CHRIS GREENE
Network Builder
By Ed Enright | Photo by Ozzie Ramsay

Chris Greene is serious about his art. But when it comes to promoting his quartet and drumming up support for new recordings and live shows, nothing is off the table.

Greene has shown that he can run an indie marketing campaign that hits harder and ranges wider than most jazz musicians ever dreamed possible. The tenor/soprano saxophonist and bandleader has embraced many of the promotional methods that have long been utilized by musicians in the pop and hip-hop communities but are often overlooked by jazz artists. By spreading the word through social media outlets and harnessing the power of aggressive fundraising techniques, promotional giveaways, creative marketing tactics and innovative online distribution channels, the Chris Greene Quartet has developed a devoted fan base and solidified its reputation among important music presenters on the Chicago scene.

“We’re just using the tools of the time,” said Greene, who has been able to give his band’s new CD, A Group Effort (Single Malt Recordings), a strong promotional push thanks in part to a successful fundraising campaign through Kickstarter. “It’s always a daunting task to promote your own stuff, but the cool thing is there are so many ways to get the word out there.”

Greene perpetually promotes his art. His tools? Eniting email blasts. Personal notifications via Facebook and Twitter. Homemade YouTube video trailers and testimonials that serve as commercials for the quartet’s gigs and recordings. Creating a band logo and band merchandise. Offering VIP seating packages for special performances. Sharing free DVDs and bonus audio tracks with select customers. Increasing his online sales through websites like ArtistData.com and Bandcamp.com. This is just a partial list of the myriad yet inexpensive methods Greene uses to generate excitement about his band, connect with listeners and turn potential new followers into true believers. And when audiences show up and express their appreciation, he goes the extra mile to make...
sure they keep coming back for more.

“I have this theory that when it comes to jazz musicians, we’re 10 to 15 years behind your typical indie rock or hip-hop band,” said Greene, a native of Evanston, Ill., who turns 40 this August. “They’re doing things like giving songs away as free downloads, and they’re diligent about maintaining their email lists. Or even like that song ‘Stat’ on the new CD. Marc Zappa and music that has those textural shifts, Marc Piane, our bass player, is really into Frank Enemy, and my parents were big soul fanatics. Listening to early hip-hop and Prince and Public Enemy, and I was able to inject some personality and humanity into the production and promotion of A Group Effort, Greene has learned just how much audience potential exists out there, waiting to be tapped. He says he was overwhelmed by how much money the Kickstarter campaign generated, far exceeding his goal of $3,150. ‘I discovered that we’ve built up an incredible amount of good will over the years,’ he said. ‘There’s a good market out there for us indie artists who are grinding away every day trying to push the music. As an independent jazz band, we can complain about how jazz is ignored, but the fact that people put up their hard-earned money in this economy to back what we’re doing was really flattering. It’s nice to know we’ve got a support system out there.’”

And it pays off. After putting so much work into the production and promotion of A Group Effort, Greene has learned just how much audience potential exists out there, waiting to be tapped. He says he was overwhelmed by how much money the Kickstarter campaign generated, far exceeding his goal of $3,150. “I discovered that we’ve built up an incredible amount of good will over the years,” he said. “There’s a good market out there for us indie artists who are grinding away every day trying to push the music. As an independent jazz band, we can complain about how jazz is ignored, but the fact that people put up their hard-earned money in this economy to back what we’re doing was really flattering. It’s nice to know we’ve got a support system out there.”