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## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Online store brings Vermont music to the world

*VermontMusicShop.com promotes local bands using the Internet*

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A&E Editor

With purple walls and pink and white Christmas lights for decorations, VermontMusicShop.com isn't exactly what a person would expect as a typical place to buy music.

In fact, without the walls full of CDs it is easy to forget that it is a shop. This is because Vermont Music Shop isn't your typical CD store; it's a business run entirely over the Internet.

"We wanted to make a store where people can read about bands and download MP3s, and if they like what they hear, they can buy the CD," Dave Donegan, manager of VermontMusicShop.com, said.

The Web site, [www.VermontMusicShop.com](http://www.VermontMusicShop.com), contains a database enabling customers to search for music by artist, album or genre, and has an inventory of approximately 350 titles, Donegan said.

"We sell only Vermont music and we are the largest selection of Vermont music that I know of," he said.

The project started four years ago as a branch off Burlington-based Big Heavy World Foundation, Inc. The site now operates as an entirely separate Web site from Big Heavy World, although they are linked and run from the same office.

Donegan and his crew of interns work to keep the store in line with the Big Heavy World mission. The mission according to Donegan is "to promote Vermont music by trying to bring more music out to the world at large."

That work seems to be paying off. According to Donegan, the site does a modest but successful amount of business, selling about 10 CDs per week. VermontMusicShop.com ships worldwide, and the majority of their sales are from out of state.

"I would say that less than

10 percent of our sales are in-state," Donegan said. "It's a great way for musicians to get the word out about their CDs, and I think it really says something about the scene to see how many people come to the site from all across the country."

Since Big Heavy World is a non-profit organization, it lacks funding for traditional ads in print magazines, but this hasn't stopped it from spreading the word about its store.

"The cool thing about the Internet is that even the little guy can get his voice heard," Donegan said. It is also registered with major search engines as a way of generating Web site hits.

According to Donegan, most bands connect with the store through e-mails. The store works on consignment, taking on average five CDs to start with. From there the CDs are put in the inventory, listed on the Web site and the shoppers buy from there.

"The fact that we take credit cards is really a nice service for bands that want to get their name out there but can't take credit cards," Donegan said.

CDs on the Web site sell for a standard rate of \$14. Donegan said this was the standard rate they found for retail stores, and while it's not going to make them a killing, it is going to help pay some of the bills.

"Musicians get \$8.50 per CD, but we are willing to work with anyone," Donegan said. "We never turn away a CD. Our number one goal is to get the music out there, not make a huge profit."

Donegan said the money the Web site does make goes to sustaining Big Heavy World and helping with the costs of running a store, such as paying for domain names, security certificates and regular costs of operation such as electricity.

Jim Lockridge, executive director of Big Heavy World, is the man who came up with the idea of an online store. He said he



Photos by Abby Sweetser  
Above: Dave Donegan of VermontMusicShop.com works on his online inventory of Vermont bands. Donegan communicates with most bands through e-mail and posts their information in an online database. Right: Jim Lockridge, executive director of Big Heavy World, came up with the idea of an online database and works to incorporate VermontMusicShop.com with the Big Heavy World mission of promoting Vermont music.



is equally pleased with the site.

"I think that it's smokin'," Lockridge said. "The whole site works really well, the system is really professional. We're dinky in size but glossy in how it works."

Lockridge also said that he was really happy to see the cooperation between the Web site and the artists.

"We don't have the muscle to buy their CDs outright, so if bands weren't helping us help them, the store wouldn't be what it is now."

The daily running of the store is all done in-house at Big Heavy World headquarters in downtown Burlington. It is fueled by volunteers who process orders over a secure server and ship the CDs to their destinations.

Donegan manages the store as a volunteer, coming in two or three days a week to supervise the interns and oversee the day-to-day operations of running an

online store.

"I started here as an intern while going to St. Michael's College, working on the Vermont Band Guide for the Big Heavy World Web site," Donegan said.

Now Donegan is working side by side with other interns to make the site more efficient. Cuyler Bryant, a sophomore music industry major from Northeastern University in Boston, is planning on spending the next six months working on VermontMusicShop.com.

"My main projects are doing outreach to get new CDs onto the shelves, restocking the CDs we are out of, and working on a manual for standard operating procedures for how to run the shop," Bryant said.

Bryant said he chose to come to Big Heavy World because he wanted to be in the Burlington area, but was apprehensive of the work he would be doing at first. He was worried there wouldn't

#### Best-selling bands

Name: Brown Trout and the Lunkers  
Hometown: Brownsville  
Albums: "Hard Tellin' Not Knowin'," "Songs for the Deer Hunter," "Sophisticated Beyond Repair," and "Untangled"

Name: Banjo Dan  
Hometown: North Ferrisburg  
Albums: "Like a River," "Some Rust... Runs Good," and "The Catamount is back!"

Name: Chainsaws And Children of Burlington  
Hometown: Burlington  
Album: "Jaca"

Check out [www.VermontMusicShop.com](http://www.VermontMusicShop.com) for more information.

be enough to keep him busy at a small place like Big Heavy World.

"I have been pleasantly surprised," Bryant said. "I'm really enjoying myself, there is always enough to keep me busy."

Bryant said he is impressed by the selection available through the store and now hopes he can help the Web site become even more diverse.

"We have a large selection, from sing-along library songs to hardcore to rock, and hopefully I can help get the selection even better," Bryant said.

Donegan said the shop's goal is to have every genre available.

"We're totally wide open," Donegan said. "We have grinding hardcore to techno to hip-hop to alternative to folk, and it goes on and on."

"We do our best every day to have an extensive and inclusive selection of CDs," Donegan said.