

RockAffairs.com is a new website that allows unsigned artists to sell their music for free and keep 100% of their profit. We talk to RockAffairs® founder, Sarah Eaglesfield, about the industry, the internet, and working with ex Duran Duran guitarist, Andy Taylor.

The RockAffairs business model came to Sarah Eaglesfield on a long commute to London last November. She recalls being so excited that she burst into maniacal laughter in the middle of her crowded tube carriage.

“I sent Andy an email the second I got into the office. He was as excited as I was, and that’s when I knew I’d struck gold.”

Eaglesfield met Andy Taylor whilst she was working as the webmaster on Duran Duran’s official site. When the band announced Taylor’s departure, Eaglesfield announced hers the same day. The pair started working together to promote Taylor’s music on the internet, and the idea quickly grew from a basic presence on MySpace to one where Taylor controlled his own digital distribution.

“My logic was simple,” Taylor said at the time. “If I am going to have digital music available commercially, it made more sense to have my own base with the ability to control what was sold and at what cost. Not having a distributor taking around 50% plus from sales revenue gives the artist a greater margin and therefore the ability to price competitively at preferred rates, but even more fundamental it gives the audience a direct link to their artists.”

Artists who sign up to RockAffairs get 25mb of disk space to create their online store, approximately enough to promote and sell 4 songs. Upgrades start from £3.99 a year, and there is no upper limit on the amount of songs an artist can sell.

“After digital distributors take their cut, even unsigned acts who make a smart choice and use services like Routenote or Tunecore don’t see that great a return,” Eaglesfield said. “The RockAffairs business model gives those artists at the thinner end of the Long Tail a chance to test the waters before they commit to a pay-for digital distribution service.”

The website also boasts a profit share scheme, where 100% of the income from listener sign-ups is shared with the registered bands.

"When listeners subscribe to RockAffairs, every penny goes back to the artists on the website," Eaglesfield said. "Fans are directly helping the bands they follow make the music they love to hear."

Over 100 bands have already registered for the website, which opened for beta testing in March this year, and RockAffairs currently receives around 10,000 unique visitors a month without any advertising or promotion.

"RockAffairs gives unsigned bands the fundamental seed money they need to carry on being a band," Eaglesfield said. "The A&R coffers have run dry, and the majors need a wake-up call – RockAffairs has the potential to turn the industry upside down."

Andy Taylor abandoned the project acrimoniously in June 2008 but despite the initial turbulence, interest in the website remained high. Plans are in progress to host a series of RockAffairs nights around the country featuring acts from the site, and negotiations for mobile distribution are underway.

“We don't want to grow too big too fast," Eaglesfield said. "We want to be able to stand back and make sure we're still providing quality of service to our bands and our listeners before moving forward. Then, when we're certain we're offering them what they need, we'll expand again."

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