complete concert chronology, a discography, photographs, videos, a complete list of all songs they were known to have ever performed, lyrics to all of their songs and, not least, a discussion forum

The forum is not huge. All its discussion is in English. The sites regulars include people from Norway, Germany, France, Switzerland, England, Greece and the US among other countries.

Through the board I met a man in France who'd collected many recordings – he sent me a CD-ROM with almost as many Madrugada concerts as I'd spent nearly ten years accumulating with REM. I never got to see them live, but I didn't have to miss it entirely.

fandom is social interaction

share feeling
build social identity
pool collective intelligence
interpret collectively

Through that fan board, I found information. I found music. I found people willing to discuss the minutia of something fascinating to me but boring to most. I found the resources that made it possible for me to be an engaged fan.

Now when I talk about "fans" I am not talking about everyone in the audience. There are a lot of ways to casually or deeply appreciate music without being a "fan." And you can be a fan without being engaged in fandom. But music is a social experience, and dedicated fans are often driven to connect with other fans. From its very origins thousands of years ago, music has been social. Its original and arguably core nature is to connect people. In connecting around music, fans today are continuing to foster the connection between music and sociability by talking about and sharing music.

fandom is social interaction

share feeling
build social identity
pool collective intelligence
interpret collectively

Fans do 4 core things when they talk about music online or off:

Share feeling : As most of you know well, loving music can be an emotionally powerful experience. Having access to other people who share those feelings validates our experience and provides means to foster and perpetuate those feelings. The feelings shared in fandom are not always good. I've seen fan communities angered or disappointed by bands or their recordings. I've seen them grieve together when musicians they loved died. I've seen them support one another through life's changes in ways that had nothing to do with the music.

Shared identity : Fans often build collective identities around music. When I worked in a record store, I could often guess what genre people would look at based on the way they were dressed or how they wore their hair. We develop shared systems of codes to mark ourselves as fans online and off. Fans don't all share a single identity, though, and there can be divisions within fan communities between, for example, fans of a hit single vs. fans of early obscure recordings.

Collective intelligence : Fans are generally interested in knowing more. They're the ones who buy magazines to read interviews with the person on the cover. As my REM and Madrugada stories illustrate, when they're together, they can create a pool of far more information than they can alone.

Collective interpretation : Fandom is also about pooling the resources of many to pick apart and understand. Whether it's figuring out what lyrics might be referencing, drawing attention to particular parts of songs, or debating whether or not Madrugada sold out by using an explosion of gold glitter as part of their live show, fans engage in making sense of things together.

> "Downloading of music, movies, games and programs is only one side of the story as well. On the other hand there is communities, blogs, websites with loads of information, free information of high and low (THE lowest) quality everywhere, all the time and it's increasing by the minute. It goes hand in hand with the downloading of music, movies, programs and games. It's stressful, highpaced, superficial and at times very rewarding. It's a world of culture under ongoing change at a level so basic that it probably will have replaced the old system completely in a couple of years. 4 years, counting from last Thursday, is our guess."
>
> - Hybris Records blog

The internet enhances all of these things I have been discussing and brings the bands, labels and others into this in new ways.

I want to suggest that at a time when the music industry is reeling from changes it barely understands, the sorts of activities fans are doing online have the potential to create the culture in which you will all be operating in the future.

"At a time when so much of the structure that holds together music culture has disappeared, fans could take the initiative to create a new one."

- Eric Harvey, *Pitchfork*

There are six qualities of the internet that enable fans empowerment and I want to talk through them with some examples, then wrap up by covering the implications this has for the relationships between fans, artists and labels. The six qualities are:
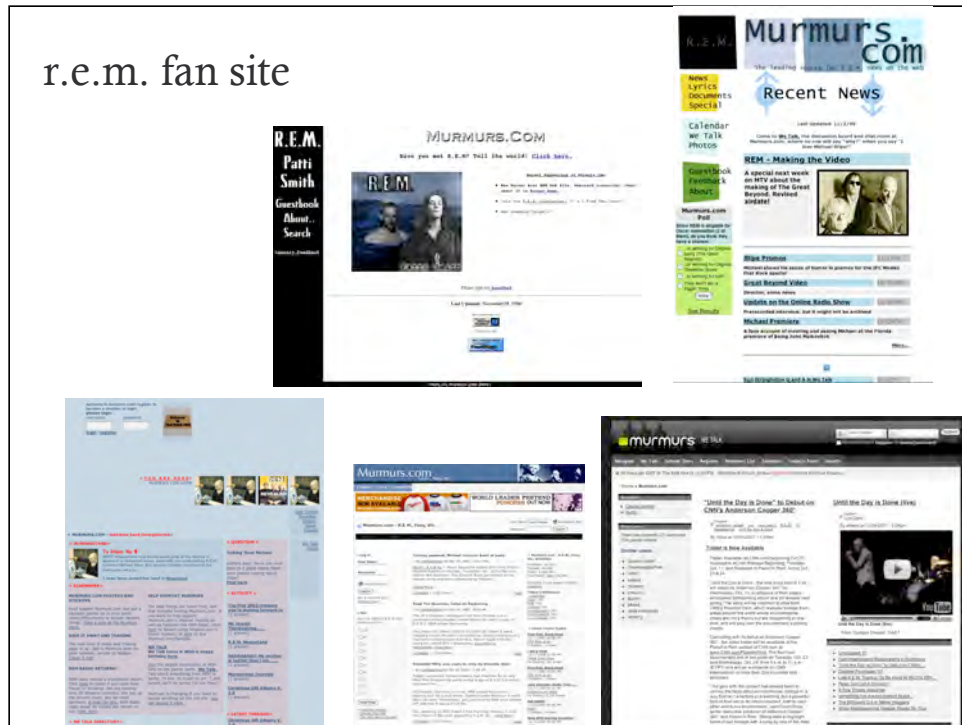
The internet extends fans' reach

It enables them to transcend distance

It provides group infrastructures

It supports archiving

It enables new forms of engagement

It lessens social distance

r.e.m. fan site

My favorite example of how the internet has increased fans' reach is murmurs.com. This is an REM fan site created in 1996 by Ethan Kaplan, who was then 16 years old. You see here what it looked like every two years. It quickly became the most popular spot for REM fandom on the internet and remains so today.

According to Kaplan, Murmurs has over 24,000 members, 2 to 3 thousand active participants. and 2 to 5 thousand people coming to the site daily where they read news, participate on the discussion board and participate on our Torrent tracker.

Through his website, Ethan was able to reach tens, probably hundreds of thousands of REM fans and provided them with a means to reach one another.

It also provided him with the means to reach the band and, eventually, the record label.

In addition to running the fan site, he is now the Chief Technology Officer for their record label, Warner Brothers.
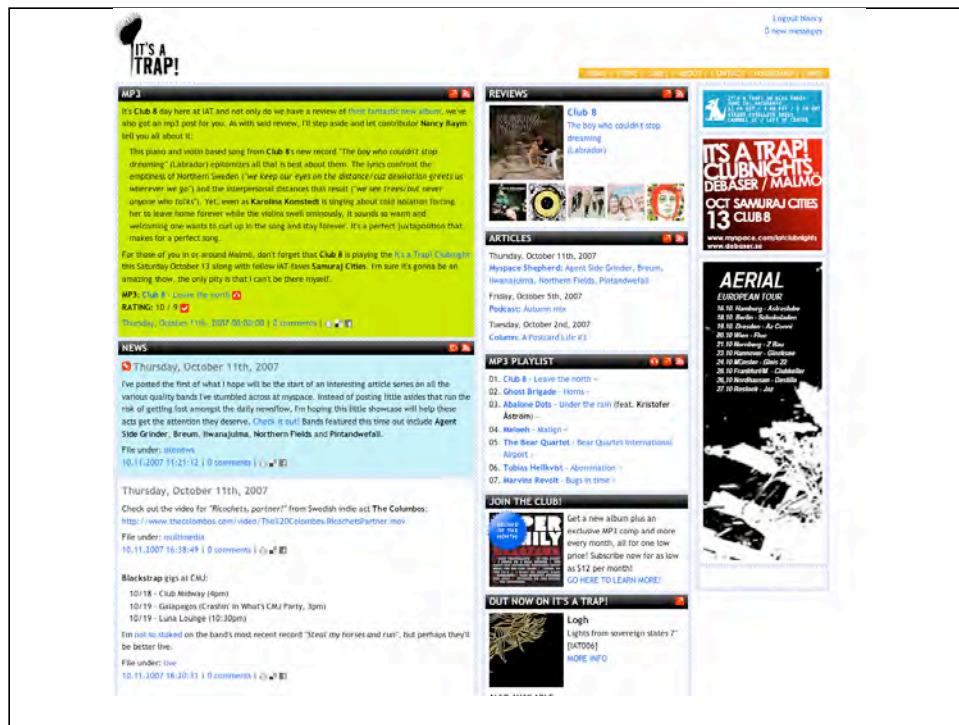
The internet also lets fans connect instantaneously across distance. This means they can build relationships across geographic boundaries and become centers of scenes regardless of their location.

I want to illustrate the impact of transcending distance by showing you the Scandinavian webzine "It's A Trap," run by Avi Roig and a motley crew of volunteer reviewers, including me.   It's a Trap gets several thousand hits a day from all over the world, and many from Scandinavia.

If you register you can use the message board and comment on items so there's some fan-interaction, though not much.

Roig describes himself as " the leading news provider -- the go-to site for many, many industry people and am often one of the first places people will send news releases since I have a quick turnaround and a wide reach"
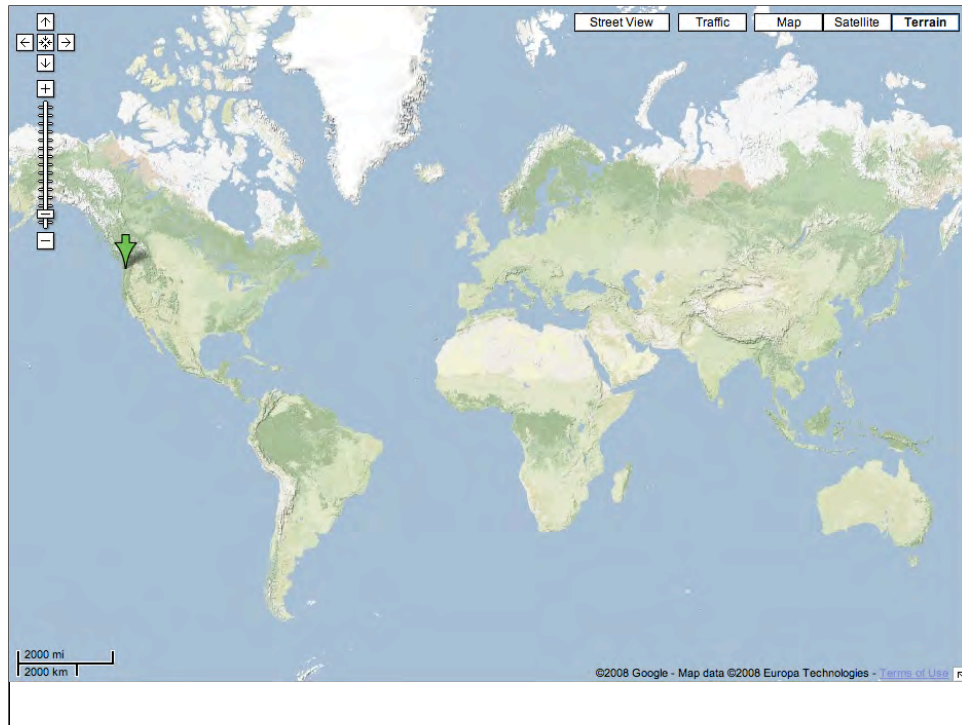
Avi runs it's a Trap from Olympia Washington.

It's hard to get much further from Scandinavia. Online it just doesn't matter.

"What I think is really fascinating about this bands and fans and the internet is that there are bands who are not very massive anywhere in the world but who have these tribes who can be traced through sites like Last.fm and MySpace all over the world."

> \- Nick Levine, *Tack! Tack! Tack!*

"The internet helps so much, especially myspace. People are listening to The Fine Arts Showcase in India and Thailand and Indonesia. I wouldn't be doing this interview if it weren't for the internet. Nobody in Indonesia would listen to The Fine Arts Showcase."

> \- The Fine Arts Showcase

The ability to transcend distance also means that bands can use the internet to build distributed fan bases in locations they never could before.

hybris worldwide orders

Every pin on this map is a city from which an order has been placed from Hybris Records' website in Stockholm, Sweden. They are offering half off to the first person to order from Africa, Antarctica or Greenland.

Sounds of Sweden (Glasgow)

Tack! Tack! Tack! (London)

Hej! Hej! (Washington DC)

Fikasound (Madrid)

It's A Trap (Malmö)

But even as the internet makes place less relevant, it increases the means for shared experiences of place. The pages you see here represent fan-sponsored music club in different cities that book only Scandinavian bands. These online fans create ways for bands to play for audiences in new places, and can create local scenes around Scandinavian music far outside Scandinavia.

Johan Angergård from Labrador Records and the bands Club 8, Acid House Kings and the Legends says, "I actually can't understand how [international booking] worked before Internet. People who contact us and want to arrange gigs are usually fans. Quite often fans doing gigs professionally, but still fans."

"I think I've done a lot to promote Swedish music in Scotland, and have converted many people into Swedophiles :) It's also great to be able to help Swedish musicians reach a new audience. Glasgow has now become a standard port of call for Swedish artists touring the UK. I've always had a great passion for music... but I can't play an instrument or sing, so this is what I do - I help make sure those with talent are heard."

- Stacey Shackford, *Sounds of Sweden*

I like this quote from the woman who runs Glasgow's Swedish music club because it shows how fans often view their labor as a means of participating in a community.
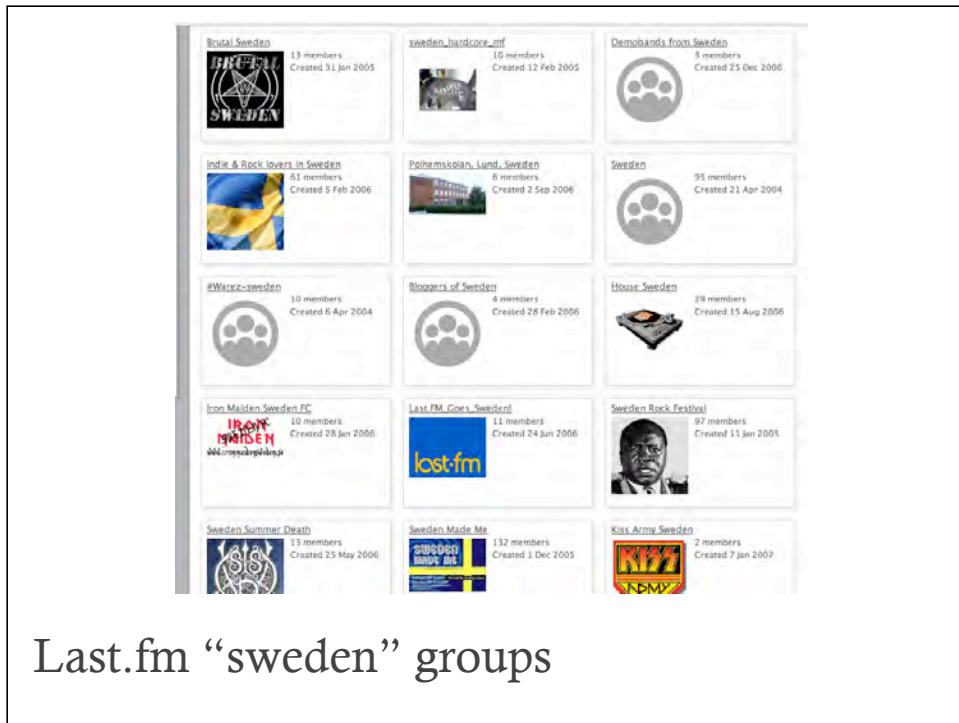
Last.fm "sweden" groups

The internet also provides infrastructures to support group interaction and stability.

But it provides so many of them that things get very chaotic and redundant very quickly. Fan communities are spread out through a huge range of online spaces loosely connected through their patterns of behavior.

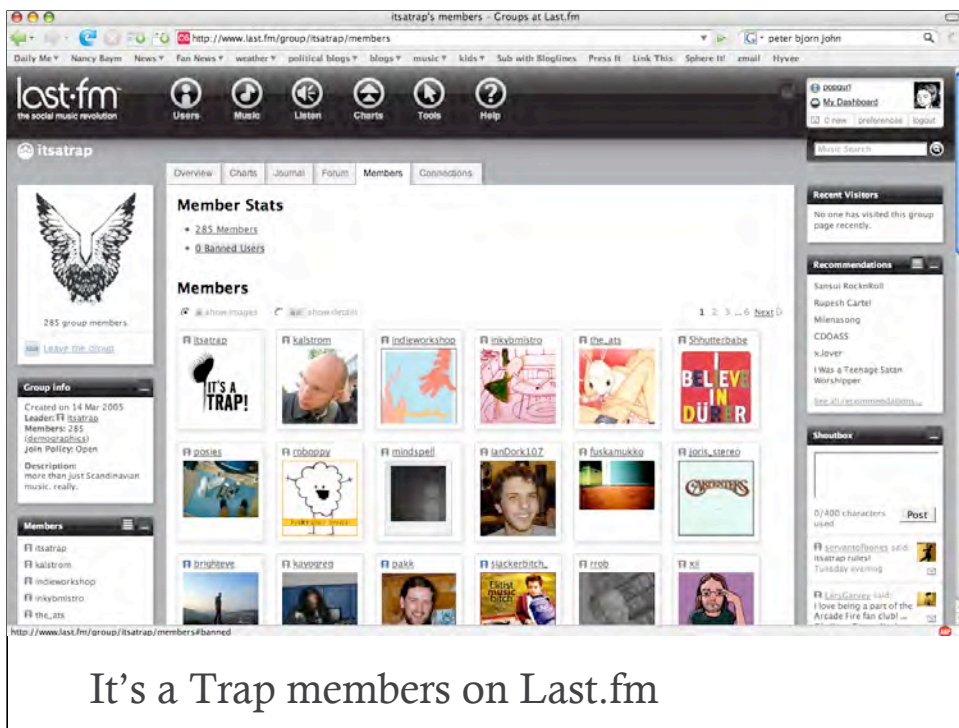For instance try looking for groups on last.fm that might be about swedish music by searching "sweden."
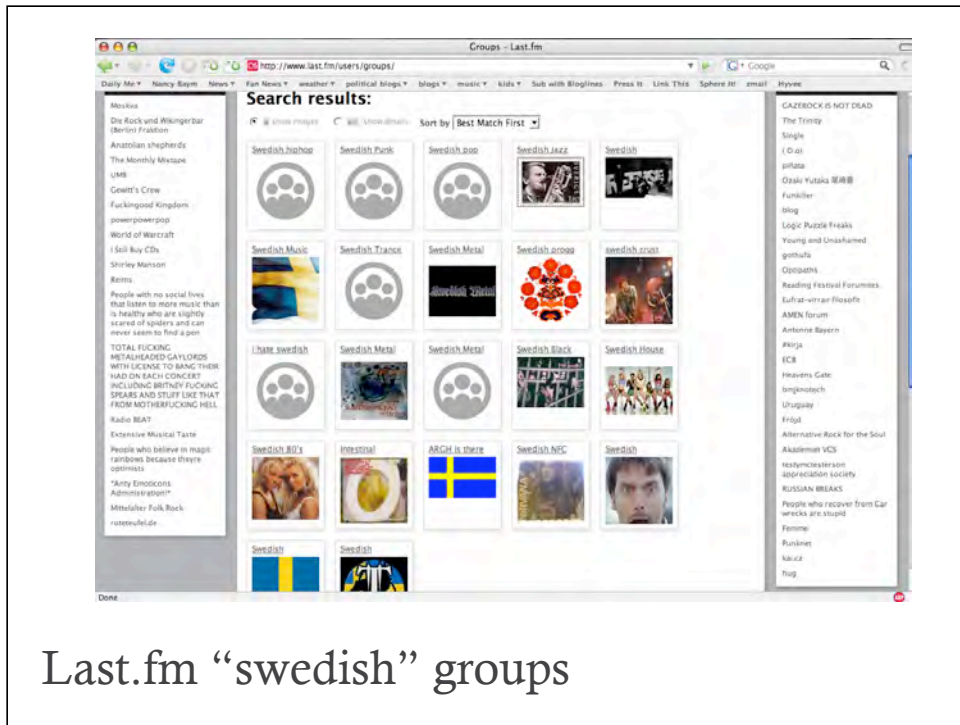
Last.fm "swedish" groups

Or "swedish"
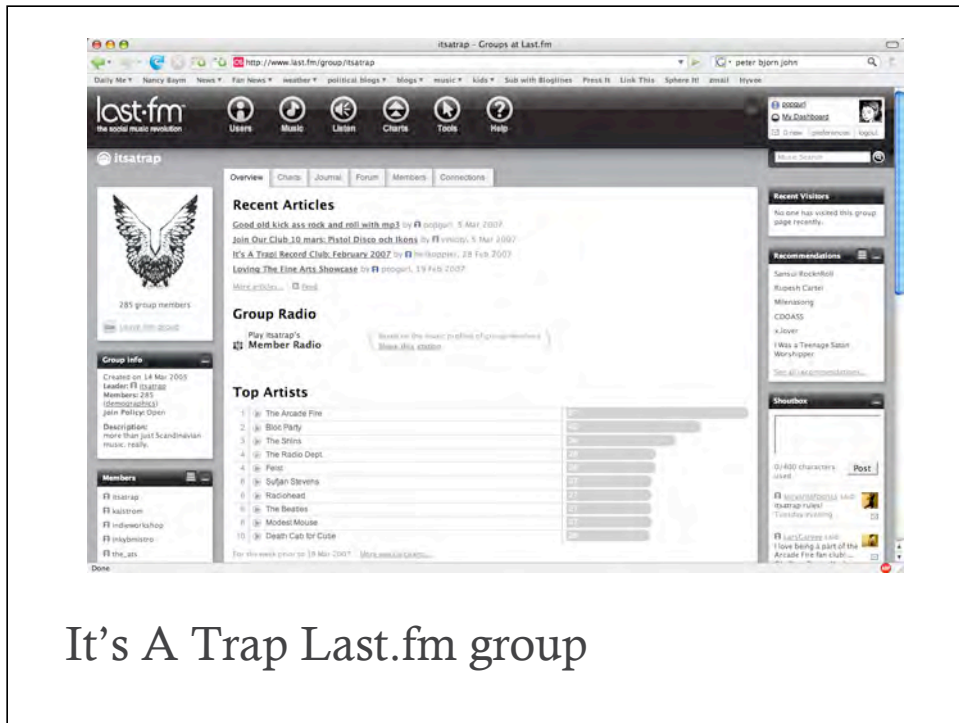
It's A Trap Last.fm group

Even IAT, which has a clear hub in the online scene can be found in group form on Last.fm.

It's a Trap members on Last.fm

... where it actually has more self-identified group members than it does on IAT itself.
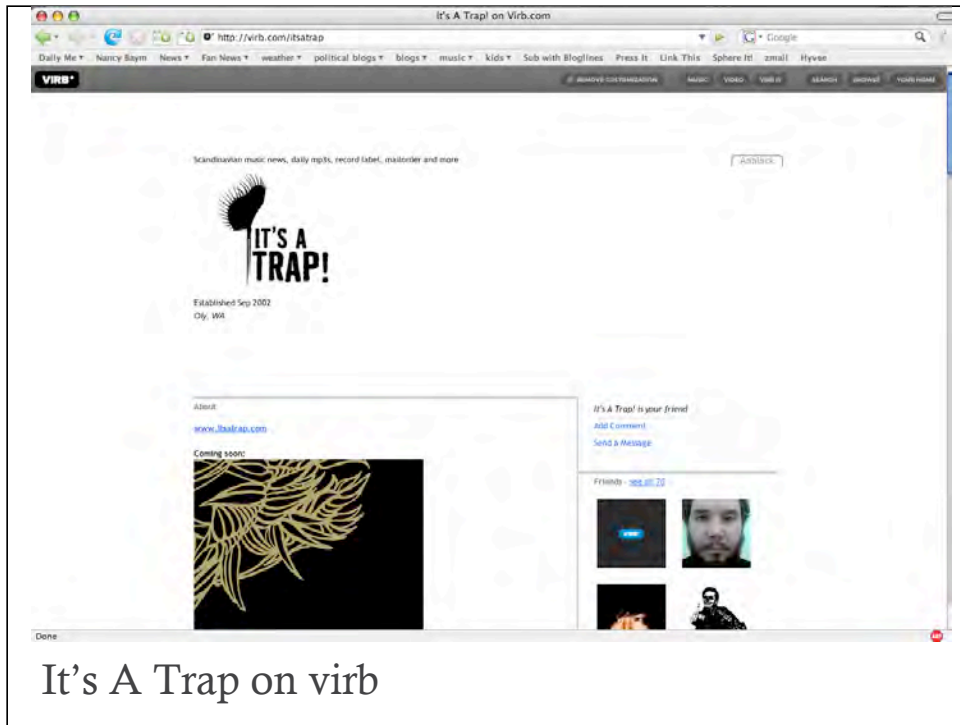
Last.fm data on It's A Trap profile

IAT uses last.fm to its advantage, importing information from it into its user profiles.
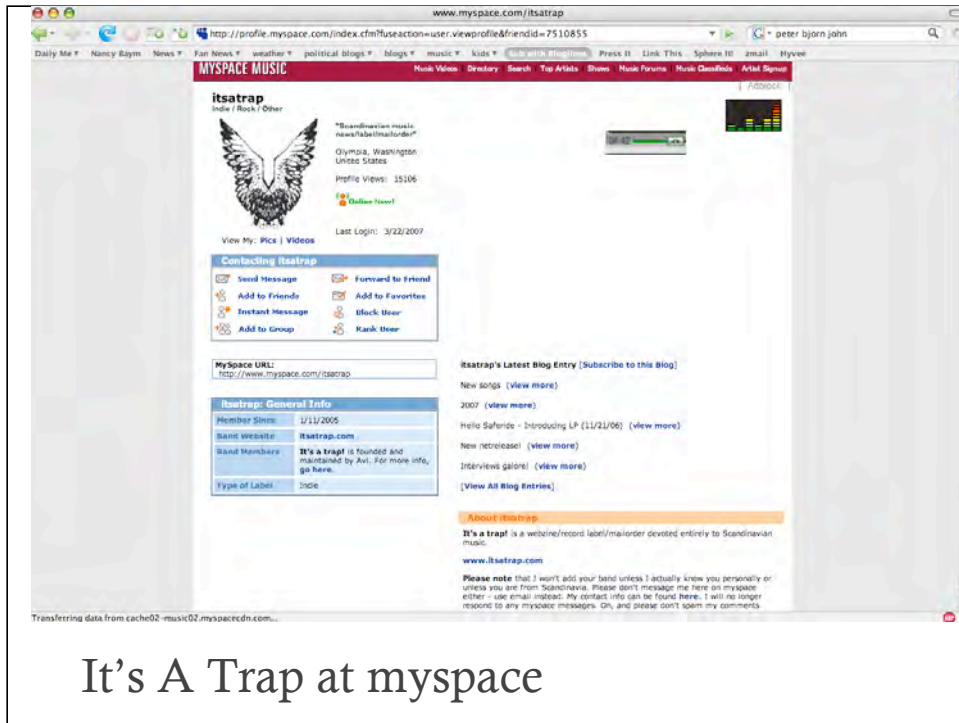
It's A Trap at myspace

IAT can also be found on MySpace, where being its friend is another way to affiliate with the community.

It's A Trap on virb

And it's on Virb.

madrugada concert chronology

One of the main things fans do when they get together is amass intelligence. The internet provides the infrastructure to support archives of all that information they collect. As a result, fans can build stable, dense, exhaustive and searchable archives more complete than anything a band or label might ever create. Producers of the show Futurama have talked about checking out the fan boards to make sure they are consistent with their own time lines -- the fans have done the work of building detailed timelines.

Consider, for example the Madrugada fan-created concert chronology which covers not just every concert, but every set list, notes about the performance, and information about whether any recordings were made and, if so, whether they were ever broadcast or circulated.

fan wiki entries at Last.fm and WikiMusicGuide

Fans also write wiki entries about bands on many sites throughout the net.

One of my favorite fan archives is this one, by Johannes Schill in Sweden who's collected a list of over 500 Swedish pop bands, more than 40 labels, and for each has created a page with information and a link to their website and any free downloads or other media that the artist has made available.

> "I'm just an enthusiast, I wouldn't say
>   I'm involved [in the Swedish music scene]
>   at all. The ones who are doing the work
>   are the artists, they should have the
>   money."   - Johannes S., *Hello! Surprise!*
>
>
> "Maybe what they see is that when
> someone else does the work, they do
> not have to bother with it for the
> official page, hehe."
>   - Reidar Eik, *MadrugadaMusic.com*

When you ask him how he justifies doing so much work for free, he rejects the idea that what he's doing is work.

This raises the really important relational issue of how to encourage fans to put in labor on your behalf without exploiting them, especially given that for the most part, they do not want monetary payment and, as I'll return to later, generally prefer to maintain independence.

 If you do it right -- as has been the case with Madrugada and the person who runs this fansite -- everybody wins. If you do it wrong, everybody loses.

swedesplease
chicago

absolut noise
paris

The internet also enables new forms of engagement. Digital information is easy to replicate and manipulate, and that's given rise to new ways that fans are creatively engaging music. We now see things like fan-created remixes, mashups and videos.

We also see the rise of the mp3 blog, which has become increasingly important in the last few years. Here are two blogs that specialize in Swedish music. They are written in English and French and actively seek to export Swedish music to international audiences.

Together with sites like it's a Trap, sites like this are creating a whole international scene around indie swedish and to a lesser extent other scandinavian music.

mp3 blog aggregators
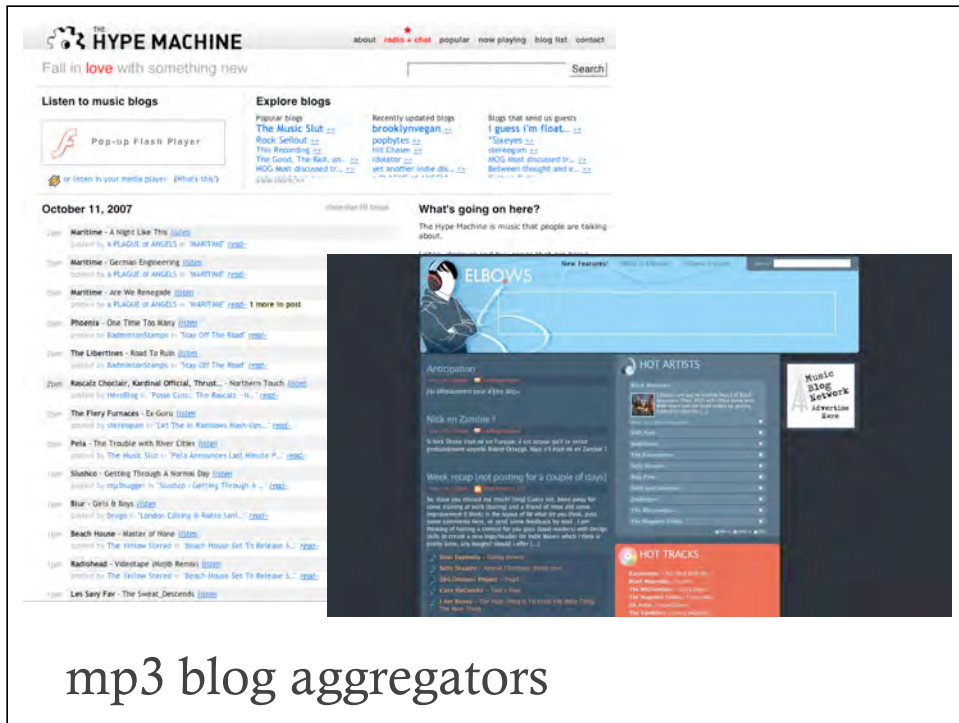
Mp3 blog aggregators such as Hype Machine and Elbows aggregate these bloggers into a collective voice -- a moment by moment stream of buzz

portable playlists

Fans can also now create playlists on places like youtube or last.fm which they can then embed in other websites, building a social identity that incorporates music while promoting the music they like.
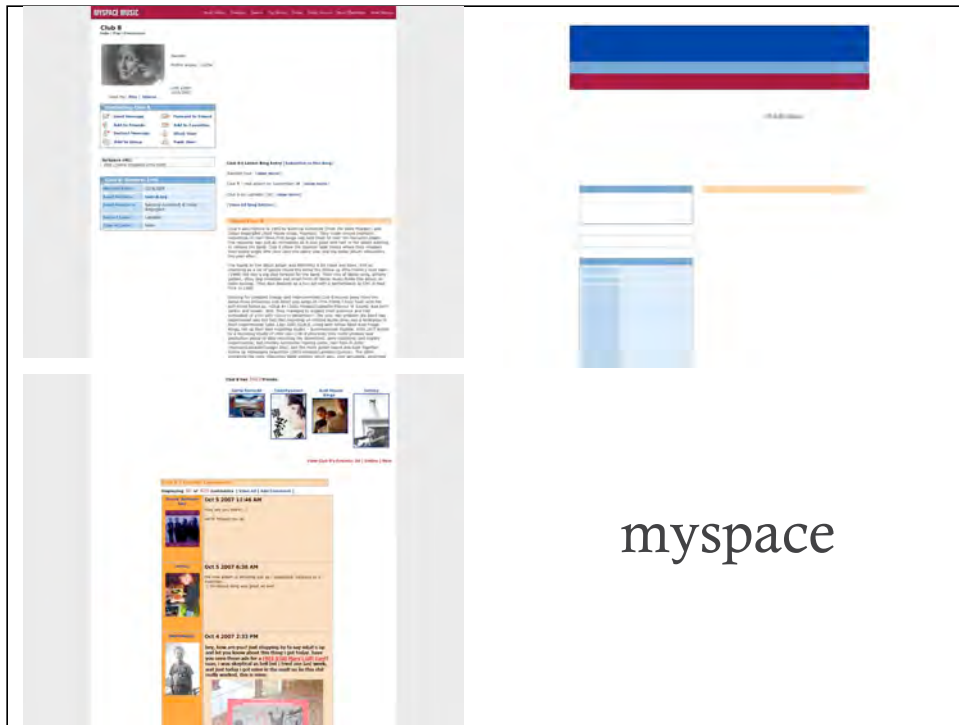
Finally, the internet changes fandom by lessening the distance between fans and artists, raising a host of issues about how to interact with fans yet still maintain creative distance, privacy, and, when wanted, some mystique.

Myspace offers access but gives musician control, though some opt out or subvert as a statement. I think too many bands are too reliant on MySpace. It's important to have a presence there, but it is not enough.

There are also issues of ownership and rights over your online presence -- you don't own your myspace page, fox interactive does. Everyone should have an online presence they own.

Some artists, like Jens Lekman, have left or never been on MySpace. The image on the right is what you see if you click on the "MySpace" link on Lekman's homepage. (the text says: Fill In The Blanks). He is active on his own site, though and has done a great job building relationships with his fans that way.

"Our record company handles the promotion side of things …but we have tried to have a strong presence on myspace."
- The Shout Out Louds

"Since I got into myspace interaction between me and people who like the music has increased by hundreds and hundreds of percent."
- Starlet

Handling friends requests on MySpace can be a timesuck, as can weeding spam out of comments, but for many musicians, the direct interaction with fans has been a powerfully rewarding experience.
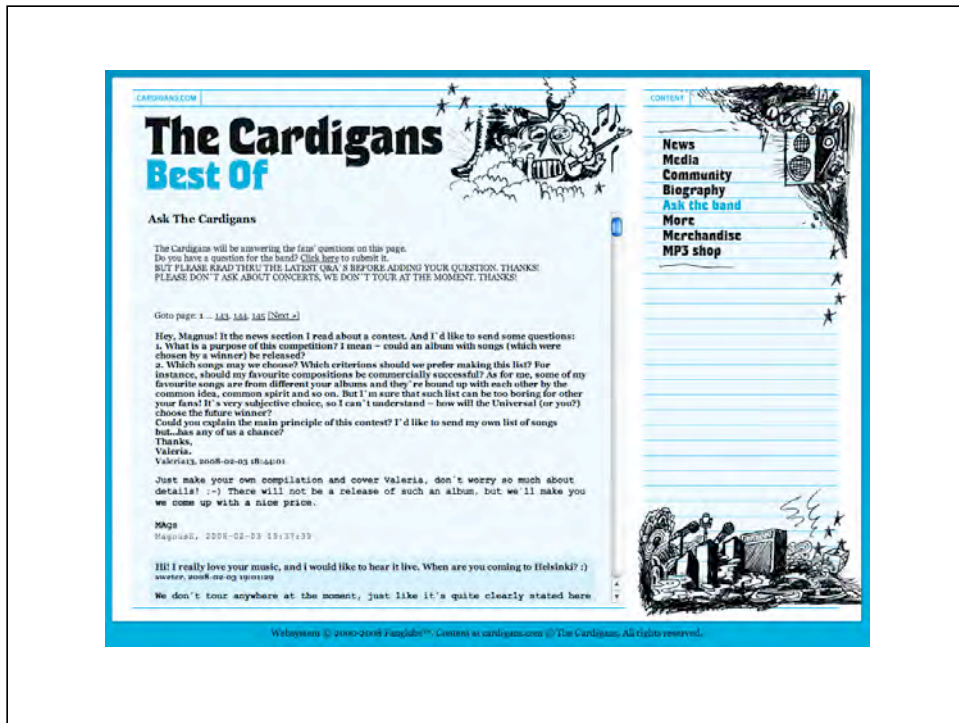
As in the Lekman example. bands are also providing direct access through their websites. Here, for instance, is the "ask the cardigans" section of the Cardigans website where their bass player Magnus Sveningsson loyally responds to fan inquiries.

Others maintain band or personal blogs or find other ways to foster interaction with their fans online.

All of this means that the fans are more powerful. This isn't just true in music. For instance these are 5 recent examples of online fans having real influence.

The movie Snakes on a Plane was preceded by a fan blog "Snakes on a Blog" where fan discussion came to shape the film's title and script.

Jericho was a tv show cancelled until fans organized online and launched a campaign in which they sent over 40 tons of peanuts to CBS headquarters in NYC until they relented and agreed to a second season.

Fandom Rocks was a group of fans of the tv show Supernatural who, inspired by Joss Whedon fan groups, decided to raise money for charity and gave over $2000 to a homeless shelter in my town.

Fans of the band Two Gallants were present when they were roughed up by police at a show in Texas and posted video of the event to YouTube, ensuring that it gained a wide audience.

The relationship between fans and the people and things around whom they organize can be synergistic, but it can also be deeply problematic.

Both Prince and Usher, for instance, have taken legal steps to claim the domain names of fan sites because they are not happy with the fan activities on there. Prince says they are violating intellectual property by posting images (including one of a tattoo bearing his likeness). Usher did not like the way the fans reacted to his then-fiancee.

Little Rubber Shoes was organized around Crocs shoes and had the blessing of the company until they realized that the site was running ads for their competitors. They sued and the site no longer fawns as much over Crocs.

Trent Reznor of NIN has been at the cutting edge of pushing internet fandom, but even he ran into trouble when his idea to encourage fans to create their own remixes and upload them to a NIN site was nixed by the legal department, who were suing fans of other bands for doing just that without blessings from above.

> "It used to be that fans and the label were very distinct entities that were separated by access to means of media representation. That no longer applies, as the means of communication for both fans and the artists/label is digital data. Because of that, labels have had to adapt on how we deal with fans. In the end, we're both on the same side: the side of the artist. The label promotes, distributes and develops artists while the fans support them from underneath."
> — Ethan Kaplan, *Murmurs.com/WBR*

The flip side of fans' increased power is a loss of control amongst those who've been able to control music production, distribution and coverage.

It's natural to respond to this with fear as the major labels, RIAA, and many artists and their managers have done. The threats are real.

But getting control back is not an option. That's just not going to happen. So the question then is how you can build relationships with these fandoms that are mutually supportive.

They do this best when bands and labels have to do their part to make that work.

Here's a hint -- building good relationships with fan communities does not involve suing them.

"The barrier is down, or a lot of it, thanks to MySpace, Last.fm and other sites. The hierarchy is flattened, me and my "fans," and the same with artist I like and adore, are in a way on the same level."

- Starlet

Fans need to be seen as collaborators and equals

"It's breaking down the barriers of the inaccessibility of the artist, which is good. It makes people realize it's something they can do themselves. It's important to remember that people who play music are just people. The internet helps that."

- The Fine Arts Showcase

This humanizes the fans. And it should humanize everyone involved.

"We email quite a bit with the "fans" (I'm having a hard time using the word "fans")… The relationship for me is the fact/hope that we gather like-minded people that share a common love."

- Club 8/Labrador

The labels and musicians who are taking full advantage of the internet to foster their fandoms and to relate with their fans resist using the term fan, focusing instead on the sense of community.

Fans, labels and bands are together building a new kind of music scene, one in which they've all got important parts to play.

a shared problem:
the internet is overwhelming

Fans, bands and labels are bound together by shared love of the music, and at least potentially by a sense of shared community.

But we're also bound together by a common problem. Everyone finds the internet overwhelming.

> " Bands should have their online page be a portal to all their online web 2.0 activities with links to their Last.fm, MySpace, YouTube. That's the wave of the future."
>
> > - Nick Levine, *Tack! Tack! Tack!*
>
> " If someone reads about an artist on Labrador in a physical paper and wants to listen to the music it should be very easy to find it. If they find their way to Labrador.se they can download mp3s from all bands. If they're on Last.fm they can hear every album in full there. Etc."
>
> > - Labrador Records

For bands and labels the problem is the need to be represented everywhere -- even niche long tail audiences are distributed all over the place online.

Who's got time?

Building a good online identity is a different skill set from making music. That may not be their creative strong suit. Too many bands let their friends handle their web presence and then their friends flake and they don't want to hurt their feelings so settle for a poor presence.

> "All I want is to get the music through to
>   people."
>
>   - Adrian Recordings
>
>
> " We have stopped thinking about selves as
>   labels, we're more like music companies. We
>   make music. We don't think about selling
>   music, we just want to have attention."
>
>   - Hybris Records

From the fans' point of view, there are so many things vying for our attention that we need filters that can guide us to the music we're most likely to like. There are bands for any fan. But it takes a lot of diligence to find them.

Hybris records talk about having 2.4 terabytes of music on hard drives in their offices - describing music "as an endless stream." There isn't enough time in life to listen to all that music.

Avi Roig from IAT has 2000 bookmarked sites he checks daily through an automated process -- on top of blog subscriptions and direct emails.

No one can keep up completely.

"we need certain tastemakers, or editors, between sender and receiver. This is where (the good) blogs and online mags/forums come in handy. There is simply too much out there to take in so we need to help each other. Something that I think will create a better world in maybe ten, twenty years time, a better climate to create and activate thousands of creative minds that never would have a voice if it wasn't for the internet."

- The Bell

This quote comes from an interview on the blog Muzzle of Bees with Swedish band The Bell who are getting a lot of international buzz right now. I like it because it both points out the need for fan filters and also repeats that idea I hear often when I talk to indie bands or labels that the internet is creating a new kind of music culture.

It's a powerful counter-story to the "pirating is killing music" narrative that dominates the discourse about online music.

> "The label isn't enough of a filter anymore. It's great for us. If a big mp3 blog puts up a track by one of our artists it gives it credibility. It makes it easier for people to like it and accept the music."
>
> - Hybris Records

The traditional media still filter -- even the indie labels still target the major magazines, newspapers and radio. But now fan communities filter too.

The band's need to be represented everywhere and the fans' drive to visibly identify with and talk about music intersect and work together. Bands can't be everywhere, but the fans already are.

free music
information
blog posts
attention
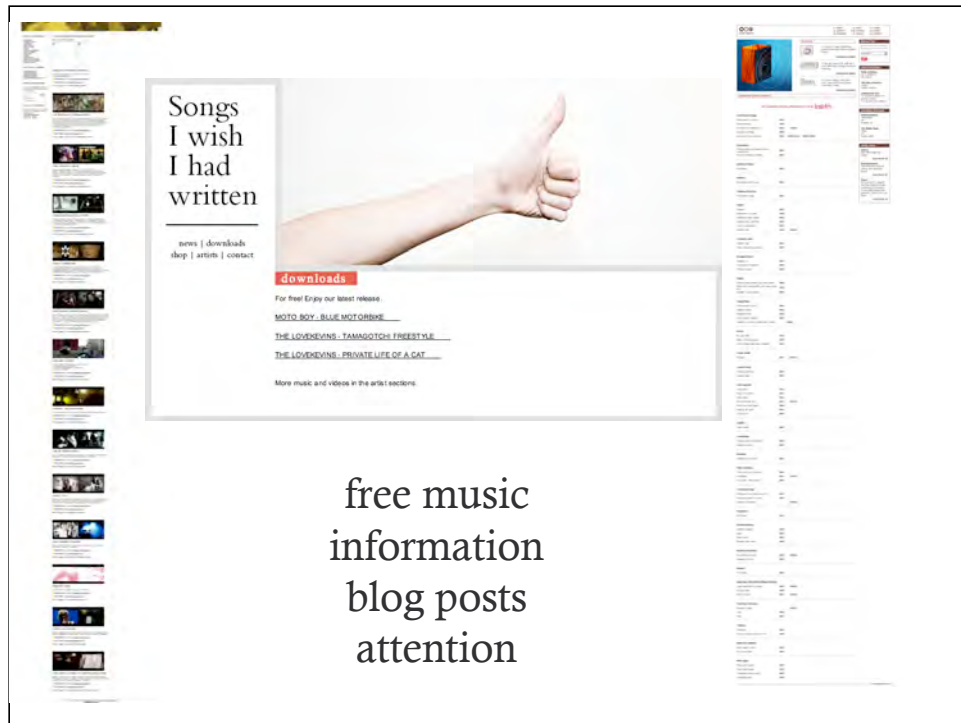
If you want fans to talk about you, you need to give them something of social value. Give them things that stimulate the activities they want to do: give them things to build identity with, to offer up for collective interpretation, to pool into collective intelligence.
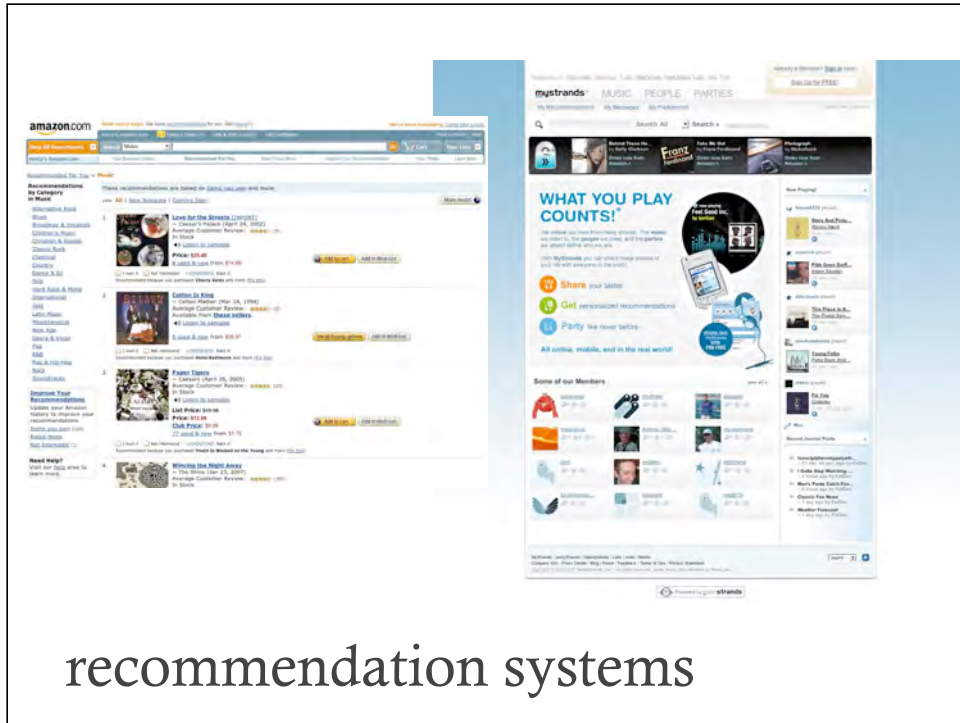
"Music 2.0"

is (largely) fan filter infrastructure

There's also a huge set of new third party players, creating online and mobile music services that in many ways utilize fans as filters. The next few slides demonstrate some examples.

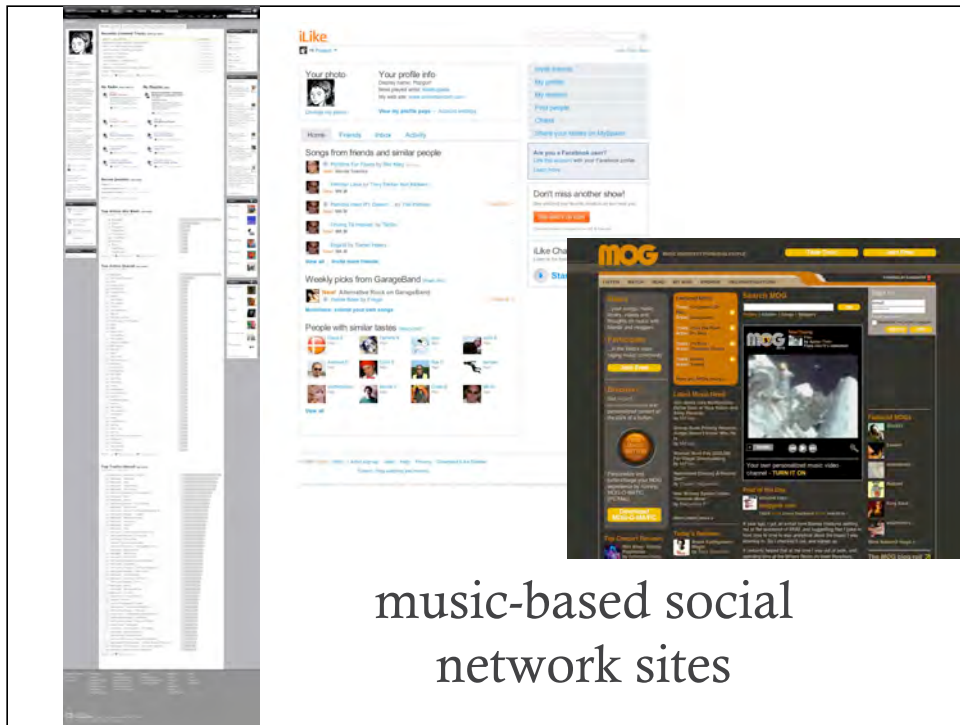This collage of Music 2.0 labels was put together by Jadam Kahn.

recommendation systems

Amazon and MyStrands

personalized radio streams

music-based social
network sites

Last.fm, iLike and MOG

library sharing

Anywhere.FM and Qloud
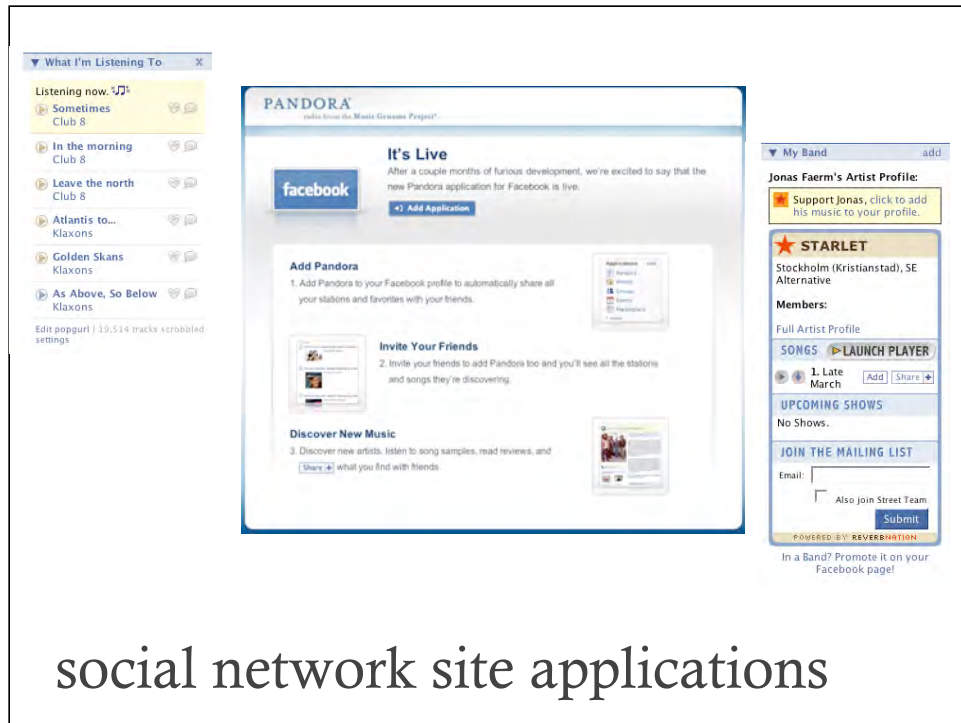
social network site applications

Facebook applications offer another way to draw on fan activity. MySpace applications are under development.
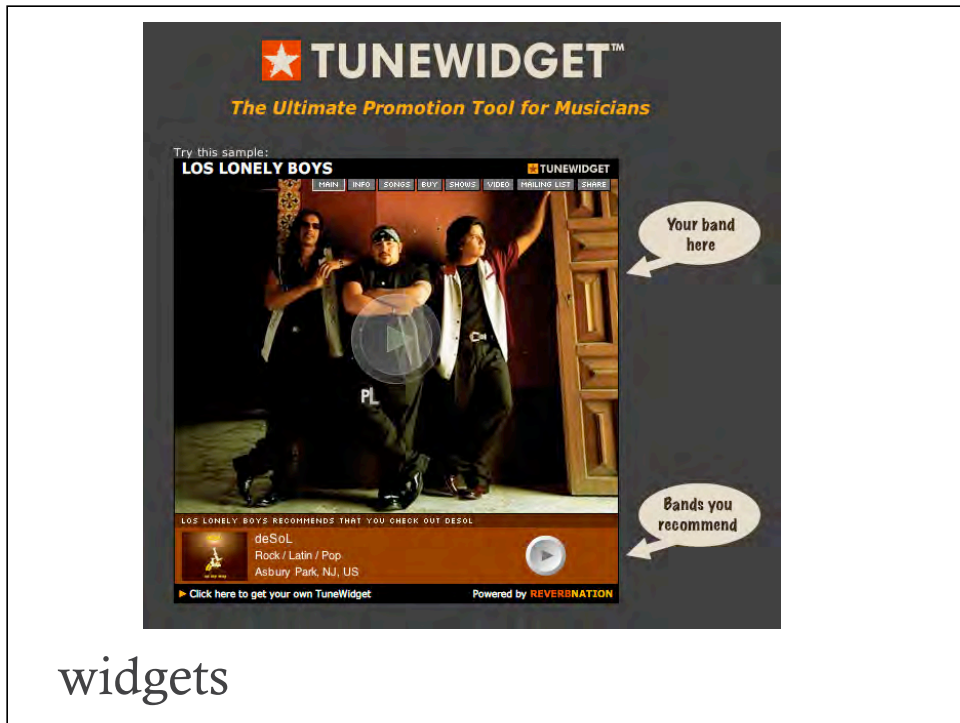
widgets

This is probably the best band widget out there. It's from ReverbNation. It can be embedded in any webpage and functions as a mini website allowing video and song streaming, music purchasing, information links, direct signup for band mailing lists, recommendations of other bands, and more.

> "Fans can't be managed like employees because they're volunteers and treasure their independence. It's more like the organic skills of gardening or farming, sensing the way the wind is blowing and adapting tactics to suit."
>
> — David Jennings, Author
> *Net, Blogs & Rock 'n' Roll*

It's important to recognize and respect the fact that fan communities need independence from bands and labels

Like the artists who sue their fan boards, it can be tempting to try to control what fans say about you online. It can't be done. And you don't want to do it, even when they say things you don't like.

"We've been happy to remain the unofficial fan site because then we have exclusive control over what goes on the website, without publicists and lawyers getting involved."

- Brenna O'Brien, *Friday the 13th Fan Site*

Brenna O'Brien runs a very successful fan community for fans of the Friday the Thirteenth movie series. At one point they almost became the official site. Her point about laywers and publicists is important, and gets back to the issue of control.

"The official page has some of the necessary information a new fan would need to get into the band. […] it works as an introduction to the band. They also have a link directly to the discussion forum of my fan page, which is a very nice touch because it enables the fans of the band to get in direct contact with each other just one click away from the band's official page. So while lacking in content, the official page makes up for it by using the resources the fans pool together."

- Reidar Eik, *MadrugadaMusic.com*

Online fandom should be left to compliment the official presence rather than be absorbed by or compete with it.

"music management, who have looked after Rob for over a decade have been great. They assist us in the kind of content we post on the site to keep our download section legal and pass on things the community wish to send to Rob such as messages of support, fan feedback and birthday cards/gifts. They've been very supportive, sending us congratulations on our first year and advising us on how to handle any media inquiries"
- Shell, *PureRobbie.com*

If you want fans to respect and pay you for what they can easily download for free, you have to treat them with respect and trust. This is at the heart of the "organic skills" David Jennings alludes to. When bands foster respectful and trusting relationships with their fan bases, the fans will rally for them because they will feel not just a legally-bound economic relationship to them but a morally-bound social relationship as well.

We saw this with Wilco. They let their most recent record stream on the internet for months before its release, despite dire warnings that this would ruin their sales. It was widely circulated and mp3 blogged. Shortly before its release, they sent out an email to their fan mailing list pointing out the many ways they had demonstrated trust in their fans -- their encouragement of the taping and distributing of their concerts for instance -- and asked that they hold up their end by going to the store and buying the record the day it was released. The fans did, and the record charted higher than their previous records had.

The success of the Radiohead CD sales also demonstrates the extent to which showing fans that you trust them to do the right thing can be rewarded.

> "Labels and managers should focus on the 'whole fan' and concentrate on their lifetime value as committed advocates, which may mean indulging the odd misdemeanour in return for having someone who will evangelise and recruit more fans on your behalf for years to come."
>
> - David Jennings, Author
> *Net Blogs & Rock 'n' Roll*

I'll leave you with a couple of thoughts about how artists and labels should think about online fans.

When Jennings talks about "the odd misdemeanour," he's talking about things like intellectual property violations, negative public criticism, and the sorts of things that lawyers tend to go after fans for doing.

"Trust the fans to bring what they do to the table, and provide them with tools, media and good information to develop their fandom in positive ways."

- Ethan Kaplan, Murmurs.com/WBR

I will give the last word to Ethan Kaplan who, as the founder of an extremely successful fan community and major label tech guy, is in a particularly good position to offer insight.

contact me:
nancy@nancybaym.com
nancy@onlinefandom.com

read my blog:
www.onlinefandom.com

Unless indicated otherwise, all quotes are from interviews conducted by Nancy Baym except that Robert Burnett interviewed the Shout Out Louds.