Everyone loves music. In some variety or format, everyone can select some genre of music, or even just a single song or artist that they can enjoy. This community-building power of music is what the social media site Last.fm was founded upon.

Last.fm believes in the power of music to provide a complete overview of an individual’s personality traits and perfect ground to find and make friends. It is a site that can work well to facilitate and build new relationships and make listening to and appreciating music way more fun.

**How It Works**
At first glance, a site that creates an extensive profile of your music section on Facebook might sound like a bore. How often can you really update your music taste before it seems silly and a waste of time?

Last.fm makes it exciting. The site has a unique application called a Scrobbler that tracks and charts all the music you listen to. The Scrobbler not only pulls from iTunes, (or Windows Media Player for Windows users and VLC Media Player for Linux junkies) but also from phones (either iPhone or Android) and iPods. As you listen, Last.fm compiles charts about the artists, albums and songs you listen to most often and reports them back to you. You then can look through charts that detail what you listened to most during a certain month or even an entire year. Reflecting back on that month you broke up with your boyfriend may seem a little torturous (“I listened to ‘Total Eclipse of the Heart’ *how many* times?!”), but it provides a unique scrapbook of your life that would be preserved no other way.

**Everyday I’m Scrobblin’**

Being that the scrobbler is such an important part of using Last.fm, a deeper look at this application’s nifty features will help to create a complete understanding of the potential of the site.

First and foremost, the scrobbler tracks the music you listen to. After you listen to half of a song, at minimum, the song will appear on your Last.fm profile. The application also has tons of other features that let you interact with what you’re listening to. Let’s take a song and track its possible journey, from iTunes to your Last.fm page and beyond.

I’m listening to “Poison & Wine” by the Civil Wars. Reading through the information the scrobbler provides, I find a detailed description from the band that this song is written as a “musical snapshot about the dichotomy of love.” Pretty cool. As I listen to the song, I slowly become obsessed with it and play it constantly. While my adoration for the song will be showcased on the track’s page through a feature that lists the top listeners, I can also choose to demonstrate my affection for the piece by using the “love” button. This button creates a separate list for me of all the tracks I just can’t get enough of and tells the site to keep them in mind when selecting possible “neighbours” (a.k.a. people who I may wish to be friends with based on music taste), upcoming concerts, recommendations, etc.

So okay, time progresses and I am still pretty obsessed with the song. I’m now getting married and have decided that I want “Poison & Wine” to be the first dance song on the big day, so I click the “tag” button on my scrobbler and tag the song with the phrase “wedding music.” I do this for other songs as well, slowly building a list of music to send to my DJ, who also happens to, conveniently, have a Last.fm account. I can make the process even more specific by adding tags such as “fast” or “slow” to indicate tempo and ensure I have a good mix for the event.

Unfortunately, as time goes on, my marriage crumbles and ends in divorce. My first move the second the divorce is final, as the avid social media junkie I am, is to my Last.fm account to “unlove” “Posion & Wine” and add it to my banned tracks list to never be heard from again. I then utilize the “recommend” function of the site to send a friendly song recommendation to my ex-husband, requesting he check out “Your Guts (I Hate ‘Em)” by Reel Big Fish. It’s a peace gesture, really.

This example was a bit long and unrealistic (at least I hope so, for my sake), but hopefully it gave you a solid overview of what Last.fm is capable of. The scrobbler also has a radio station feature where you can enter genres, tag words, etc. and the site will build a custom radio station for you around that key word, with your loved and banned tracks in mind. So I’ll be able to cry over my failed marriage with an awesome playlist of Vikki-approved, depressing music, free of charge.

**Benefits galore**

Last.fm uses these logs of your musical likes and dislikes for tons of other personalized content. Take concert listings, for example. Once the site builds a solid view of your musical identity, your homepage will be filled with local concerts that fit your music taste. Find a concert you want to attend and the site provides you with links to buy tickets and extensive venue information, including box office phone numbers and policies regarding door times, show times, etc. And, as a final right of passage, simply click the small “I’m going” button in the right-hand corner and violá: bragging rights. And Last.fm doesn’t stop there. The site personalizes everything from new album releases to free MP3s, making it an experience that keeps the user in mind the entire time.

Aside from these exciting features, the site also features standard social media functions, such as private messaging, a comment section (called a “shoutbox”), groups, a section for blogging (“journals”) and the ability to send friend requests and maintain a “friends” list that make it the total package…but much cooler.