



Gunter Loibl, CEO, Rebeat Digital

The sound of money

Digital distribution pioneer Rebeat made its Indian debut recently.

Chiraag Sutar checks out the potential

Austrian digital music distribution pioneer Rebeat Digital marked its presence in India recently to help musicians get familiar with its product that helps in distributing music digitally across stores like iTunes, Amazon, Nokia, Napster or Beatport while sitting in the comfort of their homes or studios.

Rebeat Digital was brought down by Mumbai-based music software distributors Sudeep Audio. Rebeat Digital CEO Gunter Loibl said, "We became aware of the immense creativity and quality of Indian artists and their huge potential for the international market through them. Also, there was a lot for us to learn from the Indian music scene that would help improve the Rebeat Digital services."

At present, there are a handful of Indian musicians who are using this

software to distribute music – Sona Mohapatra, Ram Sampath, Naveen Kumar (A R Rahman's flautist) and Amar Mohile. It is also said that music composers Shankar- Ehsaan-Loy- who recently launched their new music label SEL music, and a mobile app - will be using Rebeat for distributing their non-film projects.

Meanwhile, Rebeat Digital's Mumbai and Chennai workshops in September were attended by both well-known and upcoming musicians like Amit Trivedi, Vivek Rajagopalan, Leslie Lewis, Vasundhara Das, Mahesh Vinayakram (son of the legendary Ghatam player Vikku Vinayakram) students from A R Rahman's K M Music Conservatory and music label owners, and members of several rock bands.

Loibl said, "We were stunned by the input of Indian musicians and labels at our first Rebeat Digital presentation in

Mumbai. Indian musicians are struggling for fair treatment and payments as in most cases their songs are given away for free. Any kind of support that Rebeat Digital could give to change this situation could help both to boost the Indian music scene and to create a win-win situation for everybody involved."

Incidentally, the idea of developing software for distributing music came to Loibl after his own bad experience with major record labels. "No record label wanted to sign me (way back in 2001). So I thought – If you won't sell my music, I will do it on my own. I began distributing my own CDs – eventually, a lot of my music-related friends asked me to sell their songs too. Later, when iTunes and other download stores started in 2003, we began to distribute to these channels too," he said.

While distribution of physical CDs helped him get an idea of the market,



L-R: Sudeep Audio co-founder Aditya Mehta, Rebeat Digital CEO Guenter Loibl and Key account director Robert Klembas, singer Vasundara Das and Sudhin Prabhakar of Pro Music at the Rebeat workshop (Chennai)

Loibl soon discovered the advantages of distributing music digitally – “I realised that digital distribution can be done in a much easier and cheaper way than physical distribution. Thus we started to develop software for musicians and labels, allowing them to digitally sell their music worldwide and directly from their PC. After four years of development, the Rebeat Digital software was released in 2007.”

Unlike record labels, which are notorious for keeping a large share of the returns, Rebeat Digital pays 85 per cent of the collected revenues back to the musician and also handles the payment of their mechanicals worldwide. The musician gets paid monthly as soon as their accounts exceed the threshold of EURO 50. (in order to keep the transaction costs low). In addition to this, the job of putting the right price to the uploaded music is also done by Rebeat’s team.

While musicians would like to put a price to their albums themselves, Loibl explains why they prefer to do the pricing. “Rebeat Digital artists receive 85 per cent of the revenues we collect from the shops. The fact that we do not take any monthly/yearly membership fees or payments per store means that our business model is based on the 15 per cent share of our artist’s revenues. And this, in turn, means that it is essential for us to maximise the profit of our artists – to maximise the revenue does not mean to simply put songs into the highest price category but to find the right price for the right product,” he says.

Rebeat Digital’s reach is phenomenal, and this can be concluded by the fact

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 CEO, REBEAT DIGITAL

that the song once uploaded using Rebeat reaches 60 countries including the USA, Canada, all countries of the EU, India, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Russia, Brazil and Argentina. “In addition, we also have direct contracts with Apple, Microsoft, Nokia, Real Networks, Amazon, etc. - more than 300 stores worldwide in total,” says Loibl.

One of the most helpful features of Rebeat is that it puts the music of a Rebeat user on a promotional basis to a network of more than 2,000 registered media and radio outlets. Also, the Rebeat Digital Media Promotion Service (MPS) enables radio stations registered with Rebeat Digital to pre-listen to their entire music catalogue and to read all the promotional information of the artists.

“With only a few mouse clicks they can download the files and all metadata into their broadcasting software and go directly on air with it. Each time a radio station downloads a track the artist receives an email notification, stating exactly which radio station from which country has downloaded which track – a perfect way to check the radio response for a new release or a promotion campaign,” he says.

Currently, Rebeat is working on an Indian version of the Rebeat Artist Camp – their successful online platform for Rebeat Digital users. This special version will be for Indian artists only and will help them get discovered both on their national market and in international territories.

“We will also include a special list of Indian music genres into the software in order to represent Indian music better. And finally, we are in constant negotiations with Indian telecom companies and music shops to have Rebeat Digital content available on their online and mobile music stores,” he says. Rebeat is also working on a separate promotion and marketing department that is scheduled to be introduced in 2012.

At present, the full version of the Rebeat Digital software costs INR 7000 (includes once in a lifetime fee and all the future updates). In addition, Rebeat also launched a special edition targeted at independent bands that costs INR 2500 which allows the user to upload ten songs across all its distribution channel. India, incidentally, is the only market worldwide where they also provide physical boxes of this No.1 Edition. ❁