

Star uses Napster for Princely score

Client: *Napster (Redwood City, CA) and Prince and the NPG Music Club (Minneapolis)*

PR Team: *Girlie Action Media (New York) and Susan Blond (New York)*

Campaign: *"The Work - Pt. 1"*

Time Frame: *April - May 2001*

Budget: *Less than \$30,000*

Not all artists are quick to jump on the anti-Napster train sputtering through Congress and the court of public opinion these days. The artist currently known as Prince recently tapped into the 70 million strong Napster community to debut a new single, while also looking to usher traffic to his own online outlet.

The debut did more than raise the purple majesty's profile. It provided Napster with a much-needed high-profile ally.

Strategy

The rules are changing in the music industry, forcing artists to find alternative promotion sources. Facing an industry fight to get air time for his album *Play*, Moby eventually granted over 800 commercial licenses for the songs on the album. Sting, always a bankable star, needed a Jaguar commercial to kick-start sales of his *Desert Rose* single.

Prince has released a number of cyber-singles in the past through his own Web site, but this is the first time he has

teamed up with a digital music company to promote his music.

"What record companies don't really understand is that Napster is just one illustration of the growing frustration over how much the record companies control what music people get to hear," Prince says.

Interested in generating buzz for his album *The Rainbow Children*, due out later this year, and also drive traffic to his subscription-based online music service, The NPG Music Club, Prince approached Napster several weeks before the April 6 debut of *The Work - Pt. 1*. The debut would coincide with the second round of US Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on digital music.

"Napster's goal, as it's been with the Featured Artist Program, has been to show that major artists like Prince are interested in working with Napster," says Jill Mango, head of new media at Girlie Action Media, which handles Napster's PR. "They also want to show that Napster is a valuable promotional tool for artists."

Tactics

Napster prominently featured promotional material of the debut on its homepage, as well as information on sharing the song and a link to Prince's NPG Music Club (<http://www.npg-musicclub.com>).

In the days approaching the debut, Napster's "Girlies" circulated press releases and began a media outreach campaign to rouse interest among music and entertainment journalists.

Results

Mango explains there's no way to measure usage, as Napster is a peer-to-peer online service. However, reports filtering out of NPG headquarters following the debut report that traffic to Prince's site jumped over 1,000%.

On the Congressional front, Napster and Prince's site both garnered media hits.

"The cross-over appeal obviously helped promote both," says Mango. "Music and entertainment journalists were going to cover the hearings, but to have a major artist basically endorsing Napster added that much more interest to the story."

Most major news outlets either reported the story themselves, or picked up either the AP or Reuters accounts. Meanwhile, entertainment and music outlets from *Access Hollywood* to E! Entertainment to MTV News all ran segments.

Future

"Prince has a relationship with Napster," says Mango. "I don't know when they'll work together, but I have a feeling they will work together in the future."

And how has the promotional power of Napster fared since the hearings? Little known Icelandic band Sigur Rós made *Svefn G Englar*, a song from the band's US debut album *Ágaetis Byrjun*, available for sharing Friday, May 18th. In subsequent interviews, band members have credited Napster with their wild early buzz.

Craig McGuire



Prince... tells Napster naysayers to hold on as he teams with the company to push his new music