

Using Music Information on the Internet

Traveling the road of musical discovery requires more than listening to music. We need to read. Reviews, critical essays, artist biographies, and discographies help us better understand the music and decide what to listen to. Luckily for us, Internet services have put them online and made them easily accessible. These are the tools of the music explorer, and their most important function is to help us find great music we never thought existed. They help us look beyond the small collection of industry-sanctioned stars and find the great artists that don't have fat promotion budgets. They help us sort through the thousands of new albums released every year and make choices about what to listen to. What's more, they help us become educated about what we are listening to—allowing us to better appreciate the music and everything that goes into it.

While music streams through your Internet connection, you can use your mouse and keyboard to call up rich information about the music you are listening to. You can use that same mouse and keyboard to connect with people who share your musical interests; to discuss the music you enjoy; and to find out what other people think about your favorite music. In the past, getting this kind of information required a lot of time and commitment. Today, this can be a casual activity, something that people with limited time (read: you) can easily do. In other words, you don't have to hang out at the record store with the music geeks.

While the better online music services provide good music information, they will only get you so far. The chapters that follow discuss a number of Web sites that can be used to answer your specific questions about albums, artists, songs, and music genres. These Web sites build on what the Internet music services provide. Knowing about these tools, and understanding what they can do, will help you track down new music worth caring about.

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