

THE Indie **VENUE** bible

115 Articles on Touring
and Playing Live!

Reading this collection of touring articles will ensure that your live performances will be **successful** and **fulfilling**.

The articles cover **every** area of importance and have been written by the most respected experts in the areas of touring and playing live.

The wisdom that these authors share with you comes from **years** of **hands-on** experience. Please take the time to read through each article. The time spent will pay off for you **many** times over in the long run.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A GLOSSARY OF LIVE PERFORMANCE AND BOOKING TERMS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Each industry has its own jargon. Those in the know are able to move about more comfortably. I thought I would lay the foundation and provide you with a glossary of basic terms.

The Artist's Team

Agent

Representative for the artist who makes the artist available for performance dates. The agent negotiates the fees, contracts the dates and coordinates tours. In many states an agent must be licensed to book talent. NY, FL and CA have particularly strict regulations for licensing talent agencies. You could check with the volunteer Lawyers for the Arts organization in your state for more information. Start your search with the New York branch. www.vlany.org

Personal manager

Provides an artist with overall career direction and guidance. They will coordinate all the team members who play a role in the artist's development. They will negotiate record deals, publishing deals, find an appropriate agent, publicist, business manager and other team members. In most cases a personal manager does not book performance dates and in certain states it is illegal for them to do so.

Business manager

Manages the artist's finances. This team member is usually added once the artists is making a substantial income requiring a full-time person to handle finances at gigs, artist investments and general financial advice.

Road manager

Takes care of all the details prior to and during the tour. They advance each tour date, make sure the artist arrives at each date in optimum condition to fulfill their contracted duties. If a band can't afford a road manager, a member of the band may serve in that capacity.

Publicist

Coordinates artist's publicity and marketing campaigns. Provides public notice to the media to create an awareness of the artist.

Radio promotion company

Coordinates the radio portion of the marketing campaign when the artist releases a new recording. They can be hired by the record label if there is no in-house radio promotion department or hired by the manager or artist. Radio promotion campaigns generally last for 12 weeks. Their goal is to help the recording gain enough airplay to register on the various radio charts that track new recordings.

Booking Terms

Hold

Placing a hold on a date reserves that date for the artist in question until a final decision by the booker or artist is made to offer or accept the date.

Booker, purchaser

The person at the club or venue who books the talent.

Promoter

A promoter may book talent into multiple venues paying rent at each. Promoters may also restrict their booking to one specific venue whether or not they own the venue.

Venue

Any place where a performance may be take place.

Deposit

A portion of the guaranteed fee. Deposits are generally returned with a signed contract. Any percentage of the guarantee may be a suitable deposit though 50% of the guarantee is the norm. Deposits are legally supposed to be held in an escrow account until the date is played. Should anything happen to cause the date not to be played, the deposit may have to be returned depending on the contract agreement. You should think about asking for deposits once you start getting guarantees in excess of \$500.

Guarantee

The fee agreed upon that the artist is to be paid.

Gross

The total income from ticket sales before any expense is deducted.

Net

The total income after all the expenses are deducted including any artist guarantee.

Straight Percentage

An agreed upon portion of 100% of income from ticket sales. The larger portion of the percentage generally goes to the artist. 65% is a reasonable artist percentage. The negotiation points in a percentage deal are the actual percentage and to know whether it is a percentage of the gross or the net.

Guarantee plus a percentage

Artist gets a base guarantee plus some percentage. Most often these deals are based on a percentage of the net but it depends on the deal. You certainly can try to get a percentage of the gross.

Guarantee vs percentage

Artist gets a base guarantee or an agreed upon percentage of the income, whichever is greater.

Load-in

The time agreed to that the venue will be available for the artist to load in their gear and set up for sound check.

Advance the date

A series of timely calls to check with the venue that everything is ready for the artist's performance. Check with each venue contact regarding production, hospitality and housing and coordinates all necessary travel. Advancing each date will keep you informed of each date's promotion and ticket sales and will help avoid problems before they happen. It is a good habit to begin advancing each date.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

A TALENT REPRESENTATION PRIMER

(a brief rundown of some terms in the business)

by Mark Steiner & Steve Tetrault, Gig Salad

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Talent agent

Talent agents are individuals whose primary function is to secure work for their clients. (artists, actors, bands, models, musicians, singers, magicians, novelty acts etc.). When multiple agents work together, they work for a common company serving multiple talents, otherwise known as a Talent Agency. The standard agreement between an agent and performer or speaker is by contract with the major point and theme stating that for a certain amount of time (normally a minimum of a year and usually multiple years) that the agent exclusively will handle all employment. That means every professional and paid booking would be contracted through that agent's office with a portion or commission of the fee going to the agent or agency. There is also such an arrangement as "non-exclusive" representation, where an individual or band will work with more than one agent or agency, with no exclusivity at either agency. In this case, it's the agent who books the date that gets the commission for that performance. This however leaves much room for confusion, conflict, non-commitment and lack of loyalty.

Booking agent

Also known as 'buyer's agents', usually fall under the category of both an exclusive and non-exclusive talent agent. The best way I know to describe the difference is by looking at real estate. In the real estate world you have a property, you have a seller of that property and you have a buyer of that property. In the talent and entertainment world that property is a person or people. There are those who broker, book or represent those people, their talents, skills, abilities etc. and those that purchase the people for a time, for the purpose of performing their talents. The buyers are typically, live venue owners, special events planners, promoters/presenters, private or corporate event coordinators, brides/grooms and more. So those who work on behalf of the above to negotiate and broker talent would fall under the title "buyers agent" or "booking agent".

Manager

In addition to agents and agencies, there are various forms of managers. Again, sometimes, the lines get a little blurred on job responsibility and title. I suppose you can call yourself anything you want as long it is clear on what exactly you are suppose to be doing and for who.

Within the manager category, there are personal managers. Personal managers are in the most simplistic description responsible for managing the talent. These duties can vary from one individual or act to another. Again, you should simply go into the details of your arrangement to determine exactly what those responsibilities will be. For some it may include booking engagements. Meaning they are, in essence, working as the talent agents as well as taking care of the daily scheduling, bookkeeping, itinerary and all and/or other personal affairs. Business managers are those who conduct the business only portion of an acts life and career. Managers as a whole can and oftentimes do it all. Including business, personal, booking and anything else the talent needs or wants, provided both parties agree it is within their arrangement/understanding.

There are also unions, organizations, affiliations, groups, clubs, memberships, licenses and the guidelines, rules, jurisdictions, books, instructions and more that can help or you must adhere to depending on who you are or who you are associated with. Bottom line, when talent teams or partners decide to work with a second party for the purpose of advancing, promoting, employing them, they must be very clear of what the expectations are on both sides and define the "exit clause" is when either does not hold up their end of the bargain.

Tread very carefully when choosing an agent, record label or promoter and sign nothing until you obtain legal guidance. When considering hiring a talent agent or a talent agency for representation, there are several things to consider. Above all, be certain to **never sign a document without first hiring a reputable attorney to look it over**. The cost to secure legal advice will pay for itself many times over. Take ten seasoned veterans in the recording industry and nine of them will tell you this very thing.

We wish you much success in your career.

Get your gig on!

Mark Steiner & Steve Tetrault are the co-founders of Gig Salad - the North American talent directory of local and regional performers, speakers and entertainers, spanning the spectrum of entertainment genres. Gig Salad gives talent buyers, agents and event planners universal access to our directory of talent, searchable by name, category and location. If you need additional exposure, looking to get more gigs or hoping to land just one more that might open the doors to the "big break", then consider joining Gig Salad today www.gigsalad.com

VENUE OPERATOR AND MUSICIAN: A GOOD RELATIONSHIP DEPENDS ON BOTH OF YOU

by Annette Warner, CoffeeHouseTour.com

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Venue operators and musicians have historically been at odds. It seems we have a love/hate relationship and each, at times, wants to bite the hand that feeds.

After conducting interviews over the last year online, in person and over the phone, I have come to a basic understanding of what the rift is between musicians and venues.

Musicians accuse venues of exploitation and venues view musicians' monetary demands as beyond what the market will bear. A spiral forms in which nobody succeeds. Apathy is created.

The following is a combination of comments gleaned from several sources of wide ranging genres, styles and atmospheres from both musicians and venue operators.

MUSICIAN: *"If it weren't for us being musicians club owners would have nothing going on to sell their beer and liquor."*

VENUE: *"You are an act that's trying to promote yourself and your music. We are your outlets to do so. If it wasn't you we'd have darts or a DJ or something else."*

MUSICIAN: *"We should get paid what we think we're worth. Everybody wants us to play for door only. No guarantees."*

VENUE: *"If you are any good and have a following and aren't over exposed, you should do well at the door. We have seen bands come in that cleared lots of green at the door. They worked hard for their show. They made money; we made money. Therefore the door stays open for another paycheck down the road. In addition to you, we also have staff that needs to be paid, stock that needs to be bought and other bills to pay. Each night needs to pay for itself and then some.. You need a much smaller budget to maintain your business than we need to maintain ours."*

MUSICIAN: *"After a successful first show that brought many people into your venue, you still want to pay us the same money the next time we come back. We deserve a raise."*

VENUE: *"We have to work hard to sell our product. It should be no different with your music. If you aren't going to make us money, you can be sure we aren't going to pay it out. Once you have proven yourself as a worthy draw, we are willing to negotiate guarantees based on your previous shows. You have the right to negotiate your return shows as well. If you don't want the money we offer, don't book the gig. If you do book the gig, it's in your best interest to promote us as well."*

MUSICIAN: *"Venues seem to have their favorite bands revolving over and over again. They don't give new acts a chance to prove that we're just as good as they are."*

VENUE: *"Do you experiment with a whole lot of expensive equipment when you already have something that sounds great? Be willing to show us what you can do as an opening act without demanding top pay, so we can determine your worth to us. Our decisions are based on what you can do for us. Your decisions should be based on what we can do for you."*

MUSICIAN: *"Many venues don't help promote their entertainment effectively enough through advertising. They leave it all up to the bands. You should be working with us to promote the show."*

VENUE: *"Stop depending on the people that walk by our doors to see the gig poster we put up for you. If you want people to come see your act - let them know yourself."*

The performers that sell themselves the best, make the most money. They don't accept anything less than what they deserve. Face it, if you are posting flyers up everywhere and no one comes to your gigs, maybe you need to consider revamping or even disposing of your current methods and study your market a little more.

The venues genuinely like good bands and definitely like the money they bring in. The bottom line is if they want you, they will pay for you - even if they have to collect cover charges to help offset the cost. There are many venues that, regardless of how good you are or how many people you bring, cannot sell enough product to pay high fees. Most restaurant and full-service bar combinations are going to make more money than the average full-service bar, which in turn makes more money than the average 'beer only' bars... which will make more money than most coffee shops.

Income can depend on the venue and how important music is in its budget. Just because a restaurant venue has live music every night doesn't mean the music pulls in the crowd. So, on the books, music might be the first expense to go during a budget crunch. Many venues have had to scale back pay just to keep booking live music rather than shutting music out completely.

I've got an issue with musicians that have an attitude about their colleagues who will play for less money, accusing them as traitors and making it rough for the 'higher priced' musicians to find work. Be fair guys. Not everyone who is a musician wants or needs to make a living doing it and the hobbyists have just as much right to play as you do. If you demand a certain pay level, join a union which will protect that right for you. But don't expect your venue choices to increase as a result of that move. And you better make sure you have the clout in the industry to support that decision. Unorganized workers in any industry do not have, nor will they ever achieve, the collective benefits that organizations do. High priced musicians that slam a venue's budget with little or no return on investment mess things up for everybody. The venue either closes down or stops booking live music altogether.

Check your egos

You aren't worth a bunch of money because you've been playing for X number of years. You are worth it because you make money for your venue operator. [Insert favorite artist] doesn't sell out a venue because he's been writing songs on the wall with crayons since the age of two. He sells out a venue because he promotes his music and sells tickets.

Many artists leave town, driving miles and miles to play in a venue for the same money or less, just to feel like touring artists, all the while blatantly criticizing their own community of venue operators for being slack and greedy.

Huh?

A band will book themselves at a venue a week before their big gig and expect their crowd to want to see them the next weekend as well. I wouldn't go see Elvis or anyone else two weekends in a row. Seems the motivation to 'pack the house' for many bands doesn't extend past their first time in.

Be fair with your demand for an increase. Give the venue a chance to see what you can do past the first time in. Are you playing to a crowd that would be there anyway? Or are you bringing your own following? If the first is the case, they are going to naturally try and get some one less expensive. The majority of venues are not out to rip musicians off. The venues are out to survive as businesses and you can't blame them for that.

Hello? Anybody home?

Venues should be motivated to support and be fair to their local musicians if they choose to host live entertainment. Here are some suggestions to bring that effort to the forefront and to make it more productive:

- Constantly reassess the performance of bands and acts you have on your schedules. Don't make everyone pay for the bad bands you book.
- If you are making good money, share it with the performers making it for you.
- If you are guilty of exploiting live entertainment, stop it. If you are a low paying venue, go after the artists you can afford.
- Be fair. If the performers have a much better night than planned, give them a boost in the pocket. They would love to see that you cared enough to share the difference they made in your register that night. Offer a reasonable tab to help offset the low fee and always offer free non-alcoholic drinks if nothing else. Maybe add a meal on the agreement if you can.
- If your sound man is already paid staff don't dock the musicians another \$100.00 off an already low fee. Agree on the cash to be paid and include a sound cost before you even offer a figure. Musicians want the bottom line. Also make sure the sound staff is qualified and not just a bartender filling in. A musician would rather provide his or her own sound crew and pay them out of pocket than sound like bad AM radio, especially if he or she is paying for it.
- Don't pay your buddy's band more than you are paying someone else that brings the same crowd.
- Maintain your schedules accurately. Nothing irks a musician more than showing up to see another act setting up for the night because you 'made a mistake' in the calendar. Musicians have counted on that money for bills since the booking was made. And in the blink of an eye, they are expected to either share it or work out a performance arrangement including only one artist's performance. If that happens, do something to make it up to them. Don't take the 'oh well' attitude and treat them as expendable. When passing on booking responsibilities, don't change the schedule just because the new booking manager doesn't like the band the previous one hired. If schedules must be changed, do so in enough time to allow the musicians to fill the night with another gig.

- If you agree to pay a band a certain fee, pay them at least that fee. Don't attempt to lower the salary at the end of the night because the night didn't go as well as you intended.
- Advertise effectively. Don't expect your musicians to bring all your crowd. You need to be doing your part, too. Help the bands as much as you want them to help your venue.

As a Musician

Many musicians spend years honing their skills and continue to allow themselves to be exploited because they love to play music. Don't allow it.

Respect your ability to challenge the market and succeed by demanding the pay you want. If you are marketable, the work will speak for itself. If you need help and want it, seek the mentors and resources needed to help you make good decisions about your business.

There are some venues out there that you want to avoid and they have reputations that will alarm you. If you get burned once, don't go back. If you work for door and prefer not to deal with the venue's door person, bring your own. If you are working 100% of the door, they may need their own staff there to check ID's, but the venue has no reason to handle your money. If you are working for a percentage, definitely have a door person that's working a counter. If you have a guarantee against the door, you may still want to use a counter. If you are working for guarantee only, you don't need anyone at the door unless you simply want a head count for future bargaining power.

There are things that musicians can do to work together positively and provide support for each other. Here are some suggestions for a well rounded approach to dealing with your community of venue operators and peers:

- Always remain on positive, professional ground with venue operators even when your answer is, "No, we'll pass." Yesterday's booking guy may be tomorrow's venue owner with a huge budget or he may just know someone with whom he'd like to hook you up with later. Make a solid effort at improving or developing good public relations skills. Never underestimate your fans and don't be rude and unapproachable. The very people you "don't have time for" today, can be your way up the ladder tomorrow.
- Don't bad mouth venues or peers. Gossip is a never ending circle of moral decay. Behavior speaks for itself in all instances. Remember that venue owners and booking managers talk to those from other venues with the same passion and frequency you talk to other musicians. Don't bash a venue for not paying you all your money when, in fact, you showed up late and started an hour later than agreed upon. If you have issues with another member of the music community, take it up with them and at least attempt to heal the rift. But by no means should you make it your business to try and see them fail by stabbing them in the back. Keep in mind that "what goes around comes around."
- Show up on time and do your job the best you can. Don't be lazy about your promotion. Show the venue that you care about the gig.
- Recruit your friends to help make and post flyers, maintain your website, e-mail lists etc. Use the internet to help promote your band and shows. Trade links with other bands and other music websites. I have personally reaped the benefits of online exposure, so I know it works. Make e-mail sign-up forms, gig cards, business cards and website info a regular part of your equipment. Do a monthly one page news sheet if you don't have computer access or even if you do and use it to brag on your achievements, upcoming projects etc. Print them off and lay them on your gig table.

- Hold regular band meetings and assign one or two promotional tasks per band member so that no one person is responsible for everything. If you are a solo act, enlist your support network for help. If you find yourself stuck in situations where your band's ego is more important than the music you are playing together, maybe it's time to look elsewhere. Sometimes you have to clean house to see a brighter ceiling. Nothing positive develops with a constant battle of wills.

With a focused effort and tackling problems before they start, things can work out better for everyone involved.. Having a firm set of standards regarding the people with whom you can productively deal is a self actualization issue that will grow in importance in the long run. Wasting time with time wasters is never a good thing to do. Avoid the members of any community that just ooze a bad vibe and negativity. If you can't influence them, don't be influenced by them. Nothing can change with the insistence that it won't change always being the front guy.

- Appeal to your proper venue and market. Avoid taking gigs just for the sake of the money. If it's not your type of place, what's the point in playing there?
- Avoid placing a 'beer value' on your performance. You are treated as you present yourself. If you want to book your gigs with that type of bartering, then don't expect good paying venues to take you seriously when they know you have played for free beer at a venue down the street.
- Keep your salary arrangements private, just as you would any other job. Be satisfied with the pay before you accept it. Contracts are a personal decision. Never hesitate to book a gig in writing if you don't know the venue's habits. Always have a copy of the signed contract with you at the gig.
- When seeking reviews in local or even online publications, be sure to take this on with an organized approach. Send a nice package including Bio, CD, Photographs. Review writers in many ways are just like venues. They need interesting and thorough subject matter to pique their interest enough to write about you. If the information they seek is not there, they will move on to an easier subject. Include your contact information in case they want to know more.
- It's always good to make friends with the right people, in the right places. Nothing says you shouldn't go out of your way to support your community. And I'm not talking about playing a free gig or two. Go beyond that and get involved in your community as a key team player. When you do that, good things happen. By helping to promote others, you aren't taking attention off yourself - you are actually increasing it. Everyone wants to be recognized for their input, value and place in the community. Why not makes yours positive and a little more selfless.

It means a great deal to a musician to be appreciated by another musician. Go out and support each other. Let's start a new local fad and call it.. "Musicians helping Musicians...all year long." Don't just promote your next appearances. Promote other bands playing the same venue you are within the week coming up so they'll do the same for you next time around. It's never good politics to promote other venues on the microphone, so stick with when you'll be back at the current venue. Encourage people to pick up a copy of your upcoming shows.

- Don't forget those Bartenders and Waiters on the microphone at least once a set. Be respectful and friendly to all the staff at the venue. You never know where they will be pouring or serving drinks a month from now or how close they will be to their new boss.
- Make it a practice to clean up your stage before leaving of trash and bottles. Replace tables you had to move and leave it like you found it. Believe me, the staff appreciates it and it shows you are a considerate act. Be good to the waiters that keep you supplied with beverages all night on stage. There's no reason not to tip them just because you're the entertainment.

- Join online news groups, organizations , discussion forums and network with other music communities. You'd be surprised at what some good, focused networking can do.
- When playing in another town, always pull in a local to open for you. When playing locally, pull in an out of town band to open for you if the venue allows it. That's one of many ways to work your way into another city by supporting the musicians that are living there.
- Learn to deal with people professionally. If you can't seem to get through to a particular member of the community, leave them alone and focus on what your goals are.

Only you can stop yourself from succeeding. As musicians and venue operators, we're all in this economy together - and together is how we will survive or fail. Supporting one another adds strength and courage and breathes life into the overall music community.

Annette Warner is a Wilmington based Singer-Songwriter who is also the Editor for GoGirlsMusic.com. She founded A. Warner Entertainment! in 1997, A Singer/Songwriter Booking/Promotional Resource Management Company and maintains a fulltime job as a Sales Copywriter and Web Designer with her own company AwesomeWebs. She maintains a weekly column in local magazines called Warner's Corner, in which she discusses Public Relations tips and tricks for the musician and devotes many hours a week with volunteer efforts focusing on assisting up and coming musicians with developing a good public image to include hosting a weekly Open Mic to help local musicians gain stage exposure. She can be reached at annette@annettewarner.com and her website www.coffeehousetour.com

WHY PLAYING LIVE IS SO IMPORTANT

by Clare Dowling, The Moot
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Playing your music out live is vital for a band/artist for many reasons.

Putting on a concert or playing a gig enables you to get your music out there and make people aware of your band. You can also sell merchandise and CD's at gigs, promote your website and network with people. Playing live performances means you can build up a fan base and get immediate feedback about you and your music.

Without this vital connection, how do you expect people to know you exist? Relying on the internet alone for your promotional needs won't be enough if you want to build a larger and more dedicated fan base. Here are some tips:

Make sure you have some business cards with all your contact details and website info on to distribute at gigs. You can get some free cards at www.vistaprint.com. It's also good to do up fliers to give to people with details of your MySpace and upcoming shows.

Contact the local press and put posters up to help promote your gig. Build a mailing list and collect mobile numbers to inform people of your upcoming show. The more people you can get out, the more impressed the venue/promoter will be and the more likely they are to re-book you or put in a good word with their friends.

AT THE CONCERT no matter how small or big, here are some pointers:

- Never ever put you or your band down. Be positive. Be prepared to sweat a lot. If anyone heckles you, remember, who's got the mic and the big speakers? Don't be afraid to make eye contact. Do a set list for each band member and try to stick to it. Tune your guitars with a guitar tuner and carry spare strings. Be polite with the staff and punters. Advertise your website or MySpace between songs. Introduce each song but don't waffle on. Offer any merchandise you have for sale. Don't be afraid to tell any sound engineer what you want (more vocals in the monitor, your guitar turning up/down) Speak clearly. And most important of all HAVE FUN because if you are having fun then so too will the audience.
- Playing live can be a bit nerve-racking and if you have never played live and are weary and not sure what to expect you could try attending a local open mic night and get a taster for live performance there. There are open mic nights in all the big towns and cities. The only way to build your confidence is to go out there and do it. You will be amazed out how gigging will help boost your confidence and help build a solid fan base.

Clare Dowling is a member of The Moot - a two piece female band from Huddersfield in the UK. The Moot play an original blend of Reggae, Funk, Rock and Jamming that is guaranteed to make people move. The line up is Clare (electric guitar and vocals) and Eryl (drums) www.mootmusic.co.uk

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2. PREPARATION

TO TOUR OR NOT TO TOUR...THAT IS THE QUESTION!

by Sheena Metal, Music Highway Radio
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It's every musician's fantasy. The tour bus rolls up to the arena (full of groupies, beer and pizza). Fans are crowded out front hoping to catch a glimpse of America's hottest band. The group is escorted to their dressing room (full of more groupies, beer and pizza). They enjoy the various pleasures of stardom while roadies set up the stage. It's show time. The artists take the stage. The crowd is screaming. The lights are glaring. The amps are humming. The drummer clicks off the first song and...

You wake up in the back of your PT Cruiser. Your bass player's elbow is in your ear and the drummer's asleep on your foot. You've eaten nothing for the last week but corn dogs and frozen burritos. This is not the tour you imagined. This is not your Lilith Faire. This is not your Lollapalooza. This is not your Warped Tour. This...sucks.

Every musician dreams of touring. Getting out of the same boring town. Trying their tunes out on new crowds, in new areas, for fresh faces. Bonding on road, writing new tunes in the motel room, free food, free drinks, getting paid, getting laid...living the life.

But the music biz is full of touring horror stories. Bands stuck on the road with no money to come home. Musicians not eating for days. Clubs canceling gigs the night of with no warning. Negative reactions from bar patrons and local bands. The list goes on.

So, how do you make sure that your touring experience is a positive one? What can you, as musicians do, to eliminate potentially negative experiences and create positive ones.

The following are a few tips that add success to your touring experience:

Don't plan a tour because you're unhappy at home

Just as an affair will not fix the problems in a marriage, a tour is not the cure for: problems within the band, problems in the band members' lives or a general malaise for your local scene. A tour is strain and stress and loads of work. You should be excited and enthusiastic and positive when planning.

Over prepare before you leave

You can never plan too much or take too many precautions. Home is the place to rethink every scenario and arrange accordingly. Get the van tuned up. Pack extra emergency money. Bring a list of additional clubs in the area in case your gigs fall through. Pack extra strings and sticks. Bring a backup guitar. Pack extra merchandise. Bring emergency food/water. Pack extra batteries and power cords. Bring cell phones.

Be humble and thankful

You're in a strange town and a new club, act like a guest. Nothing ticks off a club owner/promoter who's taken a chance on an unknown band more than out-of-towners swaggering into a club like Paris Hilton in an episode of "The Simple Life." No matter how cool you are in your own town, this is unproven ground and your first impression is important. Ask, don't demand. Set up quickly. Play at an appropriate volume. Clean up after yourselves. Be friendly and courteous. Say "please" and "thank you". Unless you're booking in Jerkville USA, this positive attitude could set you well on your way to a repeat booking with better perks and more local support.

Seize every opportunity

If you're going to take the time away from work, family and the buzz you've built in your own music community to head out into the great beyond and conquer unknown lands...you might as well come back with something other than lovely memories and an out-of-state parking ticket. You're in a new place and the possibilities are endless. Sell CDs. Sell T-shirts. Get new names on your mailing list. Solicit local reviews, interviews and radio. Introduce yourself to other club owners for future bookings. Find out who books local festivals. Play an impromptu house party after your gig. Make new friends that can street team for you next time. Think of something I haven't even written here and do it!

Don't expect to conquer the world in one tour

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither will your touring empire be. Have fun. Enjoy each trip and using it as a building block to make each tour to that particular place better and more elaborate. Play your cards right and after a few trips you may be making terrific money, have secured lodging (either new friends let you crash or a club pays for a motel), get food and drinks comped and guaranteed press and radio coverage.

In short, touring can be the best thing that ever happened to your band if you work hard, play it smart and follow through correctly. But no matter how much you love to tour, always remember to keep your foot in the door locally. It's the great work that you do at home that makes other clubs excited about you bringing your show to their town.

Sheena Metal is a radio host, producer, promoter, music supervisor, consultant, columnist, journalist and musician. Her syndicated radio program, Music Highway Radio, airs on over 700 affiliates to more than 126 million listeners. Her musicians' assistance program, Music Highway, boasts over 10,000 members. She currently promotes numerous live shows weekly in the Los Angeles Area, where she resides. For more info: . www.sheena-metal.com

EXPAND YOUR DEFINITION OF A LIVE PERFORMANCE

by Bob Baker, TheBuzzFactor.com

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Let me ask you ... What has to happen for a person to be converted into being a fan of your music? There are a number of possible answers, but at the most basic level, one thing has to happen: The person must hear your music.

And there are only so many ways someone can hear your music: on the radio or on television, on the Internet, in a dance club or a retail store, from a friend on a home or car stereo or ... during a live performance.

Let's focus on that last one, because even with all of the advancements in technology, live performance continues to be one of the best ways to connect with fans, sell CDs and prosper as an artist.

Hopefully, your marketing plans include a heaping helping of live shows. But what type of live shows do you plan? The problem is, many musicians get stuck in live performance ruts and fail to think outside the box. For instance, most rock bands flock like lemmings to nightclubs. Most acoustic singer-songwriters obsess over coffee shops and folk venues. That's fine, but they end the thought process there - and then complain that there aren't enough gig slots for all of the acts who want to play.

The solution: Redefine your live performance goals. And ask yourself the right questions. If you only ask, "How can I book more shows at clubs?" you'll rarely look outside that possibility. But if you ask, "How can I reach more of my ideal fans through live performances?" then your list of potential venues is suddenly wide open.

Where can you play in front of more potential fans? If nightclubs is one answer, great - continue to pursue that. But what about community festivals, neighborhood block parties, grand openings, rallies, auto shows, craft fairs, the finishing line of a city marathon, a public beach on a sunny day ... anywhere that large groups of people gather is fair game.

Sure, not every option will have the logistics for a sound system, a stage etc. But any glimmer of an idea along these lines is worth looking into. And I guarantee you, the number of other acts competing for a spot at one of these offbeat events will be much less than the number you find at the traditional live music venues.

So ... expand your definition of a live performance, ask yourself empowering questions and open your mind to the many new ways you have to reach fans through live performances.

The preceding article was an excerpt from Bob Baker's audiobook, What Every Musician Should Know About Self-Promotion. Bob is also the author of "Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook," "Unleash the Artist Within" and "Branding Yourself Online." He also publishes TheBuzzFactor.com, a website and e-zine that deliver marketing tips, self-promotion ideas and other empowering messages to music people of all kinds. Get your FREE subscription to Bob's e-zine by visiting www.TheBuzzFactor.com today.

HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT VENUE FOR YOUR LIVE SHOW

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Yes, it is so important to play as often as possible. It is also just as important to make sure you play rooms that help move your career forward. Once again this topic requires you to review your long-term goals and keep them in mind as you tackle every new aspect of your career. In this case, selecting appropriate venues can be challenging but rewarding. The challenge lies in that there are a finite number of venues where one may play and an infinite number of other acts competing for those venues. The reward is realized when you begin to qualify the venues you choose to play, in order to fulfill your commitment to reach your career goals. This is a different way of approaching booking.

Keeping your career goals in mind, consider the following factors each time you approach booking a gig:

Know your audience

I think this is the overwhelmingly most important thing a band can do, understand and know their audience. When you know your audience, you are able to immediately determine whether one specific venue is right over another. For example: Is your audience more likely to be downloading songs from iTunes or listening to NPR?

If you think you should be playing at the one and only club downtown that starts most shows at 11pm and you've noticed your audience is generally between the ages of 25-50, your audience may not follow you into that venue. If on the other hand the age demographic of your audience is 17-25, then attempting to book yourself in the club downtown may be appropriate.

Consider the Following Factors

Age

A majority of people in the 25-50 age group have considerations that influence their decisions for late night entertainment such as, family and children, early work days, availability of discretionary funds, desire for creature comforts like soft-seat theaters. Those in the 17-25 age group may not have the constraints as above. Late night start times may not impact their day schedule as much. They also may not be as concerned with seating or a non-smoking environment.

Time

When are you at your best? If late night starts impact you and your ability to perform at your best, certain venues may be wrong for you. If your audience is more of the 8pm crowd, they just won't be there for the second show starting at midnight. If there is such demand, do a second night rather than two shows on the same night. Perhaps schedule a matinee or early evening show and then a 8pm show later the same day.

Types of room

Are your fans accustomed to standing for a show or sitting? If your fans are used to sitting for shows and people know that a particular venue never provides seats, your audience won't appreciate seeing your show there and ticket sales will slump. If, in your attempt to play a bigger, hip venue, but your audience is not used to seeing you in that type of venue, you may also lose sales.

In an attempt to raise the profile of one of my acts, we decided to work with a promoter who chose to put the act in a room unlike any the act had ever played before. All of the above factors came into play. The room was wrong for the artist and the ticket sales were poor. The promoter did not understand the act's audience and their method of promotion and choice of venue proved that fact.

When you are just beginning to tour and book gigs, consider your music and the type of fan the music will attract. Who do you think your audience will appreciate your act-narrow it down? It is not helpful to simply say, "I think everyone would like my music." Do yourself a big favor and be specific. If your music is similar to another act, check out their audience, see which venues they are playing. Who consistently buys tickets to their shows?

Knowing your audience can influence the type of venue in which you chose to perform. Even when you have identified your fans to be the ones who will buy tickets for a standing show starting at 11pm, some venues may be chosen simply as stepping stones and others may be recognized as showcase clubs. You might want to use the stepping stone venue for a while to create that "buzz" and get a following. When it comes to career movement, though, it is important to identify the important clubs in major markets. A showcase club is one where people in the industry are likely to be scouting for new acts and where media, print and radio, are likely to attend to write reviews and promote a new artist. Wetlands in New York City is such a club.

If your audience is of the soft-seat theater variety, you must use a similar tactic of selecting the right theaters as you build your audience on your way to playing the select theaters. You might be playing university performing arts centers and community centers at first with the goal of playing much larger concert halls and eventually outdoor sheds.

Where do you want to play?

Are you comfortable in bars or theaters, intimate house concerts or concert halls? Once you've determined who your audience is, determine the best space to present the music you perform according to your goals and comfort level. This pre-determination helps eliminate a lot of unnecessary phone calls. Now you can concentrate on the appropriate venues according to your goals, your audience and your preferences.

Begin to call each appropriate venue to establish a relationship with the booking person at the venue and decide whether this particular venue is right for your act

Details to Consider

Capacity

Are you ready for the room? Is the room too large or too small? Have you ever sold out a room that size? Prior to calling a venue, research the venues by using The Indie Venue Bible. By evaluating each venue before calling, you may determine which ones will suite your act and which ones are just not right. Make a note of the ones that may be perfect in a year or two so you include them as ones to get back to later.

Stage size

Often this may not matter. In some instances, knowing this information when you begin discussions with the booking person may help you decide if you can fit your entire six piece group with drum kit, keyboards and all the other players comfortably on stage or not. If you can't fit and the stage configuration is not flexible, then this venue may be wrong for your act. Always keep in mind that you want a situation to showcase your act at its best. Move on to another venue when you run into an insurmountable obstacle. Try not to compromise the integrity of the performance.

Technical requirements

If you bring your own sound, lights and engineer and the venue will accommodate you, then you are set in most rooms. If, however, you require sound and lights to be provided for you, checking the specifications offered by the venue can also be an important qualifying factor. If the venue does not have most or all of your required equipment, will they rent what's necessary at their expense?

Budget and fee

Most clubs will determine the fee or the percentage they are willing to pay an act based upon the act's prospective ticket selling capacity. An act in public demand commands better guarantees and percentages. I will discuss negotiating fees in another article. For now, I believe you understand the fact that known acts get better fees and unknown acts have to build a track record of ticket sales in order to have more leverage to command higher guarantees and more advantageous percentages. It is not unreasonable however, to ask the booking person for an approximate budget they might spend on a similar act. Most clubs will not offer this information, but you can determine such information by asking what other acts have they booked recently. When you have some knowledge of the other acts performing in your market, you can quickly get a sense of the kind of money the venue is spending on their talent. For instance, if the booking person names only major acts who are known to the general public and does not include any local or regional talent with whom you are familiar, you may see that you are out of your league. Unless you can persuade the booking person to include you as an opening act, it is unlikely that they will be booking your act. If, on the other hand, all the acts named are similar to yourself, local and regional and you know what some of these bands are getting paid, you have a sense of the venue's budget and may be confident of being booked for a similar fee.

Box office and ticket outlets

Is there a box office where one may purchase tickets in advance. Does the venue use outside ticket vendors? If the venue uses local business to sell their tickets, are these familiar and easily accessible to your audience. Are phone reservations possible? Knowing this will give you some advance indication of how the show is selling. This can give you some sense of how the advance promotion is going and you can work with the venue to increase the promotion when advance ticket sales are slow.

Door sales

When there are no box office sales, then tickets are usually sold at the door. Who collects the money? Does the venue provide a door person to collect the money or can you provide your own person? In many situations, having someone working for you at the door that you trust can mean a great difference in the amount of money you make. You get to determine who is a guest and who is not. If you are unable to insist on your own door person, make sure you can have your own person at the door checking the count.

Advertising and promotion

What kinds of advertising does the venue do? What is the advertising budget for each act or for each week? Many rooms only place strip ads in the local papers in the entertainment section that comes out once a week. Will your act get enough attention by this means of advertising? Is the venue willing to do more? What other forms of promotion can you expect? When you are an opening act, make sure you are included in all promotion and advertising. Ask about the proposed advertising budget to determine how it will impact upon your final fee.

Hospitality

Will the venue provide meals, refreshments or housing? Some of these things may help make doing this gig possible. If you are not getting a large guarantee or are playing for a percentage of the door, having a hotel room or rooms provided by the venue may help your budget. Similarly, knowing that a meal will be provided rather than again having to spend your own money on means is another budget-saver. Ask the booking person these questions when entering into a negotiation.

These few items will assist your decision making process when determining which venues are right for your act and which are not. Some rooms you will grow into over time, others are simply to be crossed off the list. When you approach your bookings with this method of evaluating each venue, you are once again making your determination by using facts rather than feelings, research rather than impetuosity. Just as each venue booking person will attempt to qualify you and determine whether you are right to perform in their room, you now have some tools to equalize the process and be pro-active rather than reactive. Sometimes playing the wrong room can do more to stall or thwart your efforts to reach your career goals. Qualifying each venue will save you time, effort and money and boost your career to the next desired level.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

DYNAMICS FOR SUCCESS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com
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We can discuss booking strategies and marketing plans forever, but until your group has established a working group dynamic, success may be illusive. One of my first concerns when I worked with any group, is to see how the group worked together and interacted with each other away from the music. I've seen situations when a band can make incredible music together and as soon as the rehearsal or the gig is over, everyone disappears into their own world just so they don't have to interact with one another. There is so much more to creating a successful band than just playing the music. I want to know that the group will do more than simply tolerate each other when it's absolutely necessary.

The first place to start is to see if each of your goals for the group are in alignment-does everyone want the same thing? This may best be done with your manager, if you have one or simply ask someone who is not tied to anyone in particular within the group to serve as an impartial facilitator. I suggest getting together for a non-rehearsal date. Each person would share their ideas about the group, what each individual sees as their desires for the group's goals and what their own individual goals are. Be open and honest as you communicate with each other. It sets the tone for future interactions. One member may see the group as a vehicle for their songwriting; another might be using the group as a stepping stone to a solo career or until a different group comes along more to their liking. One member might like to play the in-town gigs but not really want to tour extensively out of the area. Another member may just want to play once in a while and not really want to put much energy into the group. These kinds of things are important to know up front, before a lot of energy, money and time are invested and before the group starts to take off.

This kind of discussion often produces many "what-if" scenarios. As you brainstorm future situations that may arise, you get a chance to see how the others may react. For example, an opportunity to open a series of dates for a larger act is offered to the group. This means you will be on the road for a month or perhaps more. In that situation, what will the member who doesn't want to tour extensively do? Wouldn't it be good to explore these situations in advance rather than in the moment it actually happens? When everyone discusses these possibilities as a prelude to success rather than a reaction to it, the group has more of a chance to make great music and enjoy all the effort involved in the making of it.

Once you are aware of each member's view of the role the group plays in their lives, you are more able to proceed setting realistic goals. It is also appropriate to set a time-line for when a change needs to occur in order to satisfy a member's relationship to the group. Make arrangements with each member to give enough advance notice about quitting when the group begins heading in a direction they are not interested in going. This allows the group enough time to find a replacement if that is what's needed. Depending upon the legal structure of the group, contracts between group members may be required to spell out how each member gets in and how they get out. If investments were made, contracts would help describe financial compensation to the leaving member and required investment of a newcomer. When you anticipate as many of the worse case scenarios in advance, cooler heads design the outcomes and the remedies.

Taking Responsibility for Success

There are many tasks required in making a band successful. When first getting started, there is not enough money to hire road managers, business managers and others to take care of all the details to keep the group operating. These various tasks must fall to the members of the group. Some jobs, like booking the dates, (prior to having an agent) often takes the most time and it requires a certain type of personality. It may also be the job that is the most crucial if the band want's to play anywhere other than the garage. Often people find this to be the least fun as well. I recommend that the group member taking on this task be compensated with an additional percentage above their split of the performance fee. If you had an agent you would be paying them anywhere from 10%-20%. Agree on a percentage and pay the member of the group that percentage of every date they book.

What about the other tasks? They are just as meaningful to the group's success. You may decide that when each person takes responsibility for a specific job, rather than offering additional compensation for one job, you simply split the gig fees equally, if each job holds equal weight and requires equal amounts of time. The various jobs necessary to keep the group going to build toward success are:

- booking
- marketing
- merchandising
- keeping the books
- advancing the tour dates
- publicity

You may come up with others specific to your group's needs, but these are the main tasks. When the group members share equally in all aspects of operations, then you may decide to split all income equally. If, however, one or two group members take responsibility for the majority of the tasks to keep the group working, then it would be appropriate to compensate those members accordingly. The additional compensation shows respect for the work being done on behalf of the entire group. When these arrangements are established early in a group's career, those members doing the extra work are less likely to feel unappreciated and overwhelmed or suffer burnout. Take care of the people taking care of the group.

If you are serious about success, then start out with a meaningful dialog among members to know you are all heading in the same direction and working for the same goals. Establishing the working dynamics early in the group's career will ensure consistent growth, smooth transitions and easy interactions.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

HOW A POSITIVE INDIE ATTITUDE WILL ADVANCE YOUR CAREER

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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As a touring musician, you encounter a variety of situations that have the potential to disrupt your day's plans. The attitude with which you meet these daily challenges can influence your success or failure as you move through your career. There are plenty of obstacles thrown in your path. You may choose to approach them with a positive, "can do" attitude or a negative, "why me" attitude. The method you choose affects those around you and may even be partially responsible for getting or not getting some of the breaks you clearly think you deserve.

I'd like to examine some of the situations that may arise where your attitude may make a huge difference. I've worked with many artists over the years, as manager, agent, promoter and consultant. The one thing that stands out about each performer above all else, is their attitude about their life, their music and the manner in which they approach each day and every situation. Attitude can be infectious both positively and negatively. Be sure that when you leave a situation, your reputation of having an upbeat, positive attitude is one of the highlights.

Making phone calls

As you book each date, the first place that your attitude plays a major role is in your phone conversation. Prepare for your phone sessions — don't just pounce on the phone with vengeance determined to book the whole tour. Get yourself in the right frame of mind, calm yet enthusiastic. If you are tired or are having a bad day, don't make booking calls. It is inappropriate to carry your personal problems to your phone conversations. This will not win you many friends nor land you many gigs. Booking calls are a sales pitch. Present a positive attitude and you are more likely to get a positive response. It is not always easy to maintain when phone call after phone call nets little more than "call me next week." When multiple calls become frustrating and you feel your upbeat attitude begin to fall, stop making calls and do some paper work, take a walk or practice, but change gears before you say something you'll regret.

The way you leave your last call with a promoter or club owner, is the way you will be remembered. If they had a pleasant conversation with you, they will welcome your next call, if not, it may be weeks before they answer your calls. Set yourself up for success.

Arriving at the venue

When you arrive at the venue, first impressions make a difference in how the rest of the gig will go. It's not unusual to hit traffic on your way to the venue or have various travel delays that can unnerve anyone. It isn't anyone's fault, so don't take it out on those that greet you at the venue. They have been anxiously awaiting your arrival and are probably looking forward to helping you settle in and assist in any way they are able. Check your attitude before opening the door and make sure the first thing out of your mouth is, "Great to meet you!" or some other pleasant greeting. You must set the tone for the rest of the event. If you want those at the venue to help you put on the best show you can, you need to set the stage and offer your winning attitude.

Dealing with technicians

Once settled, the next challenge is sound and light check. This task can be fraught with one obstacle after another, from inadequate equipment, the wrong equipment, inexperienced technicians and unhelpful technicians, not enough time and anxious stage personnel. If you want to accomplish an effective sound and light check, stay upbeat, be very clear about your needs, express them succinctly and be respectful of those who work at the venue. When you run into a technician with a bad attitude, there is nothing you can do or say to change the attitude except keep yours in check and remain pleasant. Step outside to blow off steam where no venue staff can see you, return refreshed and ready to work.

When it comes to setting your sound, you know your sound best. Be persistent with the engineer until you achieve the sound you like. Don't badger, just be clear and attempt to win them over. Sound is a particularly sticky issue for all artists, as it should be. This is certainly one area to maintain your cool if you want to have a good show. Unless you travel with own sound engineer, you are at the mercy of those at the board. This is one person you don't want to piss-off. Again, your attitude can make or break the show.

Dealing with the promoter

From time to time we all run into a club owner or promoter who is difficult. From the first phone call, it was clear that this gig would be a challenge simply because the promoter offered resistance. It didn't get any easier once you arrived at the venue. Again, you're not out to make any life changes in this person. You are determined to get through the gig, do your best show, fill the hall, win over the audience, sell your merchandise and hopefully with all that in your favor you'll get paid the full amount agreed upon and perhaps you'll get another gig there in the future. Maintain your positive attitude throughout, in spite of the vibes coming at you from the promoter. Your goals are clear, ignore his distracting demeanor.

Dealing with the audience

When you are finally on stage, this is certainly not the place to air your problems, be unkind or disrespectful. These are the people you have worked so hard to stand before. This is the moment when your absolute best is tested. No matter what happened back stage, in the dressing room, on the phone before the show, in the car driving to the show or during sound check, if you display an ugly attitude here, you are done. These folks won't forget and they'll tell their friends. The audience deserves your highest regard.

After the show

After the show, you may be tired. The gig is not over though. You have an opportunity to win loyal fans and build solid support as you develop your career. Meet with fans and sign autographs. Set aside your fatigue for a little while longer. When you perform in venues other than clubs, you may be working with volunteers. If you are invited to meet the presenter and some of the workers who spent weeks preparing for this event, take the opportunity and you'll solidify a return gig. You don't have to accept invitations to parties you are not interested in attending, but a short meet and greet after the gig will go a long way to creating a good reputation. If you have to meet a travel schedule and are unable to stay for a meet and greet, let the venue personnel know that before you arrive so there will be no expectations for you to stay.

You can be a very talented musician, have a fabulous act, be a savvy businessperson, but if you sport a bad attitude, your successes will be hard won. Remain clear throughout all of your dealings with each venue and build respect for your group as a testament to your level of professionalism. Maintain a positive attitude during each situation to ensure that your good reputation will precede you and spark new successes.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

VITAL GIG BOOKING TOOLS: THE PRESS KIT

by Jay Flanzbaum, Onlinegigs

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So you think your band is finally ready to start playing more gigs. But you need to have some basic marketing items in place first so that you are prepared for the very competitive world of the music industry. Below are some of our suggestions.

The demo

For booking purposes your CD presentation does not need to be slickly designed and packaged. It does however need to be laid out professionally and simply. Your band name, contact information and song titles should be easily located on the CD. With today's technology, there is no reason to use a tape instead of a CD or to write your information directly on the CD with a marker. Invest some time in creating a printed label or send your CD to a duping company to put together cheap printed CDs in paper sleeves.

The bio

Short, sweet and to the point. You should include a very brief history of the band and its members. A descriptive paragraph about the band's sound and artistic vision is also helpful. And photos of the band help to spice up any page layout. Your band name and contact information should be easily located at the top of every page.

The press

Two or three pages of press is enough and anything less than one page is not enough. Most bands either go way overboard with too many press clippings or don't include any at all. Press clippings from two years ago are a waste of paper. If you do not have any press, start a mission to harass your local newspaper, alternative weekly, college newspaper or online music site to review your CD or live show. Your band name and contact information should be easily located at the top of every page.

The photo

The technology to take a picture and print it out is too affordable to justify not having a band picture. Your band name and contact information should be easily located below your band shot.

The poster template

Any gig you book is going to require posters. You should design a simple poster with room to fill in the show's specifics. 11 X 17 sized posters stand out better than 8.5 X 11, but either is fine. It is helpful to print copies of these posters in advance. By including one in your booking package you show that you are ready to start promoting your gigs. Your band name and contact information should be easily located on the poster.

The flyer template

It is also useful if you convert your poster to a small, postcard size flyer. You should be able to lay out four of these on one 8.5 X 11 sized sheet of p. It may not be necessary to include this when you send your booking package but having one ready is a good idea.

The stage plot

A simple document with every instrument and each musician's microphone or monitor needs. This may not be necessary for all gigs and can even be left out of the booking package. But many venues will require you to either fax or e-mail them a stage plot, so have one ready in advance. Your band name and contact information should be easily located on the stage plot.

The folder

Save your money. Talent buyers will either file your information away or throw it out. In both cases a nice, glossy folder for the above items is superfluous. Use them for special occasions only.

The website

At the very least you should have a distinct URL (ie: BANDNAME.COM) that compiles the above information: Music Samples, Photo, Bio Information, Press Clippings, Contact Information, Stage Plot, Poster Template and Flyer Template. If you are technologically savvy however your website can become your own personal marketing team for all things band related.

Jay Flanzbaum got his start as a booking agent putting together national and regional tours for independent bands. Those years running a boutique agency inspired the creation of Onlinegigs, an incredibly powerful booking and promotional tool for independent bands and agents. www.onlinegigs.com

PLANNING YOUR OWN TOUR

by Kim Ruehl, Betamax
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Sure, you could hire someone else to do it for you, but let's face it - at some point we all decide to book our own tour. I've spent a good deal of time on tour and have managed to learn a thing or two about life on the road. Here are some helpful hints that can at least get you out the door.

Start early

It's always best to give yourself more time than to be scrambling a week before you leave. If you're touring in the summer, you can bet everyone else is too. Clubs get inundated and you want to make sure you're taken into consideration. This is particularly important if you're looking at Churches or House Concerts. Often they'll be booked out a year in advance.

Pick a region

You want to narrow it down to an appropriate amount of space. If you're planning on spending the whole summer on the road, for example, a tour of the East Coast may be OK. But if you only have three weeks, that would be incredibly ambitious.

Find venues

To think you won't ever get stiffed or mistreated by a venue is just a bit idealistic. But it's important to narrow your chances of having that happen. There are some great resources online for finding venues. House Concerts are a great place to look too. Churches will never stiff you. Alliance shows are a sure thing as well.

Call ahead

Always call before you send your materials. For one, you want to make sure the club still exists and that they're still booking Folk acts. Also, some clubs hand booking over to an agency, which will often book several clubs in town. If you touch base ahead of time, you can let them know that if you're not suitable for the club you were initially calling for, maybe they can hook you up with another venue.

Send a demo, bio and press kit

This doesn't have to be fancy shmancy, but it really is better if you put some time and effort into your materials. The people who own the venue don't know anything about you, so you may as well make an honest impression. Make sure your demo is recent and that your bio is up to date. It's also nice to include a letter to the venue introducing yourself and thanking them ahead of time for listening to your work.

Don't wait for them to call you

A few places are noting on their websites that they don't want artists to call about booking. In that case, honor their policy. There's a reason for it. But most of the time, they're not going to call you if they have to call long distance. Give them two weeks to listen to your CD and then call to check up. No need to stalk them, but if they don't have an answer yet, try back later.

Be realistic

It may not look like a terribly long drive from New York to Atlanta, but trust me - it is. More realistic: book in DC and Raleigh on the way. Respect yourself and the venues you're booking and make sure you're going to have time to get there and still have the energy to put on a good show. Even if you only take one day off per week, it's important to have that time.

Send contracts

Boy I wish someone would have told me this a long time ago. Contracts don't have to be written by an attorney. You can write them up yourself - just make sure the date, time and agreed-upon compensation method is clearly stated. You sign, the person booking you signs and you both keep a copy. It helps to save you from getting stiffed and it helps the club know you're serious about what you do.

Get your car checked out

This is essential! You definitely don't want to wind up in the middle of nowhere after driving for eight hours and find that your car is falling apart. Make sure you bring WD-40, duct tape, spare oil, a jug of water (in case you over-heat) and a gas can (in case you run out). Better to be safe than sorry. Oh and join AAA.

Head out

Make sure you have a copy of your itinerary, your instrument(s), amplification/P.A., a list of phone numbers for every venue, copies of your contracts and the names of the people you spoke with. This is particularly important if you get lost looking for the venue or if you're caught in traffic in another state. It happens.

Plan well in advance!

Give yourself and the venue plenty of time to take care of what you need to take care of before you leave.

Figure out where you're going to sleep along the way. Sleeping in the car can become a necessity, but if you're alone, it's especially risky. Don't get me wrong, I've done it too. But beds are so much nicer. Check your cell phone plan and make sure you won't be roaming the whole time.

Additional things you need

- Join AAA
- Your instrument(s) and amplification/P.A.
- Your itinerary
- Contact information for everywhere you're playing
- Extra money (cash or credit) in case something goes horribly wrong
- A road atlas - you'll need to know how to suddenly skirt rush hour in DC
- Plenty of copies of your CD to sell
- A good cell phone plan

Kim Ruehl is a Seattle-based musician and freelance writer, as well as a political junkie and history buff. Kim has spent nearly a decade touring the US as a Folk singer. Now based in Seattle, she splits her time between a day job at the University of Washington and her other job as a freelance writer. In addition to being the About Folk Music Guide, she is also the Roots/Americana columnist for Sound magazine and a frequent contributor to Performer magazine and online at Seattlest.com. She performs regularly with her folk-rock band Betamax and has released 6 CDs on their own cognition. www.myspace.com/betamaxseattle

SETTING UP A SUCCESSFUL TOUR

by Kenny Kerner, Musicians Institute

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The best way for an artist to create a buzz and sell records is to simply take his music to the people. And that, my friends, means touring.

Getting out on the road is a tradition for everyone even remotely associated with the entertainment industry. Authors go out on book tours, movie stars visit every major late-night talk show, others pop in on radio broadcasts, do print interviews to promote an opening of a play or concert and some, those who are really hungry for success, do it all!

Touring is a very costly proposition, both financially and organizationally. It takes money to finance the travel and lots of time and planning to put it together.

Before you can even think about getting out on the road, you must first determine why it is you want to go out. What is it you wish to accomplish? Sightseeing? Partying? If that's the case, better stay home! But if you have product to promote (a new CD, maybe), then touring is a viable solution. Putting together a tour simply for the experience, is not recommended. Only go out if you are selling/promoting something that people can buy and if that tour will advance your career.

I know this might sound crazy, but begin planning your tour at least six months before you actually want to leave. This will give you plenty of time to do your research, mail out packages, make follow-up calls, book the appropriate gigs, route your tour, save some additional money, rehearse, update your equipment insurance, get the van repaired, assemble a crew and get your shit together. Man, it's already starting to look like six months may not be enough time!

Once you've decided to go out on the road to promote your new independently-released CD, you'll want to decide what areas to cover. If you've never been out before, I strongly suggest staying close to home, meaning go no further than a few hundred miles away. If you live in the Los Angeles area, try booking gigs from Seattle (to the north) all the way down to San Diego (in the South). This routing will enable you to reach any venue in a day's drive and return home the next day, if necessary. Or, you can do several cities in Washington (Seattle, Tacoma), sleep over and drive to San Francisco the next day. The same theory applies regardless of where you live.

Next, you'll want to make a list of all appropriate clubs in the areas you'll be touring. Don't get lazy on this one! Do your homework. There's nothing more embarrassing or wasteful than a Metal band setting up its gear on the stage of a Jazz club. Get the picture?

Call the clubs and find out who is in charge of booking the talent. Mail out a neat, professional-looking package with a cover letter specifying the dates you expect to be in that area. Be sure your package includes some industry quotes, any airplay you're receiving and the most recent reviews. **AND DON'T FORGET TO INCLUDE THAT VIDEO OR CD!**

You'll want to wait at least 5-6 business days for the packages to arrive before you begin your follow-up calls. Then, once on the phone, be polite, persuasive and direct. Understand that the club has no reason at all to book you since there are thousands of unsigned local acts that are dying to play those venues for free. So, what can you offer the clubs that they can't get for free? Here's where you'll need to do some thinking and use your imagination. Nobody said it would be easy, right?

Assuming that you're going to be successful in booking a string of 10 club dates—and always remember to get signed performance contracts that list your pay, time of load-in, sound-check, show time and hospitality provided by the club (usually in the form of a hot meal for band and crew and drinks)—you should route these dates in one of two ways: First, begin with the club the longest distance from your home. Drive to it and schedule other dates working your way back to your home base, with the show closest to home scheduled for last. Or, begin the opposite way by playing your way out to the farthest point and then making a straight, non-stop drive home after the final show.

Do not hesitate to call your local AAA office and request a Trip-Kit package of the areas you will be touring. This will be helpful in giving you the most direct routes and the exact mileage from city to city. Having this information will allow you to more accurately budget the tour.

When you go out on the road for a short period of time (1 1/2 - 3 weeks), too many off dates can kill you. It will drain your money (when you're off, there's no income from gigs or selling merchandise) and set you up for a giant loss at tour's end. Therefore, try to book as many dates in a row as possible and only take off every fifth day, at most. But remember to use that off day for a little relaxation and a little promotion of your next gig!

Find out if anyone in the band or crew has relatives or friends in your tour area. It might just be that a friendly phone call will result in a place to stay overnight. This will save you hotel bills and food money. If you are forced to sleep in a hotel, the cheaper, the better. A bed, hot and cold running water and a phone are all of the amenities you'll need. And guys, get used to sleeping 5-6 in a single room. Look for motels that are located within a mile or two from the club. This saves mileage and gas. The club booker can be helpful in suggesting places to stay overnight.

*The preceding article is an excerpt from the best selling music education book, Going Pro by Kenny Kerner, published by Hal Leonard. Available at all bookstores and at Amazon.com. Kenny Kerner was the former Senior Editor at Music Connection Magazine. Kenny is currently the Director of the Music Business Program at Musicians Institute in Hollywood. Specialties include Personal Management, Artist Development and Music Business. Phone: (323) 860-1122
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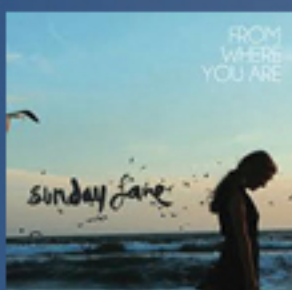
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3. BOOKING AGENTS

LOOKING FOR AN AGENT

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com
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You have reached that point in your career development when adding an agent to your team would be a logical next step. Before you pick up the phone and start calling around, I suggest you do the following:

Get a clear picture

Take inventory and create an overview of your career position to date. This process and information will help you present a clear picture of your career for yourself and assist you in making a more powerful pitch to any agent you are considering.

Taking inventory includes re-evaluating your past two year's growth. I would include a list of all your past performance venues, the fees you actually received, the capacity of the venue and the number of seats you sold. If you haven't been keeping track of this information, it is not too soon to begin. Along with these details, I would also list the merchandise sales you had for each venue. All of this information helps assess your growth from year to year and venue to venue especially when you play a specific venue a number of times during the year. If your numbers increase each time, there is good indication you are building a following. This is exactly the type of information a booking agent wants to know when determining whether they will invest their time and money to add you to their roster. When you present an organized evaluation of your career development to an agent along with your promotional package, you immediately set yourself above most scouting for an agent.

Define your goals

Create a set of career goals, timelines and projections. Most artists are looking for an agent to relieve them of work they dislike doing for themselves-making calls to book gigs. Look for an agent to help you raise the level of your performance dates and increase the number of dates and the performance fees. Set career goals for the types of venues you would like to play and present this to prospective agents. Determine a specific time line in which you would like to have these goals accomplished. Then based on the kind of concrete information you've gathered from your evaluation (step 1 above), you can make some realistic projections about what percentage of increase you foresee in the next two years. For example, based on last year's information, you are able to determine that your bookings, fees and merchandise will increase by 20% during the next year and 20% the year after. When you present an agent with hard numbers they can more effectively evaluate whether or not it is worth their involvement.

Research

The final step before making phone calls is to do some research. It doesn't matter how well organized you are or how talented you are, if you are calling the wrong type of agent, you are wasting your time. Check through the Indie Venue Bible for a booking agent in your area.

Some agents book specific genres music or styles of performance. When researching agencies, determine if the genre of music or the type of performance is compatible with your own. Check their roster of artists to see if you recognize anyone. There may be some acts for which you might open-when finally speaking with someone at the agency, mention that. Create a list of appropriate agencies and make sure you get the names of one or two or the head of the agency if it is a small company. If you know any acts who are working with a specific agent with whom you might be compatible, ask that act if they would mind sharing some information about their agent. You may get some insider information regarding whether or not it is a good time to make your pitch based on whom the agent just signed or if they are looking for new acts to add.

Go to conferences

Another method of researching agents is to attend booking and showcasing conferences. Agents often use these conferences to scout for new talent. Seeing acts in live performance help agents get a sense of audience reaction as well as getting a better picture of what they might potentially be selling. The other great benefit to attending booking conferences is that you can walk around the exhibit hall and meet all the agents who are representing their acts. View their booths to see who is on their roster as well as examining how the agency presents their artists with their booth display. You can get a sense of the agent's organization and creativity by the manner in which they represent the talent. Stand by and listen to the way they pitch their artists to prospective buyers.

With these three tasks under your belt, you can confidently present yourself to appropriate agencies when you feel you are ready to make a pitch. You will present a much more professional overview of your act with a clear evaluation of your past performance and a realistic projection of your future.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

BOOKING AGENTS AND NATIONAL TOURING

by Max McAndrew, The House of Blues

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I currently work in the Talent Department at the House Of Blues, but for many years I was an Agent at ICM, one of the world's largest Talent Agencies. They house offices in NYC and Los Angeles and also maintain several satellite offices all over the world. The booking business is divided into two separate and equal parts, the Promoters who purchase the Talent and the Agents who sell the Acts. Here's how it all works...

Who We Are

Agents are part salesmen and part negotiators. We are young and old, black and white, male and female. When I would tell people what I do, their faces would light up: "Wow that's so cool...you're an Agent"...then there is this long pause and they go on to ask, "What does an Agent do?" Well, I have been asked that question so many times and I find the best way to describe what we do is to ask that person if they have seen the movie Jerry McGuire. If they have, then I say that's exactly what I do. We sit in our offices and yak on the telephone through our headsets until it's time to leave or until the day is done. (The headset is neither a perk nor a plus, but rather more of an essential as we spend so much time on the phone).

No two Agents are alike; everyone marches to the beat of his or her own drummer. The dress is extremely casual. You can wear whatever you want and that includes jeans, T-shirts and sneakers. Most office spaces are pretty vibrant - music playing, walls covered with gold and platinum records - although they are not nearly as lush as what I have encountered at various record labels. Some of the perks associated with being an Agent include having an Assistant who acts as your first line of defense and is your liaison to the outside world. You maintain an expense account and travel frequently to see a new act or an existing client. I flew to LA on several occasions and attended Music Midtown in Atlanta, GA. (Not including the many NYC-area road trips). Outside of that there are the free CDs from Record Companies and the ability to go to any show free of charge. I will say that I became very spoiled when attending live shows because I was always hooked up with all the right credentials. Today, I do not attend shows unless I have the royal hookup; once you get a taste of it, you can never go back.

How Our Day Is Spent And What We Do

A typical day in the life of a Music Agent starts around 10 a. m. with the clearing out of voice mails and e-mails that were received from the previous day. First you deal with anything pressing or any emergencies, then you get on with your day by starting your calls. An Agent calls the Promoters in their territory and gives Artist's avails (ie: available dates for shows) to each Promoter. This is done telephonically, so it's crucial that your Assistant is present to handle the onslaught of return calls. Many times a tour can hinge on one date, so it's important to know who's calling at all times.

Once you have given out the avails and have created a routing, you can then place holds on the venues. Once the holds line up with the markets and distances you like, you then start to gather offers from the Promoters. Offers are exactly what they sound like, an offering of money to the Artist. Offers contain the essential details for a show performance. These include: Artist guarantee; ticket price; capacity; tax rate; curfew; merchandise rate; ticket scaling; times; and contacts. We'll get into the specifics of these terms later.

Once all the offers are in (most always faxed), they are input into a computer mainframe where they can be printed out in a clean version. The RA (Responsible Agent - responsible for all dealings with the client) then prints out the offers and goes over them with both Artist Management and the BA (Booking Agent) in that part of the country (a more detailed description about the difference between RAs and BAs. Depending on what conclusions the RA and Artist Management come to, some deals are passed, some are tweaked (details need to be changed) and some are confirmed. All of this is done over the telephone, so it's important to make sure that the Promoter is listening to the details you are giving.

This process continues until there are no more tours to book or until it's time to leave the office. Most days leaving the office does not signify the end of the work day (or evening, as we should put it). Many nights are spent out eating dinner before attending a client performance or scoping out a new act. Thinking back, I cannot recall any one week where I did not attend at least one show. I watch the act's energy, stage presence, listen to the mix and the vocals, all while talking to the Record Company contact and the act's Manager.

Where Do We Come From?

The CIA had this training facility located on the outskirts of ... just kidding. Most Agents come right out of college, as I did and head directly into the Agent Training Program (but let me tell you, breaking into an Agency's Training Program is quite a task). The Training Program - a glamorous description for the word Mailroom - is one of the most grueling experiences one can go through. I ended up stocking people's refrigerators, making coffee, sorting mail and messenger packages all over the city. After having spent close to five months in the mailroom, I got my break. Jon Podell had just come over from William Morris and had promoted Mike Krebs to Agent. Mike too had served in the mailroom and he knew that I was hungry to be an Agent like him. He offered me a spot as his Assistant and I gladly took it.

Most Agents serve a dual role at their companies; they function as Responsible Agents (RAs) and Booking Agents (BAs) - however, there are a handful of just BAs in the business. As an RA, you are responsible for all dealings with the client. You interact and liaise with the Artist's Manager, the Record Company and everyone else associated with the project. The RA is the final authority and acts only on direction from Artist Management. BAs supplement the RAs efforts by booking particular regions of the country in which they have expertise. Depending on how the Agency is divided, the Music Department may be separated by size of the venues or by style of music. ICM was divided up by style of music; on my side you had the Alternative Music or Club Department and on the other was the Adult Contemporary Department.

Can You Be Your Own Agent?

You can. You or one of your band members and/or your Manager can call just as efficiently on your behalf and set up the show. Agents are not the only ones who are allowed to call venues or Promoters, in fact, many times a Manager or Artist will call them directly. However, having an Agent can prove very beneficial. Most importantly, Agents already have established relationships with these venues and Promoters. Having this relationship means that they will take my phone call or will at least call me back. This may not be the case if you call and you may have to adhere to the venue/Promoter booking policy (sending a press kit, waiting about a month, then calling and the like). I just call them and give them my pitch and see what's available. This it not to say that you will not have success in going directly to the venue or Promoter, but I feel having an Agent helps tremendously. What's the old saying, that 90% of the battle is getting in the front door? Agents open those doors and they get paid for it.

If you do go the do-it-yourself route and attempt to book your own national tour, be prepared that getting a Promoter on the telephone is most often difficult to do. Rule number one is, if and when you get the Promoter on the phone, keep the conversation short and get to the point. Research the venue's schedule well in advance so that when you are talking to the Promoter about specific dates, you can see what's booked and what's available. Let the Promoter know that money is not a concern and that all you wish is to get into the room and perform. Be persistent, but not annoying. If you have played a venue of similar size or stature, bring that into the conversation; it gives you credibility. Developing a following will also help increase your chances of getting yourself into some or the more premier venues. You want to play in as many major markets as possible, but you don't want to over-saturate the area. The only way your numbers will go up is by touring and touring regularly. Last but not least, be polite and courteous Promoters and Club Owners deal with thousands of Acts and their materials. If they don't have time for you the first time, try again later; stay clear of making waves as you will only decrease your chances of getting into that specific venue.

Additional Benefits Of Having an Agent

As an Agent I always considered myself as the extra member of the band. I say this because the Agent is the closest person to the act when they are touring. It's obviously not based on a proximity factor, but rather stems from the Agent-Client relationship. Let me try to clarify: When something is great or when something goes wrong on the road, it's the Agent's responsibility to fix it. Why is that, you say? Because the Agent is the one responsible for all the live-show dealings of an Act. The Agent is the one who sold the Act to the Promoter with certain guidelines, which are always outlined in a show contract. Should the Promoter deviate from the terms in the agreement, the Agent must then intervene on behalf of the Artist.

Feeling like that extra member of the band made me do my job better. Any time a situation came about where my Artist was going to get screwed, I would get right into it and bring the situation to a head. Case in point, I was routing the Toadies through the Southeast (my territory) and had a date booked in Raleigh. Two weeks out, the Promoter has no tickets sold and I don't have either the contract or the deposit. I am a little worried 'cause this guy is pretty green and I don't have a history with him. Three days out and I still have no deposit and no contract. I conference-call the guy with the band's RA and the guy flakes. The show cancels for the deposit and I go on to tell the guy that without him sending me the money, he will never get a show from ICM again. No one ever thought I would get that money, but seven months later it showed up.

You see, in situations like that, it's great to have an Agent, because they get down into the pit and fight like dogs for their clients. The other good thing an Agent provides is good cover. They will absorb all the negatives that are associated with booking live shows (both from the Artist and the Promoter). Just because you are the Artist's representative, this does not mean that you do not look out for your Promoters. Like when a show stiff and the Promoter loses a bundle of money. No one wants to see that and chances are, the Promoter will call looking for a reduction. You want to look out for the Promoter, but ultimately you are responsible only to your Artist and their Management. If they agree that giving back some of the money is OK, then you do it. An Agent never wants to give money back, but they also don't ever want a Promoter to lose their ass. It's a very fine line. By having an Agent, this allows the Artist to be themselves and to say what they want to say and do what they want to do. At some point in time the decisions come full circle to both the Agent and the Manager. We are the ultimate role-players; we are the good cop and the bad cop and it all depends on the scenario.

How To Find and Attract A Booking Agent

Check your copy of The Indie Venue Bible for Booking Agents in your area. You also want to solicit references from all the people you run into in the club scene. All Promoters deal with Agents on a daily basis, so they are a great resource to tap. Finally, you may want to check out the CD inlays of your favorite artists. More often than not they will list their Agent's name and company and possibly even their phone number. It's always worth a try.

Most Agents pick up their acts through relationships with friends in the industry. These may be Promoters, Club Owners, Record Company people, Managers, MTV folks, VH1 cats or Tour Managers. These are all resources that Agents consult on a daily basis. A tip on a hot act can come from anywhere. Therefore, strong networking will be critical for you in identifying and contacting the best Agent for your Act.

Certain Agents gravitate to certain kinds of music. I say this in a very generic way because it's partly true and partly not. Find out who at what company is responsible for which acts and that will provide you with insight on who is going to be most into your project. Case in point, let's say you are a new alternative act and you call up an Agency and find out that most of their Agents have acts that are either Hip Hop, R&B or Classic Rock. Unless you visualize yourself touring with the likes of Eddie Money or the Beach Boys, I suggest you take your music elsewhere.

Identifying the Agents who would be most receptive to your style of music is a key starting point in selecting an Agent. This saves you sending kits to every Agency, where most of the time the music falls on deaf ears and the photos & bios make for the recycle bin. A good strategy is to send the package to the Agents' Assistants instead of directly to the Agent. This does several things. First, Assistants open all the mail and they more often than not listen to the music, even if it's just once. If the Assistant likes the Music, then you have an "in" at that Agency. The music can then be delivered freely among the others and your name will be brought up in conversations. Plus, if the Agency ends up signing the act then that Assistant will get props for bringing it in. This may come by way of a promotion, the assignment of the project or greater say at that company. Remember, today's Assistants are tomorrow's Agents.

Another good way for you to be seen or heard is to set up an industry showcase. This should take place in LA, NYC or similar cities where there is a strong music-industry presence (ie: Nashville). The show should be set up well in advance so that everyone you invite will have the date marked down in their calendar (I can't tell you how many shows we missed due to conflicts like going to Knicks' Games). Once your date is locked in, it's essential that you get the word out. This entails e-mails, flyers, phone calls and the like. Again, if you can't get the Agent on the phone, try to get the Assistant to go to the show. The more people you invite, the better your turnout will be. If you can, try to get a good cross-section of industry personnel, you will find that news travels quicker that way. A good ploy is to bait people with free drinks or food. Agents never pass up a free beverage or cracker. Once they arrive, the night is yours. If the show is a success they will talk about it. Talking about it creates a "buzz" and when you have a "buzz" everyone is interested in your act. It is from here you can start to feel out the Agents.

Passion

When looking for an Agent (and when I looked for Acts) find someone who is truly passionate about your project. I say this for two reasons. The first is this business is full of ups and downs, trends and fads and so you want someone who will stick by you through the good and the bad. If your Agent loves your band, you will have a successful relationship and touring career. Secondly, your Agent serves as your representative, so you want someone who reflects what you are all about. There is nothing worse than trying to sell something you have no interest or faith in. It's a tough sell and people can see right through it.

Every Agent wants all their shows to sell out, but working in the Club Department with developing acts meant that was not always the case. New bands are exactly that - new. Most have no following and many have never toured extensively across the states. When a new act gets signed it's always an uphill battle to book the dates. You have to pull out every piece of ammo to get the act in certain rooms on certain nights (sales figures, paid attendance, airplay etc.). I vividly recall begging people for \$50. for an acoustic singer by the name of Jewel. In these cases Agents fall back on their love of the act and their ability either to sell the act or in some cases, their ability to strong-arm the promoter. That's why Agents want to only sign acts they are passionate about, because it's an easier sell. A good example of this is an Artist named Martin Sexton. When we first saw Martin's live show, we were in awe (I was shivering). He blew us all away and we signed him without hesitation. Selling Martin dates was both an honor and a privilege and on every call I had love and passion in my pitch.

How To Choose A Booking Agency

First things first, most Talent Agencies (especially the big ones) will not take on unsigned acts. I think they institute this policy to weed out acts. If they didn't, they would be listening to thousands of unsolicited material a year (collectively we would receive around 20 new submissions a day). I also believe they adhere to this policy because this business is a game of chance and in order to better increase your chances of winning, you want to have odds in your favor. By only taking acts signed to labels, I think Agencies feel that they have a better chance to break the act, hence the policy of taking only signed material. If you think about it from an Agency perspective, it all makes sense. Acts signed to majors have at their disposal Marketing Departments, Radio Promotion Departments, Tour Marketing Departments and the like. One would think that with all these people working in unison the chances of breaking the act are heightened. In theory this is true, but it's not a given. Case in point is a band out of Richmond, VA called Fighting Gravity. They got signed to Mercury awhile back; Mercury puts out the record and does all the promo stuff. The band does OK, eventually gets dropped in the Universal takeover and to this day has still sold more of their records independently than Mercury did. Getting signed to a major is a great achievement, but it's not a guarantee that you will be successful.

Agencies are paid on a commission basis. Standard rate is 10% of the shows they book. However, if you're a Courtney Love or a Billy Corgan, I am sure that most Agencies would be more than willing to negotiate with you on their cut. Think about it, taking 1% of what the Rolling Stones gross a year from touring versus taking 10% of what the Screaming Trees gross. It's slightly lopsided. I'll take the 1%.

Depending on what you want out of your career there are many ways to choose the right Agency. First and foremost, are you strictly a musical act? I ask this because several of our clients came to ICM because we were a full-service Agency. Full service means we have more than just a Music Department. ICM houses a Classical Music Department, Motion Picture Department, Sports Department, Commercial Department, Literary Department and a Speaker's Department. Madonna, Brandy and Courtney Love all came to ICM partially because we have an awesome Motion Picture Department. If other mediums interest you then you should take a hard look at full service agencies CAA, ICM and William Morris. Monterey Peninsula (another booking agency) does not have a Motion Picture Department and ICM shut down its Alternative Music Department in January 1999. Just FYI.

Power

People rarely talk about power, but everyone knows it exists. In the story I mentioned earlier about getting that Toadies money from that Promoter, it was a combination of many things, but ultimately it came down to the fact that ICM is a powerful Agency. Power is not based on size or money or how you dress or how long you have been in the business. Power is based on your skill and knowledge of the scene, your standing among peers and Promoters, who you know and who your clients are. I was one of the more junior Agents at ICM, so I was developing my power through my relationships with Promoters.

Case in point: I was routing Monster Magnet (off their last record, Powertrip) and the tour was so hot, everyone wanted a Magnet date. Early through the cycle, the record was getting hammered in Spartanburg, SC. It was one of the top three cities on our list and I knew the perfect Promoter for the show. Mick Minchow ran Ground Zero and even before the record was completed, he would call me and ask when the band was going to do dates. He was both a fan and a Promoter, the perfect mix. The routing changed several times and Mick was in the process of moving locations and the show fell through the cracks and landed at Magnolia Street Pub. The show ended up there by default and it was for sure not the correct venue. I felt bad for Mick and wanted to make it up to him, so when they came back, I made sure that Magnet performed for him (even though I had competing offers from every national Promoter in the area). Needless to say, the show was a huge success and everyone had a blast.

Identifying The Correct Promoter Or Venue

In the previous example, Mick was the correct Promoter for this show and the folks at Magnolia were clearly not. I say this not because Monster Magnet was his favorite band, but because musically it's what sells both in his market and in his venue. If you contact Ground Zero and check out what's playing there and what was performed in the past, you are not going to find Hootie or Dave Matthews, but rather Slayer and Cannibal Corpse. I would never sell Mick an Edwin McCain date and it wouldn't be because he could not promote it, it's just not the appropriate room and he has far more experience and success with heavier music.

Theme Nights

When identifying the correct Promoter or venue, ask about the club's schedule. More often than not venues have theme nights. This means that on certain nights clubs specialize in specific styles or types of music. If you are a heavy-metal act and are routing through a city and the only available date is at a club on techno night, chances are it's not going to go over well. This is the case because, obviously, the people who regularly attend that evening are expecting techno, not heavy metal.

History

One of the factors an Agent takes into consideration when selling an Act to a Promoter is, does the Promoter have history with the act? Did this Promoter purchase this act in the past? If the answer is no, then all the offers stand on an equal basis. However, if a Promoter does have history with the act, this must be taken into consideration, especially if the Promoter booked the act as a favor or if he lost money on the show in the past.

Selling the act to the Promoter with history is not always the correct decision. Like when I routed Slayer through Florida. I ended up giving the date to Harry Tiyler, because he had the history. This despite the fact that I and the RA, had doubts about Harry's ability to promote the show. Harry convinced us, basically begging for the show and we let him have it. Long story short; Harry voicemails me on Monday morning (the show played over a weekend) and proceeds to tell me that it rained during the show and that the venue had holes in the roof. Water seeped in through the holes and shorted out all of the production. The show was a disaster and Harry did not get another show from me.

Routing Dates

When you or your Agent routes dates, mileage and distance should be your primary concern. Boston to DC sounds all good until you actually get into the car, bus or van and do the drive yourself. It wasn't until I started making road trips to see clients that I fully understood the toll the road takes on you (and I wasn't even performing). First you need to identify how you will be traveling. If you are signed to a major label, then hopefully you have some tour support and access to a van or better yet, even a tour bus. If you're traveling by bus, you're less worried because you have a driver, a bunk and are capable of making long hauls by driving through the night or doing overdrives. A bus gives you a greater range of cities that you can hit. If you are traveling other than by bus, you need to limit your scope and distances to your own style. You are the one who knows your limitations (financial and otherwise) and you are the one on the road. I have had Artists who only do three shows in a row and I have Artists who play seven straight. This is entirely a comfort thing and is decided on a case-by-case basis.

When routing dates, you need to look for good match ups with other acts. Scenario one would be to locate a good opening position for a national act in markets you want to hit. This gives you credibility as you can tell people you opened for, let's say, Everclear. Secondly, it takes all the pressure off you as it's technically another act's show. You need not worry too much about drawing people cause that is supposed to be the headliner's job. Chances are you will be performing in a good size-venue, with good production and the Promoter will probably promote the show. You may even get some free advertising out of it. If you have an Agent, your Agent can get you on these bills by either calling the other Act's Agent or by calling the Promoter directly. Half of what we do is packaging or bundling appropriate Acts together. We submit our acts to other Agencies to open or co-headline with whomever they may have touring.

Show-Swapping: Developing Relationships With Other Acts

Not everyone begins his or her career at Madison Square Garden. You may do 1,000 people in your hometown of Chicago, but in Waverly, NY you may not draw more than 10 people. Theoretically speaking, everyone's numbers should be better in their hometown, since people know them and they perform there on a regular basis. If you located a venue in every city that you wanted to get into and were able to perform with a strong local act in each one, you would automatically be performing in front of a good crowd. That's the importance of getting on the road and meeting as many bands as possible. Everybody has a home base and if you offer an out-of-town band a prime slot in your turf, chances are they will return the favor. That is show swapping.

Colleges

The mother of all pay days. It's what we Agents call "stupid money." When colleges approached me or when I solicited offers to them, it was always for stupid money. Stupid money basically means, give me your ATM card and your PIN# and I'm gonna take out what I want. You see, colleges have deep pockets - some I believe have no bottom - so we as Agents make sure they pay a premium for our acts. Artists receive a better bottom line and Agents get a fatter cut. And you are playing in front of college-age kids - which never hurts since they buy a huge percentage of all popular music!

The Deal

There are several types of deals that an Agent can negotiate with a venue:

The Flat Deal where the Agent and the Promoter agree to a flat financial guarantee. More often than not this deal is not used because it caps the Artist's earnings potential. Basically what that means is that no matter how well the show does, the Act is paid the flat fee. Colleges pay mostly flat deals because they are always paying three to four times what an act normally gets paid at the club level.

The Plus Deal is a profit-sharing deal and this is always coupled with a minimum front-end Artist guarantee. This deal reads that the Artist is paid their guarantee plus a percentage (agreed upon by the Agent and the Promoter) over what they call the split point. The split point is a tally of the total show costs for that specific performance and it includes the fee to the Artist. Here is a made-up deal: \$5,000 plus 85% over \$14,500 (in fixed expenses). This reads that the Act will be guaranteed the \$5,000 and then if the show grosses over the \$14,500, the Artist and the Promoter share the profits over the fixed expenses, with the Artist receiving 85% and the Promoter 15%. The industry standard on a Promoter's cut is 15%. Agents like these deals because they provide what is called a "backend." The backend refers to the potential for the band to receive extra show monies. This way if the show does well, the band will be paid on it.

The Versus Deal. In this deal, you the Artist take the guarantee versus a percentage of the total box-office receipts (not gross, but net - ie: after costs are deducted), whichever is greater. On these deals show costs are not itemized beforehand, but are tallied night of show and are settled on actual expenses. An example of the versus deal would look like so: \$7,500 (the guarantee) vs. 70% of the net box-office receipts. At settlement, you would take the tally of all admissions, subtract tax and approved expenses and compare 70% of that figure to the \$7,500 you are to be guaranteed. You walk with whichever sum is greater, that is the versus deal. Many stadium acts use these deals and several of the largest acts take strictly a percentage deal with no guarantee.

The Magic Bonus. The third deal is what I and two Promoters from Florida call The Magic Bonus. The Magic Bonus is created in stages or presented at a sellout. You can set up cash bonuses at intervals of paid admissions or at a sellout. Rule of thumb is to know when the bonuses kick in so that if you're close to a bonus and your Tour Manager is smart, he will buy the remaining tickets and get the band the bonus.

The Contract

Put it in writing. Contracts are very important because they provide written proof of an agreement that you or your Agent entered into over the phone. Contracts take out surprises and save you many headaches. The main items you want listed are: date, venue capacity, ticket price, ticket scaling, your financial guarantee, tax, merchandise rate, times (of load-in, sound check, show etc.), billing and contact names and numbers. A plus would be to get the contract signed by the talent buyer prior to your show. That way, if there is a discrepancy, you have the person's signature affixed to your contract.

Ticket Scaling

Refers to the type of tickets being sold for this event. Tickets can be either GA (general admission) or reserved. GA means that they are sold on a first-come first-served basis and they are located in a pit area in front of the stage. Reserved means that there is either a corresponding seat or designated area in which the ticket holder will be standing or seated. Generally, these tickets are sold at a premium as they are often located in premier locations such as off the floor, balcony, tier sections or VIP areas.

Merchandise Rate

Refers to the agreement made between Promoter and Artist as to how much of the Artist's merchandise sales the Artist can keep. This is a variable rate and is based on a percentage. Depending on the venue's policy and on the specific act, the rate fluctuates. Most standards fall at 75/25 - 75% to the Artist, 25% to the venue. The best deal an Artist can receive is 100%. This means that the Artist keeps all proceeds generated from merchandise sales at that venue. Anything less than 100% means that the Promoter gets a cut of your merch. This means if you sold \$800 in merch and the rate you agreed to was 80/20, you would receive \$640 (80%) and the Promoter would receive \$160 (20%). Merch sales can be a huge make or break for many Acts, especially those earning less than \$250 on a guarantee. Many times the Artist sells the merch themselves, however, some venues arrange for a member of their staff to sell it (for a fee of course).

Billing

The placement of your act's performance on a given show. If you are the opening act, that should be reflected on your contract. If you are the headlining act, that too should be reflected on your contract. Knowing where you are playing on the bill ensures that you will arrive on time and are aware of what acts are before or after your performance. Promoters are notorious for adding that third act on the bill, so beware and advance the date well out. Billing also determines your placement on advertising and promotions for the show; if you are the headliner, you should get "top billing" on any posters, flyers etc.

Tax

Comes out of the gross, but it comes off the top, so technically it's money that the Artist would never see. On your contract face you would have items listed as follows: Gross Potential, Tax Rate and Net Potential. The gross is calculated by taking the ticket price(s) and multiplying them by the venue capacity. Once the gross is established, you take out the tax and are left with the net potential. All shows are settled on the net, as taxes need to be taken out. Tax varies from state to state, so you need to check with each venue in each town.

Rider Provisions

Riders are essential documents that you attach to the contract (they "ride" on the contract) and outline what your requirements are for a show performance. This is especially critical with production. Every Artist and Agent should know exactly what to expect at every venue with regard to sound and lights. You may have "bare minimum" production requirements and you need to know what those are so as to steer clear of rooms with poor production. Avoid any instances where you feel the production will be inadequate and may jeopardize your live performance. Ask questions up front or advance the date well out to work out any potential glitches.

Well folks, that about sums up how booking agents and national touring works. Good luck and write us with stories from the road!

Max McAndrew began his career in the music business at International Creative Management, Inc. (ICM). He was drafted into the Agent Training Program, where he was promoted to Assistant Music Agent. He apprenticed under Mike Krebs and Steve Kaul and was then promoted to Music Agent. In his capacity as Agent, Max oversaw all Club Department bookings for the South East section of the country. This included booking, coordinating, organizing and routing various national tours, in addition to scouting for and developing new talent. Max Departed ICM to take a position in the Talent Department at The House of Blues, where he is currently employed as an Assistant Talent Buyer and Concert Promoter. The acts that he has worked with or will be working with include Stone Temple Pilots, Wu-Tang Clan, Widespread Panic, The Deftones, Edwin McCain, Vertical Horizon, Splender (who he absolutely loves), Nine Days and many others.

How to Approach Booking Agents

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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You have reached that point in your career development when adding an agent to your team would be a logical next step. Before you pick up the phone and start calling around, I suggest you do the following three steps.

1. Take inventory and create an overview of your career position to date.

This process and information will help you present a clear picture of your career for yourself and assist you in making a more powerful pitch to any agent you are considering.

Taking inventory includes re-evaluating your past two year's growth. I would include a list of all your past performance venues, the fees you actually received, the capacity of the venue and the number of seats you sold. If you haven't been keeping track of this information, it is not too soon to begin. Along with these details, I would also list the merchandise sales you had for each venue. All of this information helps assess your growth from year to year and venue to venue especially when you play a specific venue a number of times during the year. If your numbers increase each time, there is good indication you are building a following. This is exactly the type of information a booking agent wants to know when determining whether they will invest their time and money to add you to their roster. When you present an organized evaluation of your career development to an agent along with your promotional package, you immediately set yourself above most scouting for an agent. This presentation tells the agent that you are mindful of your growth and are organized in the manner in which you conduct your business. These are attractive aspects of an artist's livelihood to any agent.

2. Create a set of career goals, timelines and projections.

Most artists are looking for an agent to relieve them of work they dislike doing for themselves-making calls to book gigs. Look for an agent to help you raise the level of your performance dates and increase the number of dates and the performance fees. Set career goals for the types of venues you would like to play and present this to prospective agents. Determine a specific time line in which you would like to have these goals accomplished. Then based on the kind of concrete information you've gathered from your evaluation (step 1 above), you can make some realistic projections about what percentage of increase you foresee in the next two years. For example, based on last year's information, you are able to determine that your bookings, fees and merchandise will increase by 20% during the next year and 20% the year after. When you present an agent with hard numbers they can more effectively evaluate whether or not it is worth their involvement.

3. Do some research.

It doesn't matter how well organized you are or how talented you are, if you are calling the wrong type of agent, you are wasting your time.

Some agents book specific genres music or styles of performance. When researching agencies, determine if the genre of music or the type of performance is compatible with your own. Check their roster of artists to see if you recognize anyone. There may be some acts for which you might open-when finally speaking with someone at the agency, mention that. Create a list of appropriate agencies and make sure you get the names of one or two or the head of the agency if it is a small company. If you know any acts that are working with a specific agent with whom you might be compatible, ask that act if they would mind sharing some information about their agent. You may get some insider information regarding whether or not it is a good time to make your pitch based on who the agent just signed or if they are looking for new acts to add.

Another method of researching agents is to attend booking and showcasing conferences. Agents often use these conferences to scout for new talent. Seeing acts in live performance help agents get a sense of audience reaction as well as getting a better picture of what they might potentially be selling. The other great benefit to attending booking conferences is that you can walk around the exhibit hall and meet all the agents who are representing their acts. View their booths to see who is on their roster as well as examining how the agency presents their artists with their booth display. You can get a sense of the agents organization and creativity by the manner in which they represent the talent. Stand by and listen to the way they pitch their artists to prospective buyers.

In conclusion, with these three tasks under your belt, you can confidently present yourself to appropriate agencies when you feel you are ready to make a pitch. You will present a much more professional overview of your act with a clear evaluation of your past performance and a realistic projection of your future.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, [How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED](#). She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program [Manager-In-A-Box](#) and presents [The Performing Biz](#), seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at [www.Performingbiz.com](#) or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail [Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com](#)

MANAGERS: CAN'T LIVE WITH THEM...BUT CAN YOU LIVE WITHOUT THEM?

by Sheena Metal, Music Highway Radio

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You can't throw a rock in any metropolis on Earth without hitting someone claiming to be a manager. Where musicians go, managers follow. It's as accepted and expected in the entertainment industry as an out-of-control cocaine habit or a failure to pay taxes. When you tell people you're a musician, one of the first things they're going to ask you is: Do you have a manager? However, those in the throws of the music business know to ask an even more accurate question: Do you have a good manager?

"What's the difference?" you may ask. Isn't any manager better than no manager at all? While it would seem that the answer to that question is unequivocally, "Yes", in reality it's a bit like asking, "Isn't having a herpes-ridden prostitute for a girlfriend better than being single?" In truth, bad representation is far worse than a lack of representation. While, it's a fact, that there are things your band will probably never achieve without the aid of a manager, agent, entertainment attorney etc., bad representation can stagnate a career...stop it dead in its hurling climb to the ranks of super stardom or even worse...undo some of the hard work the band has already done.

Sad but true, a bad manager can take a perfectly good band and turn them into a thing so foul that old gypsy women covering their faces with rags will spit and give your band the evil eye as you pass. Ok, that may be a bit dramatic, but seriously...all your band really has is its name and its reputation, so why would take a chance on either of those by putting the whole of your band into the hands of someone that you're not 100% sure has your best interests at stake?

The following are a few tips that will help you to decipher whether or not your manager can take you to the top or turn your band into a flop:

The Drummer's Girlfriend Is Not A Manager

Sure, she may get names for your mailing list, invite her girl's beach volleyball team to all of your gigs and post your latest pictures on your website photo gallery, but she's not really your manager. She's a helper, she can be the president of your fan club, the head of your street team and the world's sexiest roadie but she probably doesn't know how to put together a press package and make the calls that will get you into an A&R rep's office for a meeting. This also applies to: boyfriends, wives, husbands, booty calls, one night stands, moms, dads, cousins, aunts, uncles, neighbors, nieces, nephews, grandparents, grandchildren, pets and the homeless guy who roots through your trash at midnight. These people may all be well-meaning and you can accept their aid in dozens of ways (it takes a village to build a popular unsigned band) but don't give them the label or the powers of a manager.

Treasure Your Fans But Don't Let Them Manage You

This should be a given but you'd be surprised how many over-eager, slightly-obsessed fans move from semi-stalker to mega-manager in a few simple weeks. I cannot stress how simply wrong this entire concept is for two dozen major reasons the most important of which is: fans need to be kept at a distance. There is a reason why that same person comes to all of your shows no matter how many you play, gets there early, sits up front seemingly paralyzed staring at you enraptured. Either they're in love with someone in the band or they're insane. These may be reasons to get a restraining order but certainly not reasons to make someone your manager. A band's manager knows every secret of each musician, every person in each member's personal life, where you keep your money, where you live and who's in your fan/contact database. This is not information that you want someone who has 450 cut-out pictures of you on their bedroom ceiling having at his/her disposal. Enough said?

Don't Sign A Contract Unless It's Worth It

Manager's like control. That why they choose to be managers and not people who macramé wall hangings with the mane hair of ponies. Thus, most managers will try and evoke you into signing a contract. In the entertainment industry, contracts are like marriage certificates...before you sign one be sure your band wants to be tied to the same person for long time (a year, two years, five years etc.) because they're much easier to get into than to get out of. For example, if you sign a contract with an efficient, but somewhat green manager, who is helping all he/she can to get you everything possible from what little resources he/she has and then Gwen Stefani's management team approaches you after a big gig and wants to put you on tour with John Mayer. Do you think if you tell them, "We love to take your tour but we're under contract with someone else for the next five years, can you hit us up then?" the offer will still stand? Not so much. So, if you must sign contracts, keep them short and make sure they give you room to act, think, play and communicate with others without getting clearance from your band warden (manager). And make it includes an exit clause. Read up on it.

Sometimes Bigger Is Not Better

Although it's a huge ego stroke to brag to all of the other musicians backstage at the Whiskey A Go-Go that your manager works with Grammy award-winners and stadium sell-outs, sometimes an unsigned band can get lost in a huge management firm. While Mr. Big Stud Manager is busy picking out Madonna's dress for the American Music Awards, he may forget to ask Quincy Jones to attend your bass player's birthday gig at Billy-Bob Wang's Tofu BBQ Shack. The problem with huge managers is that their focus often goes the acts that are making them 15% of 100 million dollars a year. Your 15% of \$45.75 a year after expenses is probably not his highest priority now or ever and what good are his super amazing industry contacts if he never remembers to invite them to your gigs?

Having a manager is great but only if they provide more benefit to the band than the sum total of your band members and band helpers can do for yourselves. If you find someone who can open doors, take your music places it cannot go on its on and has your best intentions at heart, then grab that contract, sign it and enjoy the benefits. If not, you may find yourself: conned, stalked, ignored and/or legally bound to someone that puts their own agenda (well-meaning or otherwise) and their own ego above what's right for you band. And whatever you do, don't sit around waiting for Mr./Ms. Right to wisk your band off its feet and carry it off on his/her white horse to the Fairyland where everyone gets a record deal. You, as its members, know more than anyone, how to do what's right for your band and nothing will attract the perfect manager faster than seeing musicians who are out there, doing their thing and making headway in a very difficult business with a great attitude and terrific music.

Sheena Metal is a radio host, producer, promoter, music supervisor, consultant, columnist, journalist and musician. Her syndicated radio program, Music Highway Radio, airs on over 700 affiliates to more than 126 million listeners. Her musicians' assistance program, Music Highway, boasts over 10,000 members. She currently promotes numerous live shows weekly in the Los Angeles Area, where she resides. For more info visit www.sheena-metal.com

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4. BOOKING GIGS

BOOKING LOCAL / CLUB SHOWS

by Carrie Klein, Nasty Little Man Promotions
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As one of two bookers at the 250-capacity Mercury Lounge in New York, I became well-acquainted with the many do's and don'ts of booking a small-ish type artist into a small-ish type club in a big-time city. Booking guidelines vary from city to city and club to club, but there are certain fundamental standards that apply everywhere.

The club booker's job: what it's not

The first thing you should know about booking your act is that most club bookers spend 10 hours a day in a windowless, non air-conditioned, often fly or mouse-infested basement office. Club booking is one of the least glamorous jobs in the music industry. I went to work every morning at a bar that reeked of vomit and stale beer from the night before. The concrete floor was littered with cigarette butts and shards of glass. The bathrooms were disgusting and stayed that way until the busboys finished cleaning up around 5 p.m. There were few of the corporate perks you might associate with the music business. No expense accounts, no travel (except maybe the annual South By Southwest music conference in Austin), no free subscriptions to Billboard or HITS. Okay, there were a few perks. I drank a lot of free beer (which became less appealing after staring at taps and kegs all day long), I got free CDs from friends at labels (many of whom would want to be put on guest lists to sold-out shows in return). I got into other clubs for free (although after leaving work the last place I wanted to go was another club). In other words, club bookers are not the slick, polished music-industry execs who have gold record plaques on their walls and Time Warner stock in their portfolios.

The club booker's job: what it is

Most club bookers are more than just club bookers. I did not just listen to demo tapes all day long. I was also a night manager and a publicist. I printed and sold tickets. I hung posters, designed flyers and ran to Key Food for deli platters. I painted the dressing room and I scraped stickers off the bar. Booking a club is a hands-on, get down and dirty, do-it-yourself venture - not unlike booking your act. Most club bookers are young and eager to make their venue known for its selective and hip booking policy. At a midsize club like the Mercury Lounge we had a wide range of artists, from major-label veterans Wilco and Echo to recently-signed talent showcasing for their labels to bands playing out for their first time. Finding a new, up-and-coming artist is one of the most rewarding parts of the job, but also one of the most difficult and time-consuming. It's risky for everyone involved:

I needed to book acts that could draw well (that is, attract a lot of paying customers to the show) not only as proof that I had an ear for talent but also to make money for the club. And artists playing the club for the first time had to not only play well but also bring in paying customers in order to be asked back for a second shot.

Who you are

You are a musician trying to get a show at a reputable club. You may have a manager and/or a booking agent or you may be going through the whole process without any help. There's nothing unprofessional about a solo artist or band member trying to book a show on his/her own.

If you have a manager or agent who's thoroughly familiar with the ins, outs and intimacies of your act, it's fine to have him make the necessary calls for you. It's not necessary, however, to recruit a friend simply to fulfill a perceived role. You are the one who knows your act best and you will most likely have the most persuasive voice.

The very first call

The first time you call a club, keep your pitch brief. Most clubs have regular booking days and hours, so find out if you're calling at the right time. If you're calling on an off day or before or after booking hours, do NOT try to make your pitch anyway. You may not want to be lumped in with the masses of other calls, but there's really no way around it. At the Mercury Lounge my booking hours were Tuesdays and Thursdays between 1 and 5 p.m. Some artists would try to be sneaky and clever and call at 12:50, thinking that they'd get to me ahead of everyone else. It didn't work. It only annoyed me and made me less likely to take their calls later. Once you get the right person on the phone at the right time, ask if they're accepting demos. Always, always call before sending your music. You are trusting the club with hours and weeks and sometimes months of your time and your talent - you want them to be prepared for it, you want them to be familiar with the your name and ideally you want them to be looking forward to receiving this wonderfully precious gift. At the Mercury we would receive between 15 and 50 submissions a week. There were times when we got so backed up that we would have to stop accepting new material. The unsolicited, unfamiliar-sounding submissions could easily get lost, overlooked or relegated to the bottom of the always-growing pile. Don't let that happen.

Packaging & press kits

Once you've established that the club is accepting music, get the correct spelling of the booker's first and last names (a lot of people don't bother to get it right) and put the package in the mail. I usually advised against hand-delivering, only because the club environment is so fast-paced and unpredictable that you could easily come by at an inopportune time and unwittingly leave a bad first impression.

When you're putting together your press kit, keep it simple. A one-page bio is all you really need - press clips are fine but not necessary. Same goes for the photo. Make sure to include your contact number on the tape or CD since the bio usually goes into the trash fairly quickly.

Following up and what clubs care about

Wait at least two weeks after sending your CD before you make your first follow-up call. If you're not in a huge hurry, give it three to four weeks. Once you call, be ready for the possibility that no one has listened to your CD yet - you may be asked to call back in another week or two or three. Once someone has listened, be prepared to answer a few obvious questions. The most important question by the booker's standards is usually "What kind of draw do you have?" (read: "How many paying customers can you bring in?") The more paying customers, the more potential drinking customers. Most clubs make money from bar sales, not door revenue. Be honest about your following. If you are truly just starting out and have never played a show anywhere, say so. You may be told to get a few gigs somewhere else to work up your draw. Some clubs just aren't the right place to jump-start your career in music - they're looking for artists with an established following and they aren't always willing to take a chance on the unknown. If that's the case, take their advice and try to get some shows at another venue - maybe somewhere smaller, newer or that has an open-mic night. You may not want to settle for a less reputable club, but once you've played out a few times you can go back to your original first choice and you'll have numbers to back up your claim of being the highest drawing band on the Lower East Side.

On the other hand, if you haven't played many shows before but the booker was REALLY impressed by your demo, he or she may be willing to give you a shot. This happened to me with a band called Sway (now signed to Reprise and renamed Thisway). They had the added benefit of being highly recommended by an A&R Rep (a record-label talent scout) friend of mine, but for the most part I just loved the music. I had a last-minute prime-time Saturday night slot open and decided they deserved a chance. It paid off - for the band and for me. With two days notice, they brought in over 50 people and secured themselves several more shows within the next few months.

Again, it's to your benefit to be honest about your draw. Most club bookers are competitive, but on friendly terms - they see each other out and about and they TALK. So if you tell me that you played Brownies last week and brought in 204 people, I just might call up my Brownies counterpart to see if that's true. If the number was actually closer to 24, the phrase "You'll never play in this town again" may not be entirely inappropriate. If there was a really good reason that you only brought in 12 people the last time you played Wetlands, then come clean with it. The booking-related equivalent of "the dog ate my homework" is "It was a Sunday at midnight and it was snowing and oh yeah, it was Mother's Day too." It sounds pretty flimsy, but it'll leave you in a better position than the band who brought in 12 people at 9:30 p.m. on a balmy Thursday.

Negotiations and rules of the game

There are certain standards that industry folks take for granted but that you, as a relative newcomer, may be unaware of. The most important of these is probably the two-week courtesy rule. In general and most definitely in a big music town like New York, it's a good idea to keep at least two weeks between shows in the same city. If you're coming in from out of town and it doesn't make sense financially to play only one show, then try to work something out ahead of time with the clubs. It may be tempting to play out as much as possible, but doing so can really bring your draw down. If you send a postcard out advertising your no-cover show at Arlene Grocery on June 6th and your \$8 show at Brownies on June 11th, it's pretty likely that the average fan is going to come to the free gig. I can't tell you how many times that I (or even worse, my boss) opened up The Village Voice or Time Out (local entertainment papers) and discovered that this great, super-cool band that I had booked was also playing at Baby Jupiter - all of a sudden they weren't so great or super-cool anymore.

If you're opening for a more established artist, you may be asked to make certain compromises. Headlining bands sometimes request solo acoustic openers, so you might have to ditch your band for a night. You may be asked to do a much shorter set than you're accustomed to playing or have to play in front of a hideous neon green backdrop. If you're getting paid out of the headliner's money, you may only get \$50 even if you bring in the majority of the people. If these seem like unacceptable sacrifices, then don't take the show. Playing in front of a sold-out crowd will only help you if you're really ready for it.

Different clubs have different payment policies. Some clubs will guarantee you a certain amount of money, but most small to midsize clubs put the burden on you and will give you a percentage of the night's door revenue. It may be a percentage of the entire night's door or it may be a percentage of just your act's draw (in the latter case, customers will be asked which artist they're there to see). Make sure to negotiate payment BEFORE the night of the show, otherwise you may end up haggling with the door person at 1 a.m.

Contracts for unsigned acts are usually not necessary - verbal agreements are standard. There will probably be times when you wish that you had something binding - times when you have booked a show and sent out your mailing only to find out that the club went ahead and booked the Foo Fighters in your slot. This will happen. It's unfair and you may lose money, but unfortunately, there won't be much you can do. You can try to snag the opening slot, but that probably won't happen - most national artists tend to bring their own openers with them. Your best bet is to play the sympathy card and use it to your advantage to get an amazing show at a later date.

When You Think You're Getting The Run-Around

Be patient and persistent, but not pushy. Calling every week during booking hours is being persistent; calling at all hours of every day is being pushy. You want the booker to be familiar with your name, but not cringe when she hears it. Put the club on your mailing list so that they know when and where you're playing. In many ways you are selling yourself and your music, so a certain level of "brand" recognition is essential.

If you have music industry connections, use 'em. If you want to do a showcase for a few record labels, it's not necessarily enough to say that so-and-so from Atlantic or Columbia really wants to come see you play. A&R people are not usually paying customers, so having one or two record-label reps come out to your show is not a huge sell from a booking standpoint. If, however, you do have an industry "buzz," that is a selling point. If people are talking about you or your band, the club wants to be in on the scoop, sometimes regardless of your draw. Have an A&R rep call the club directly. Club bookers are in constant contact with labels, agents, journalists - all the usual industry types. If you know some of these people, have them put in a call. If you know someone whose band already has a good relationship with the club, try to jump on their bill. There's nothing wrong with the "friend-of-a-friend" route.

The payoff

Booking your act at a small to midsize club can be a frustrating endeavor. Once you're given your first gig, however, the relationship between artist and club has started. If you bring in 40 paying customers to your first show, you shouldn't have a hard time getting a second one. If you consistently bring in good numbers, you may be asked to headline a show or to open for a national artist. Peter Salett is an excellent example of an NYC musician who has been doing his thing - and doing it well - for several years. Besides his considerable talent, he is also hard-working, reliable and always pleasant to the staff, his audience and anyone else involved in his show. He has headlined weekend nights at the Mercury, opened at the Bowery Ballroom (a bigger venue than the Mercury Lounge - roughly 600 capacity) and headlined The Bowery. Once you've proved yourself to the club, anything is possible. Cultivating and maintaining a good, trusting relationship with the club will set you on the right course for a long and fruitful career in the live music scene.

I worked at The Mercury Lounge for three years and also at The Bowery Ballroom from the day it opened in 1998; I was responsible for booking and artist relations. Working at these two popular NYC venues gave me amazing access to an incredible range of industry contacts: booking agents, managers, promoters, label executives, journalists and of course the musicians themselves. I left this job in July of 1999 and started my current stint as a publicist at Nasty Little Man. We have an amazing roster that includes the indie-est of indie bands to the big superstars. I now work with artists like Ween, Sonic Youth, Supergrass, Ben Harper and Chris Mills. At Nasty I have found the perfect middle ground - it's a small company without any of the corporate politics that you find at a label, but it's also big enough to offer a sense of stability that's hard to find when you're working in the basement of a bar. www.nastylittleman.com

THE BASICS OF BOOKING YOUR OWN TOURS

by Jay Flanzbaum, Onlinegigs.com

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To be able to book gigs successfully you'll need a ton of persistence and even better organization. Whether you are booking locally, regionally or nationally you will essentially need the same skills and tools to be effective. Independent bands and agents, by definition, tend to lack the nationwide connections necessary to make the idea of booking an extended tour possible. As a result the ones that are most successful are generally the same ones that understand how to gather and effectively manage, all of their business related contacts. We've all seen some pretty lousy bands with some damn good gigs, so talent isn't always the main issue.

Data collection

If you haven't already, you are going to have to start collecting contact information for the people that can help you achieve your goals. If your goal is to have a touring career in the music industry then you better find some venues, colleges, festivals, record companies, managers, record stores and media contacts, to do business with. It is never too early to start this process. You should start today even if your CD won't be ready for another 3 years and you don't have a full time drummer yet. Every person you meet and every possible gig that you hear about will need to be recalled at a later date. There are many sources that a beginner or even a veteran, can turn to for gathering this type of information.

Printed music industry directories like the Indie Bible can have an incredible amount of information to get you started. Alternative newsweeklies like the Village Voice or the Boston Phoenix are a great source of local music venues, festivals and college listings. Most major markets in the country have an independent weekly publication; some of them can be found online at www.awn.org. Online music communities like are also an ideal place to find where bands of a similar style are playing.

Data management

Once you start gleaning contact information from printed directories, online communities, newspapers and other bands, you will soon realize that you need a good way to organize and access all of this data. You most likely have pages full of notes, e-mails with venue referrals and spreadsheets covered with names and numbers. The key now is to be able to effectively organize all of your new found contacts in a way that maximizes your opportunity with each one of them.

Software or web based contact managers like Outlook, Act, Maximizer or Onlinegigs, are all efforts to help you centralize your business related messages, tasks and contact information. It doesn't make sense to dig through multiple e-mail boxes on different computers to find important messages. Anymore than it would to be unable to find an important phone number because you left your address book in Spokane, WA. Whatever application or method you choose, be sure to get as many of the following features as would apply to your specific needs.

- complete and total access to all of your important contact and business information in one location
- multiple, archived backups of your information in case of data loss or equipment failure
- reminder system for upcoming activities and tasks
- integrated e-mail & fax messaging with message tracking and searching
- customizable for your specific industry
- remotely accessible from any internet connection
- ability to easily share information with others

Importance of contracts

After a few months of working your task list religiously and following up on every CD in a consistent and professional manner, you should be ready to start booking some gigs. After all the work you have just gone through to find contacts and reach out to each one of them, it would be a shame to lose out on a gig at the last minute. Admittedly, last minute cancellations and double bookings can and will occur. The story usually goes like this:

You sent out your CD in January; to finally book a gig in April for your upcoming August tour. It's just a Tuesday night for 100% of the door, rooms and food; but it's a needed stop-over between Colorado and Nevada. You call a week before the gig from somewhere in Texas and the club has never heard of you. What's worse, there is another band booked on that night and the other band has a confirmed written agreement. In a toss up situation between the band with no proof and the band with a contract, the band with the contract usually wins.

For gigs that are low-dough or no-dough deals, you should still send a written agreement. A written agreement is your only line of defense after all of the work you have gone through to secure the gig, not to mention the work you will need to do for properly promoting it. E-mail is the easiest method because you can easily send the same message over and over until you get confirmation. Faxing is also relatively easy, however having to send a snail mail agreement over and over can be a pretty big hassle. Your goal here is to constantly remind the talent buyer of your agreement and put all of the details in front of them. The higher the dollar value on the agreement the more diligent you should be about insisting on a signed, hard-copy version of the agreement.

Getting ready for the road

Putting a group of people on the road for any amount of time comes with responsibilities. There are many people who will need detailed information about your schedule in order for your tour to be effective, safe and organized. Band members and their families, your manager, a publicist and even your fans all need to have access to different information about your trip. At a minimum all of your shows should be listed on your website as soon as they are confirmed. Ideally you would also list set times, the venue's address, phone number, website and any other bands on the bill with you.

The tour itinerary

The best way to be sure your trip is error free. Everyone on your team should have a chronological listing of each of your tour dates with as much or as little detail as they need. But the master itinerary for you and your band members should list all of the contact info for each venue, set times, payment details, venue capacity, ticket price, age limits and step by step directions from one gig to the next. This is your bible for the trip and the more copies you make the less likely you will be lost in Lincoln, Nebraska without the buyer's phone number or any sense of direction.

The Tour Itinerary is also a crucial tool in satisfying your greatest responsibility as a touring band: Advancing Your Shows. If you want your journey to free of surprises, then you will advance all of your shows. This simply means contacting the venue a week or so before the gig to confirm performance details, get important load in information and find out about any last minute changes. Out of your entire organization of band members, managers, agents, tour managers and interns, there needs to be one person who can assume this role.

Properly promoting your shows

If you have never played before in a particular market, then most likely nobody in that town has any idea who you are. And why would anyone come out to see you play if they have no idea that you are even playing. What you really need is some press or at a minimum just a listing with the local radio and print music calendars.

Your first step is to put together all of the contact names, fax numbers, e-mail addresses etc. for the local media outlets in a 30-60 mile radius of each of your gigs. Then you will have to prepare a professional and concise press release. A good release should be able to convey all of the pertinent information on one page. Radio stations and newspapers get flooded everyday with hundreds of releases, they do not have time to read numerous pages that outline your band's Zen philosophy or each of your bass player's numerous influences. Keep it to the point or they will not read it all. Keep your layout clean; do not use multiple fonts and font sizes or too many colors and graphics.

Make sure your release has a section with the performance details that is easy to pick out and includes: Performance Date, Band Name, Venue Name, Full Address, Phone, Website, Ticket Price, Set Times, Age Limit and any other bands on the bill. Also be sure to include your personal contact information: Contact Name, Phone, E-mail and Website. If someone needs to get in touch for a photo or an interview, you will want them to be able to track you down quickly and easily.

Here is where your Contact Management program really comes in handy. You could take the time to create numerous, personalized press releases for each press contact you have found. This would probably take you days depending on the size of the market. If we are talking about New York City, it could take you months. But if you have the proper tools, you should be able to create one template and send personally addressed releases, by fax or e-mail to hundreds of media contacts all at once.

The dance

You should think of every band outing as a well choreographed dance. All of the administration needs to happen with precision for you to grow each new market. Put a check list in place and follow it like a religion for every gig and pretty soon it will become second nature to you and your band members. Organization alone is not going to make you a success but the sooner you get the basics in place the sooner you can spend time enjoying your music. In today's music marketplace, exposure for independent acts is generally limited to touring. If you want to be heard outside of your local market you are going to have to get your band some gigs outside of your local market! Put a solid plan in place and achieve your goals.

Jay Flanzbaum of Onlinegigs got his start as a booking agent putting together national and regional tours for independent bands. Those years running a boutique agency inspired the creation of Onlinegigs, an incredibly powerful booking and promotional tool for independent bands and agents. www.onlinegigs.com

OVERVIEW OF BOOKING A GIG

by Marc Davison, author of "All Area Access"

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The Club & Club Owner

A nightclub, a bar or any small size venue that you are going to call upon is first and foremost a business. The owner is someone who has invested a good deal of money and is working long hours so that after the overhead (bills) is paid, there's some profit left over for themselves. They are probably in the business because they enjoy music, but if music were their only motivation, they would be in some other job listening to the radio while they work. They are in business to make money.

The way clubs make money is by charging admission and/or selling drinks to their clientele. The amount of patrons a club can attract is a result of the type of entertainment and atmosphere the club provides. When a club owner looks to hire a band to perform, the decision on hiring revolves around the entertainment value the band can provide. A band's value is based on

- (a) How many people will they draw?
- (b) Will they entertain the regular clientele?
- (c) Does the band have a following and are they big drinkers?

Ask any club owner and they will tell you that a great band is one that brings in a big crowd. A band that plays great but doesn't draw anyone is an out of work, great band.

The days of clubs working hard to develop an act are for the most part long gone. Locally, you might find a place that will give you a start on an off night like Sunday or Monday, but it's up to you to bring the crowd. Due to the high cost of rent, insurance, liquor and security just for opening the doors, club owners will not offer you much in the way of pay to just come in and perform for no one.

Many clubs today will put anywhere from 3-6 bands together on a bill to maximize the audience. If each band can draw 25 people, then 6 bands can draw 150 people on the night. Of course it doesn't always work out this way and some bands will draw more than others. But unless you can pack the house on your own, sharing the bill is a fact of life.

There are many different types of clubs, bars etc. and for the sake of this conversation, we need to concentrate on the type of place you will first be looking to play in. Whether you live in a big city or a small town, chances are that you can find a small drinking bar that has at least a 75 person capacity, a small stage, some lights and a small dance floor. This should be a room that aside from a regular clientele of bar flies, younger people go there occasionally to see a band.

The owner of this establishment like every other club no matter what size, is probably inundated with requests from more bands to play than there are available dates. The decisions on who to book are usually based on the following:

The reputation of the group

If you are an already established band, the word on the street and through the club circuit on how well you play or what size crowd you bring, will determine whether you have a good reputation or not. Usually club owners know of each other and due to their competitive nature are always checking who's playing at the other guy's club. If the band has a good reputation they will be preferred by the clubs over a new untested act, especially if they're vying for a booking on the same date.

The tape and press kit

These are the two most important marketing tools your band has. They serve as proof of your accomplishments documented in a professional manner for everyone from club owners to the press, all the way up to the record labels. The press kit contains a bio on your group, band photo, press clippings, along with any other vital booking information. This will be accompanied by a demo tape of your music. The club owner looks at this material, listens to the tape and determines whether they want to offer you a gig. If your band is new or has never played in the area before, the club owner takes a very big risk in booking you. The reputation of the club is based on many things including the kind of music it features. Having never seen you before will supersede any guarantee you make as they take a financial gamble by hiring you.

Your sales pitch

The fact is, some of the most successful people in the world are salesman. Whether you're selling computers, cars, ideas or yourself, to truly be successful at it, you will need to possess certain communication skills and concepts. Club bookers are very busy people and do not have a great deal of time to look for quality in a band if it is not easily found. Furthermore, due to the vast amount of phone calls club bookers receive it helps if you can offer something that makes you and your group stand out.

To develop an edge so that you can get through the maze of tapes and press kits on their desk you will need to possess the following traits:

Professional attitude and personality

First you need to come off like a winner, but without being cocky and arrogant. You are not the first group in the world that writes their own music and you need not try to sell yourself with the line "we're the best band you've ever seen." Trust me you are not the best band they've ever seen and you never will be if at this stage of the game you already think you are. The club booker has seen and heard it all. Allow them the chance to come to that conclusion on their own. Let your music do the talking.

Allow yourself to take criticism. Club owners are just one of the many people who you will be approaching for help and in turn they will offer their opinion on what you need to do to improve. You should not change yourself with every opinion thrown your way, however, if enough people comment on a particular characteristic of the group, consider its conquest to be the next rung you need to climb on the ladder to success.

Upon calling me, many musicians open with the line "we are so much better than everybody else out there, we just need a break." When I hear that, I get turned off. My feeling is if you are better than everybody else, the breaks should be and will come. I prefer that you let your music do the talking and not words of bravado. If you feel you are better than everyone else that's great but keep it inside as an inspiration for yourself. A healthy positive attitude is magnetic and it draws people to you.

Timing

They say this is everything but they are only partially right. If you look at most successful people and listen to their story, you'll find out that when they hit it big, yes timing was everything, but you should also realize all the times that they tried and failed. Like a baseball player, the more times you get up to bat the more chances you give yourself to hit the ball. But not every time up at bat will yield a base hit. Eventually if you keep at it you just might get that pitch that you will meet with the perfect swing and boom, it's outta there. So really it's not just timing, it's putting in the time that is everything. When making your calls, don't call one club. Call five clubs. Make it your goal to book at least three shows a week and don't stop until you do. If you call 15 clubs and book five of them, you are batting 300 and that, my friend, will get you in the Hall of Fame.

Knowledge/understanding

Know your opponent. It's war out there. If you're going into battle without knowing your enemy, then to whom do we send your belongings?

Before you attempt to book a club, try to find out as much about the place as you can even if it means going there at night and hanging out. The worst thing you can do is book yourself into a club that is not right for your music. It will happen sometimes but each time it does, you will learn something from it.

Learn about the booking habits of the owner. Find out what the minimum draw is. If the owner expects bands to draw 100 people at the worst, do not even attempt to contact this place until you are at 75 people.

I keep stressing to you that the people who book and own clubs are inundated with phone calls. Your window of opportunity is 60 seconds on the phone at best. You better know what you're going to say and minimize what you have to ask so you can get right to the point and make your pitch. Unless you can talk your talk and walk your walk, do not dial that dial.

Patience

Last but not least, something all bands need to have is a little bit of patience. You are not going to get booking agents or club owners on the phone the first time you call. Or the second or third. Just keep leaving your name and number and continue to ask when is it a good time to call back.

Do not get frustrated. If after ten calls you don't get a response move on. It's not meant to be. Use your time and energy on your next conquest. Just do not take it personally. These people do not know you! In time when your reputation is stronger you will come back to this club and find yourself pleasantly surprised as to their willingness to work with you.

Your First Bookings

Appoint one person in your band to assume the role of making contacts and bookings.

It is important to split up jobs within the group. But it is equally important that the jobs do not cross each other otherwise it will cause conflict. The best choice of individual to assume the role of band booking agent should be the one member that is comfortable on the phone and able to do what it takes to sell the band. It helps to have a likable personality as well as some knowledge of the music business. With that I am not just referring to the way business is conducted but to also know what is going on in the industry as a whole. It would certainly help your conversation skills if you read issues of Billboard magazine, R&R, CMJ etc.

Hook up with a local established band

Inquire if they have a local show coming up and if you can be the opening act. This will help break the ice with the club allowing them to see what you've got without a press kit. It also gives you that chance to play in front of audience and hopefully pick up new fans.

You should have a prepared set that has at least 40 minutes of music. If you consider audience applause and time in between songs, you can possibly push the set to 45 minutes which is the usual time allotment for an opening act.

If the group is willing to let you open up for them do not discuss money at this point. Most bands need every penny they make and they are already doing you the favor by getting you in the door. This is something you can't buy. If you bring up the money there is a good chance you won't get the gig.

Look for a club in your area

If you do not know a band that can help you, this is the way to proceed:

Look for a club, preferably in your home area conveniently located, so that all of your friends can come.

Make sure the admission age is low enough so that it doesn't exclude many of your fans. Don't forget, that for this first show you are going to want to bring in as many people as you can, so that you can begin developing that good reputation.

Make sure that the club features bands so that they are used to loud volume levels. The last thing you need is to be constantly reminded to lower your volume or in a worse case scenario, be told to stop playing altogether.

Call the club and inquire

Call the club and inquire as to who does the bookings. Get their name, the club address and the hours in which the booker works. Ask how long after they receive your tape should you call back for booking information. It is not necessary to speak to the club booker at this time. All you will get out of the call is instructions to send your tape and press kit and call back in two weeks. So why waste your time and theirs. First mail in the tape and then ask for the booker. If you live close by you can consider dropping off the tape. For one thing it gives you a chance to step into the venue and see it, especially if this is your first time. If you're lucky, the booker will be there and might even listen to the tape right away. If not, then perhaps the person behind the bar who you will leave the tape with will become a good contact and if you enter into a good conversation that could be an asset to you.

Call back at the time you've been instructed

It would help if you remember or even jotted down the names of the people you met when you were at the club or spoken to on the phone. If they should answer the phone and you remember their voice and refer to them by name, you will have made a very big impression. Ask to speak to the owner or the person that books the shows. Do not lie or exaggerate the size of your following. Be honest and let them know you are just starting out and would like the chance to open for a more popular group so that you can start adding on to your following. If this is indeed your first show you still should be out telling all your friends, family members and whoever else you can about this event so that you can count on some kind of initial following.

The Event

If the club has received your tape and you are now in conversation to book the show, there are three main points you need to address.

Payment/date/time

Thursday, Friday and Saturdays are by far the best nights of the week. Depending on where you are, Sunday might not be so bad (but is usually affected by people having school or work the next day) and Monday and Tuesday are terrible.

If this is your first show, you are somewhat at the mercy of what the club booker offers you. Chances are it's not going to be on a Friday night at 11:00 for \$500. It could be a Monday at 7:00 PM or worse at 2:00 AM.

Though you may be able to come up with many reasons why this time slot won't work for you, you need to understand that there is no reason why the booker should offer you anything different. You have no reputation and he has no way of knowing for sure what kind of crowd you will bring so why should he take any chances. Remember the club has to pay its bills. Unless you can supply him with documented proof like a press kit legitimizing your group and describing your drawing power, I'd say take what you are offered. Consider it an audition for the club to get in and impress whoever is there with your ability to turn it on in the face of adversity.

What are you entitled to?

As far as pay is concerned, unless you have a reputation and have established a going rate for your band (based on what you've been paid for the past five shows), the deal they offer is the deal you take. Payment is based entirely on how many people you draw and not just for the first show. You will need to prove that you can bring in good business every time you play. Once you prove yourself, you should be getting your area's going rate for bands. The most useful tool you have negotiating your pay is the amount of people you bring through the door. Based upon admission price, times the amount of people, you can estimate how much money the club is making on your crowd.

SAMPLE 1:

$\$5.00 \text{ admission} \times 75 \text{ people who came to the show} = \$375 \text{ amount made at the door}$

What are you entitled to?

That will depend entirely on the club policy, your area's going rate and your reputation. If you are asked how much you are looking for, you should take the equation from sample 1 and receive anywhere from 25% -100% of that money. To figure out the percentage use the equation in SAMPLE 2.

SAMPLE 2:

$\text{Gross } x \text{ percentage} = \text{amount or } \$375 \times 25\% = \$93.75$

Your job will be to negotiate this, based on many factors including: your reputation, club policy and going rate. You will have to because the club will certainly never offer you your value.

What to Expect from the Club

Basically the club functions as a room that you are borrowing to put on a show. Don't depend on the owner for anything other than maybe some advertising. It is your job to bring in the crowd.

It is important that you understand this fundamental rule. Although ethically you should be paid every time you play because it is work, you are really working for yourself so who in reality should be paying you? As with any new business starting out you have to develop a clientele. This is usually done through advertising which for any new business can be a costly undertaking. In this case your advertisement is your performance, a pretty cheap way to build clientele if you ask me! Besides, get used to it, throughout your career there are going to be other types of dates where you might play for free like seminars, agent/record company showcases etc. just to gain exposure.

The following are some of the many types of pay structures offered in clubs:

Pay to play

In this scenario you will be asked at the time of your booking to purchase in advance x amount of tickets from the promoter of the show. This amount ranges from city to city and in NYC where I'm from, it's around \$250 - \$500. Once you get the tickets it then becomes your responsibility to sell them to fans not the club's. In the case where you purchase 100 tickets for \$500 that makes each ticket cost \$5. This insures the promoter and the club profit for that night. For you to make profit on the show you will have to raise that cost to let's say \$7.00 a ticket.

This is a sleazy way for promoters to do business and I advise you to steer clear of these deals, however as these promoters put it, they are offering you a place to play and an opportunity to make money taking some of the pressure and financial liability off themselves. It definitely gives you some insight into the workings of the business and it puts the pressure on you to succeed. So it's not altogether horrible, but if you can find a reputable promoter who isn't lazy and works to promote the show, you are better off.

No pay

Sometimes a band needs to play out live to showcase themselves for a club owner or booking agent. Due to the high cost of running a business, a club won't take a risk on paying a band that they have never seen or heard of. Many clubs offer open mic or audition nights on a certain night. You'll get around a half an hour or so to play and the club will see what kind of crowd you bring in and if you're good enough for a pay gig.

I don't often recommend that bands give their show away for nothing but at times under the right circumstances, if you really want to get into a place on a regular basis, this is a very good way to do it.

If you are not going to get paid there are some trade offs you can ask for. The willingness of a booker to concede to some will give you some indication as to the type of club and individual they are:

- ask the owner if the club regularly take ads out in the paper.
- if so they can give you some mention in an upcoming ad. This alone is valuable in your press kit.
- try to get some perks out of the club like a guest list.
- try to book a tentative future date at the time of the show.

This way, should there be a good crowd happening that is giving you a good response, you can advertise your return date right there, maximizing the potential draw for the next show.

Percentage of the admission price: redeemed passes

Passes are those 4"x 5" postcards used by bands and clubs the world over to advertise the show. They are passed out at clubs, on the street and through the mail giving friends and fans alike information about an event. On the night of the show the club will have someone at the door collecting passes and admission money. At the end of the night the club will then count up all the collected passes and pay you a percentage of the passes with your name on it. Fair deal, right?wrong!!!

First, unless your father owns the club or the door man is Mother Theresa, you can't really trust the club to account for every pass redeemed. Imagine over the course of a busy night how easy it is for a doorman to misplace 15 passes and not realize it. Are you going to be the one to accuse this 8-foot gorilla who eats steroids for breakfast and punks like you for lunch, that he purposely threw some away in the garbage? I think not. And if you try to convince the club owner that you drew more people than cards collected and therefore expect them to fork over more money, you will be attempting a kind of surgical procedure that even Dr. Beverly Crusher has not heard of.

You will therefore need to take the following precautions:

- find the biggest, baddest, but level headed friend you can and post them near the doorman.
- have them collect the passes as they are handed off to the doorman. If that isn't permissible they should carry their own counter and check off the amount of people redeeming your passes. Sometimes having this person looming in the background who is not easily intimidated is enough to keep an otherwise dishonest club owner or doorman straight.
- try to be original in the style, color and even size of your postcard.
- if you have a disagreement with the owner after the show, you might want to look around the front door area, dance floor or even in the trash for your very recognizable postcards.

Percentage deals are the standard in the club circuit but here are some tips on negotiating them to work in your favor.

To start with, your cut of the passes will usually be around 20% of the admission price. So if the admission is \$5 you'll get \$1 per card. But what if you draw 200 people? Shouldn't you get a higher percentage than the \$1 per ticket? Yes you should. What you need to do here is negotiate an accelerated percentage per amount of people you bring in. So that after let's say you draw 50 people you get 25% and after you bring in 100 people you're entitled to 30% and so on. A club should be open to this negotiation at the onset, when you book the gig.

In some areas of the country, admission prices to these shows are somewhat expensive.

And if you're appearing on a bill with other acts chances are you are not going to get a lot of time on the stage. In order to entice some of your fans to come down you might want to work out a deal with the club owner that offers your friends a cheaper admission price. In return you will accept either a slightly lower percentage or what I recommend is a larger draw amount before your percentage goes up. So instead of a \$7 cover charge you can offer on your postcard a \$5 charge. In return the club will only pay you \$1 on your pass or bump you up to 25% after you go over 80 people instead of 50.

What you are hoping to accomplish is showing some business smarts as well as an appreciation for his club. After all, you are trying to draw the most amount of people. The booker might be more interested in getting a true count of what you brought in. You also cost less money and in showing you their appreciation they might be more prone to doing right by you. Keep in mind, many of the clubs have themselves been burned by plenty of bands ripping stuff off from the clubs and defacing their property. You've got to show them some respect before you can expect them to show you some back in return.

Percentage of the admission price

A slightly better deal usually reserved for more reputable bands. The club will pay you at the end of the night a percentage of all the door receipts.

Depending on how many bands appear that night and at what spot your band played in (opening act, middle acts or headliner) will determine what your percentage will be.

So let's take a \$5 ticket price and 6 bands. It's three o'clock in the morning and you finally sit down with the booker. You're told that 95 people paid all night to see all the bands. 95 people on a \$5 ticket comes out to \$475. If you were promised 50% of the gross receipts then you would get 50% of \$475 or \$237.50.

Set pay

Some clubs that have a good reputation will usually offer to start a new band at a set price. Usually around \$50. If you are just starting out trust me it's decent money and take it. Until you develop a following and begin to make the club money, you have nothing to bargain with. In most cases a club that offers you a starting pay is a club that cares about its acts and will do more to help develop you a following. These types of venues will advertise you in the local papers and if you ask them nicely might give you the names of music reviewers so that you might invite them down to review your band.

Set pay plus a percentage over

Now you are starting to get in with the club or have a good reputation as a band that draws a big crowd. Let's say the deal is the club will pay you a set salary of \$500 plus 50% of the collected door money over 400 people. So, in effect you will get \$500 no matter what happens. If the club draws 575 people on an \$8 ticket you will get 50% of 175×8 , (175 being the difference between 575 and 400) or 1/2 of \$1400 which equals \$700. So now your total pay for the night will be \$1200 (your contracted price of \$500. plus \$700 over). Of course you have to rely on the club's honesty as always but keep in mind that if you are doing the club this much business, they themselves are making good money and will not try to do anything to upset you. The tides do turn as you get more popular and you'll notice the clubs will become like home to you and your fans.

The door

This very simple arrangement is where your group will supply someone at the front door and he'll collect the admission as it comes in. At the end of the night you keep everything that you collected. You usually get this kind of deal only if you are a fairly popular band with enough of a reputation to demand it and the only band on the bill. It is more common in suburban areas and college towns than in bigger cities where there is more of a tendency for the clubs to do the door themselves and give you a percentage.

There are many other deals that will incorporate a little of each one of these with perhaps a new twist of its own. I know a promoter in Colorado who books a number of popular clubs in the Denver area. For many of the new acts that are booked, their pay (regardless of their draw capacity) is \$100. But included with that they get a big ad in the main music newspaper as well as a 1/2 page write up!..... Brilliant!! To me, this is promotional material that in most places, money can't buy. In fact the \$100 seems almost a bonus when you consider how valuable the write up and ad is to their press kit.

Of course all good deals are not without some drawbacks and in this example, the promoter only books bands that have their own CD out. They need not be a signed band, just a band that has reached the level of marketing their own merchandise. That as we will see later on in the book is a positive signal in the industry that the band has made it through some of the first stages of development.

Negotiation

What is your recourse in the event that you feel you have been unfairly handled be it pay or otherwise? When it comes to pay you are at a disadvantage especially in the beginning when you have very little performance options and are at the mercy of the club. Each negotiation is unique unto itself. To be successful you must not attempt to outsmart your opponent but rather match wits with a good argument based upon facts and a good sense of business etiquette.

Supposing you go to settle a show that you were promised 50% of the gross door receipts. From the stage you can see the 350 capacity room is so packed that the line by the door needs to be manned by two bouncers instead of the usual one. As you now sit in the office watching the clock turn 3:00 AM, waiting to get paid, the booker enters and after offering you a drink says you did okay drawing 95 people. Your pay is \$235. You stare ahead wondering which one of their two heads you should address.

Instead of hitting the roof, inquire how that is possible when the club was obviously filled to capacity. The booker will no doubt combat that with all kinds of excuses ranging from half those people were regular customers and do not pay, to you must be blind and don't tell me how many people were in my club. What you must keep in mind is that if you honestly drew a huge crowd, the booker would be a fool to piss you off to the point where you vowed to never perform there again. So with an armful of confidence you can offer this possibility.

There are other clubs in town that would appreciate your 300 fans and if there is no way to settle with you then you will happily play for the competition. A fool would end the conversation here so they will respond one of two ways. If your bluff is called you know what you have to do. If on the other hand you're asked what you think is fair, let me offer you one solution.

You were offered payment on 95 people and you feel that club maxed out at 350. Offer to split this down the middle and have him pay you the percentage on 222 people which is roughly the difference. You arrive at the difference by adding $95 + 350$ then dividing the total in half.

The booker's reaction may be positive or they may come back to you with an offer which might end up being another split down the middle. The argument might be that x amount of dollars was spent on advertising and there is no way that you drew that many people. Explain that you also spent x amount on advertising. Proceed to show the mailing list pages from the night with the multitudes of signatures to drive your point home.

What you are hoping to achieve here is much more than financial. Let's face it, neither of you can really prove how many people came in through the door unless there were tickets sold and the show sold out in advance.

In a courteous tone you want to establish that you are not to be jerked around and that you are not a fool but rather someone who is taking care of their business. In the end you will get more respect from the club, keeping them honest in the future. The final result of this negotiation should put a bit more money in your pocket, raise some respect for you and hopefully culminate in a better arranged deal for the next show you perform there.

I want to point out that although this may happen from time to time there are many very reputable clubs where it is a pleasure to play at and where the bands are treated very fairly.

As far as the many other circumstances that bands find themselves disadvantaged by, the same level headed techniques need to be assimilated. Always direct your problem to the person directly responsible for correcting it. Yelling at the bartender because you are being denied drink passes is not proper procedure.

There are methods to booking a show, documenting and confirming all the things you discussed with the booker on the phone so that you are in less risk when you arrive at the club.

Marc Davison is the author of the book All Area Access - your map for the road to musical success. Marc Davison puts his many years of experience as a musician and artist manager into this book. Topics include: starting a band, booking gigs, press and the media, recording, copyrights, merchandising, touring, finances, managers, agents, record deals and much more - everything you need to know and do to market your act and your music. Marc draws on his 25 years of experience - from playing and touring with bands to booking and managing them - to give you All Area Access to musical success. Marc is also co-owner of 1000Watt Consulting www.1000wattconsulting.com

5 NEGOTIATION TECHNIQUES TO BUILD BOOKING KNOW-HOW

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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We are making deals all the time. Whether you are looking for a record deal, a publishing deal, booking a performance date, hiring a side musician, renting a car, buying new sound equipment, hiring an engineer to record your next CD or even deciding where you are going to have lunch - you are entering into a negotiation. There are techniques that could help make you more comfortable and more skilled at handling each of these situations so that you can reach your desired outcome. In this article, I will cover some of the techniques more specifically geared toward increasing your skills for booking performance dates.

Establish goals

I believe that everything we do, each new project, each tour, each phone call will be more productive and successful when we first establish the goal for the situation. Consider the next tour. Why are you touring? Are you releasing a new CD? Are you simply filling the calendar with dates? Have you decided you want to expand your touring region? Do you want to tour in a completely new market? Do you need to make a specific amount of money within a specific time frame? For example, during the next 3 weeks, we want to play 16 dates and make \$10,000.

Establishing a goal for a tour will influence how you conduct each phone call and what extras will be acceptable or unacceptable. For instance, if they throw in two hotel rooms, will that make it acceptable when they are not able to pay the guarantee you are asking? It may be an added bonus in some instances. It may allow you to do this date if the guarantee was small and the value of the hotel is greater than what the guarantee might have been. Considering this small example again relates back to having established goals for the tour.

Let's look at two scenarios that will help clarify the need for setting touring goals.

Scenario 1: The CD Release Tour

The Goal: Get as much publicity as possible, open new markets.

In this situation, getting radio airplay, getting print reviews, getting the act in front of as many new audiences as possible, is the focus for this tour. Yes, you would like to make some money, but getting publicity for the CD and therefore the band is the priority. By setting this publicity goal, the types of dates you are now seeking will differ from those you would be seeking if your goal were to earn a specific dollar figure. Now you would look for dates to open for larger acts, thus putting you in front of larger audiences. Booking radio interviews and live performances on radio shows would be another advantageous situation. If you were able to get a support act slot opening multiple tour dates for a major act, you would make minimal dollars. However, you would have the opportunity to play in front of much larger audiences while also being able to sell the new CD. Those sales have the potential to support the tour.

Scenario 2: Touring for a specific dollar amount

Goal: Play 16 dates and make \$10,000 in 20 days

When you establish this goal, it demands that you look for dates in venues that will allow you to earn \$625 per night. This means you need to book dates in markets where you have a following, can command a guarantee and have the potential to increase your earnings with a decent percentage if the guarantee is not equal to \$625. Do you still want publicity? Absolutely! Will you accept publicity instead of money in this case? Possibly-but now it really depends on the type of publicity and how many of the other 15 dates can make up the shortfall of \$625 so you still can meet your goal. Set realistic goals. When you are building a following but have never drawn the kinds of crowds that would earn you this kind of money, unrealistic goals will set you up for disappointment. Set touring goals that are in line with your career development so you measure successes.

Once you have established the goal for the tour, it is easier to begin discussions with promoters and club bookers. Now let's consider some of the additional techniques necessary to increase your negotiation savvy.

Ask open-ended questions

Negotiation is a process that depends on developing a relationship with the other person. Your success in the entertainment industry depends on how well you develop industry relationships. Asking open-ended questions allows a relationship to become established. When you ask a question that can be answered with a "Yes" or a "No," there is no room for fluid conversation to develop. When questions are framed in an open-ended manner, conversation can mature and flow more naturally. For example: "Do you present jazz at your club?" The booker can answer, "Yes" or "No" and the conversation never gets off the ground. However, if you ask, "What kind of music do you book at your club?" there is no opportunity for "Yes" or "No" answers. The booker answers, "We book some jazz, but mostly blues and rock." Now you have some information to consider. Continue with information about yourself and ask additional open-ended questions. A conversation has begun. Now you can gather much needed information to decide whether this club fits into your touring goal.

Hot tip!

Be sure to gather as much research as you can from online resources and directories about the venues you are calling, before actually making contact. You will sound more professional and the bookers will appreciate your not wasting their time with questions already posted on their website.

Don't be the first one to mention price

Continue with the open-ended question technique. You need more information about the club to decide whether they will have the dollars or the media outlets to support your goals. They may ask your fee right away. You might have a set fee, but you still don't have enough information about the venue to offer your fee yet. In an effort to discover what kind of budget they work with, you should check their online schedule to see whom they've already booked. If the names are familiar and many of the acts are at the same career level as you and you know approximately what they get, you may be able to determine the kind of money they would spend on your group. If they name mostly major, well known artists, you may determine you are not ready to play this venue or you may use the information to pitch your act as an opener for one of the upcoming major acts.

Other questions you need to know before offering your fee might be.

- what kind of sound system do you have?
- how large is the stage?
- what is the seating or standing capacity?
- what is your ticket pricing policy?

Answers to these questions can help you determine an appropriate and now educated answer to the question, "What is your fee?" or more likely, "What are you looking for?"

Don't be thrown off by abrupt questions about your fee. Ask the open-ended questions necessary for you to give a well-thought out answer in line with your goal for the tour. At some point you need to discuss money, first get information.

No is just the beginning

When you get "No" for an answer, don't hang, up-get information. "Yes" is my favorite answer, but "No" is my second favorite. I'll take a "No" over a "Maybe" any day. Once the answer is "No" you can move on. Talk about other tour dates when you are coming through the area. Find out when they are booking a major act. Perhaps you might be the opener. Ask when you should call back to update the booker about developments in your career which may make them more interested in booking your act. If you finally get a "No" from one venue, you can begin a more aggressive search into other venues to fill that date.

Using deadlines

It is important to move your negotiations along and not let them drag on past the point of no return. You have a promotion time-line, mailings to get to your fans and publicity to disseminate to the appropriate press. When a negotiation drags on, you might miss some important deadlines. Offer a deadline. It could be one week, 24 hours, 48 hours. You need to have an answer about the date in discussion so you may set your promotion in motion. In some cases, you need to get an answer so you may search for another venue if this one is not going to work out. When you offer a deadline, the negotiation moves along and comes to a conclusion.

When you are offered a deadline, be sure that there is enough time to consider all the issues and make an educated decision. Don't allow yourself to be rushed into making a decision you may regret in the future. Take the time to consult the appropriate people on your team or in your group or simply work the numbers and review all the options.

Now that you have some basic negotiation savvy, it is time to become familiar with some of the standard types of deals used when negotiating performance dates. I also suggest the various situations for which each deal is best suited. Keep in mind, however, that every negotiation can be as creative as the individuals participating. If the following standard deals require some tweaking to suit a particular situation, feel free to explore all of your options. Most booking personnel with whom you shall be negotiating are familiar with these standard deals and may be more comfortable using one of them to finalize your negotiations.

Five Standard Types of Deals

Straight Percentage
Straight Guarantee
Guarantee Plus Percentage
Guarantee Versus Percentage
Guarantee Plus Bonus

Straight percentage

A straight percentage is a percentage of the ticket sales or the income taken at the door. The key to this negotiation is to come up with the appropriate percentage. This deal is often offered when a performer is not known in a market and the promoter is not willing to risk any up front money or guarantee. Percentages can range from 100% of the door on down. Typical percentage splits are 65-70 percent to the artist and 35-30 percent to the venue. When negotiating this type of deal, it is important to build your value in the marketplace in order to get the promoter to agree to the highest percentage rate possible. Then, it is up to you to see that the show is well promoted and get a good audience. With the promoter having very little at risk, it is unlikely they will put much effort into promoting this date. It would be advisable to get some idea of the promotion the promoter is willing to do and include that in your contract.

This deal can be very advantageous to a performer under certain circumstances. When an artist has a very strong following in an area with a loyal fan base and large mailing list, a straight percentage, especially a high percentage, can often net the artist a higher fee than some of the other deals we'll discuss. Artists who produce their own shows at local venues and are savvy self-promoters with good media connections, are perfectly suited for a straight percentage deal. Quite often, most guarantees that club owners offer are far lower than the amount an artist can net with a straight percentage under the above circumstance.

However, if you are unknown to a market, a straight percentage may not be a good deal. The promoter may be very interested in using a straight percentage to reduce the risk to the venue. When touring to unknown markets, make every effort to negotiate some guarantee to cover basic expenses. At least you know the venue is risking something on your behalf. They might actually make some efforts to promote the date so they recoup their minor investment.

Straight guarantee

A straight guarantee requires the promoter to offer the artist some money. As a new performer to the venue, that amount may be very low—\$50 or \$100 is not unheard of. A straight guarantee assures you of some income when building audiences in new markets. Some artists, who have reached a certain level in their careers, can ask for much large guarantees and are quite satisfied with the straight guarantee. The key to these negotiations is coming up with the guarantee that works for both parties' budgets.

As you begin to draw larger audiences and perform in venues with greater seating capacities, it is important to determine whether a straight guarantee will be adequate compensation. Now you must consider the seating capacity, ticket pricing, the venue's budget and weigh that against the guarantee you are discussing. When all the figures begin to show a profit far outweighing your guarantee, it may be time to begin incorporating some split percentage deals above the straight guarantee.

Guarantee plus percentage

This deal is determined after considering the seating capacity, ticket prices, gross income potential, expenses, (including artist guarantee) and the acts' draw potential. After all the figures are calculated, you will be able to determine the amount, if any, remaining after all expenses. At that point you may negotiate a percentage of the overage, (the amount left over after expenses), to be split with the promoter. Again, standard percentage splits range between 65-70 percent to the artist and 35-30 percent to the venue, but anything is possible. The greater the demand for the artist, the more the act is better able to command larger guarantees and percentages. The percentage of the overage will then be added to the artist's guarantee to make up the complete fee to the artist.

You may begin to see how this deal can be advantageous to an artist who has a large draw. This deal is win-win for both parties, rewarding the artist and the venue for each of their efforts in making the date successful.

Guarantee vs percentage

In this case a guarantee is set and then a percentage is determined. The artist receives whichever amount is greater. Again, ticket price, capacity and gross potential need to be calculated. In this deal, if the ticket price is \$10 and the seating capacity is 150, the total gross income potential is \$1500. Perhaps you agreed that the guarantee is \$500 and the percentage is 75% of the gross sales. In this case 75% of gross sales is greater than the \$500 guarantee. The artist would get the 75% or \$1125.

If, however the deal is 75% of the net after expenses, (in this case all the expenses, including artist's guarantee, equals \$1000), then 75% of the net is only \$375. The artist would get the greater amount, the guarantee of \$500.

The key to this deal is whether it is a percentage of the gross or the net. Always "try" to make this deal based on the gross. Most bookers will want to make it based on the net. Do the math for each deal to determine how the numbers will eventually work. Always have a calculator by your phone when negotiating. Once you determine this deal is not producing the numbers you would like to see, suggest a guarantee plus a percentage especially when the promoter insists on a percentage of the net (after expenses). The percentage of the split will most likely be lowered from 75% in this case.

Guarantee plus a bonus

Numerous promoters like this deal because it is easy accounting. By using a guarantee plus a bonus, the artist is rewarded with bonus amounts above the guarantee based upon blocks of tickets sold or income.

For example, a venue has 300 seats and the ticket price is \$10 equaling a gross potential of \$3000. The venue's expenses are \$1000. The artist's guarantee is \$1000. This suggests that the artist's guarantee be based on 100 seats sold. Bonus amounts are determined by calculating the overage, (\$1000) and the number of seats remaining to be sold above 100, (200 seats remaining). Most often the number of seats is divided into blocks, in this case four blocks of 50 seats. As each block of 50 seats is sold, the artist will receive an additional amount of money, in this case, \$200 for each block. This deal would then add \$200 at 150 sold, 200 seats sold, 250 seats sold and 300 seats sold. If the show sold out at 300 seats, the artist fee would be \$1000 guarantee plus \$800 in bonuses for a total fee of \$1800. This left \$200 for the promoter. It is more likely the bonus amounts may be lower to give the promoter a larger percentage of the overage, perhaps \$150 or \$175. It is also possible that a single bonus amount is offered after a predetermined number of seats are sold.

The benefit of this deal is that is easy to calculate. The problem is, no bonus is given for partial block sales such as 120 seats instead of 150. In that case, a guarantee plus a percentage provides an advantage since it accounts for every seat sold.

The other way to work this deal is to base it on income rather than seats sold. For instance, if we use a \$10 ticket price and 300 seats with a \$3000 gross potential, the promoter may choose to bonus the act after a specific income amount, such as \$1500. The amount of the bonus is calculated after determining the expenses and the guarantee. A single bonus amount or incremental bonus amounts may be offered. This works well in situations when a low guarantee was set to reduce risk and the act does much better than expected.

These five deals are the standard in the industry, but don't let that restrict you from creative deal making. There is no end to the options available when attempting to negotiate a deal that will work for you and the promoter. The key to any negotiation is, knowing what the options are and which option will work in your specific situation. Good luck.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, [How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED](#). She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program [Manager-In-A-Box](#) and presents [The Performing Biz](#), seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at [www.Performingbiz.com](#) or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at [jg@performingbiz.com](#)

BOOKING YOUR ACT

by Jay Flanzbaum, Onlinegigs

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Technology and organization are the keys to success.

When people start turning to technology to help them organize their music careers, it usually means they are finding it difficult to manage the process using the traditional address book, notebook or Outlook-style application. All the technology in the world won't make much of a difference if you are only performing live a few times a month and aren't looking for more exposure. But if you are looking to perform as often as possible and manage your music career from the road, a digital solution is something you ought to consider.

You can only saturate your local market for so long before you start to cannibalize your fan base. Eventually you will either need to expand your performance radius or simply reduce the number of local live shows. Attempting to play out and do more traveling means more opportunities. The more live music talent buyers with your product in their hands, the more likely you will book more performances. If nobody has your CD and press kit, all you can really do is sit around and wait for the phone to ring.

You can only follow up so many times with the same buyer before you are considered a nuisance; so maximizing your time also means constantly pursuing new opportunities. You should set goals in terms of how many new talent buyers you will send your info to on a weekly basis.

The old adage that it's not what you know but who you know holds true in the music industry. When you need a gig in Lincoln, NB it is helpful to know the local live venues and how to get in touch with the talent buyers. But identifying possible gig opportunities in new markets is really just the tip of the iceberg, the real work starts once you find a location that seems like a good fit for your act. There are a whole series of activities that need to be religiously executed to contact a talent buyer, book a gig, notify your team and fans, prepare for the road and promote the show to the local media.

Finding booking and promotional contacts

Booking gigs successfully requires persistence and organization, whether you are an agent or an artist booking your own act. It doesn't matter whether you are booking locally, regionally or nationally. You will essentially need the same skills and tools to be effective.

The first place to start is to collect contact information for locations that hire live music performers. You need as many of these as possible to increase your success potential and you also need as much information (phone number, styles of music, capacity, contact name etc.) about the location that you can get your hands on.

Alternative newsweeklies can be a great source of local venue listings. Every major market in the country has an independent weekly publication and most of them can be found online (check out Alternative Weekly Network at www.awn.org/). Sometimes the ads alone are enough to determine whether or not your act is appropriate for a particular venue. You will still need to get in touch with the venue however to find out their booking policies and get the right contact name for the talent buyer.

Printed music industry directories are an incredible resource. These directories tend to list everything from venues to record companies to managers and back again, so it is easy to get overwhelmed. Make sure you pick the one that is right for you and that's going to help you accomplish your goals. Take a look at The Indie Bible to get a sense of what is offered.

Your peers are an excellent place to find venues appropriate for your band. Most will gladly share what they've learned regarding the best time to reach the buyer or exactly how to pitch your act. It's a safe bet that they are usually interested in telling people about all the venues they have played, so don't be afraid to whip out a pen and piece of paper. The more names and numbers you can get your hands on, the more possible gigs you can lock down.

Keeping track of your booking efforts

So you've scoured the web, bought every music directory and harassed every touring band you know. At this point you probably have an incredible collection of venues, colleges, festivals and press contact information. You most likely have pages full of notes, e-mails with referrals and spreadsheets covered with names and numbers. But now what? The key is to be able to effectively organize all of your newfound contacts in a way that maximizes your opportunity with each one of them.

Software or web-based applications such as Act, Outlook or Onlinegigs are all efforts to help you centralize your business related messages, upcoming tasks and important contact information. Handheld versions such as a Filofax or Palm Pilot can also suit many of your needs. Whatever you choose, be sure to get as many of the following features as would apply to your specific needs:

- complete access to all of your important contact and business information in one location
- multiple, archived backups of your information in case of data loss or equipment failure
- reminder system for upcoming activities and tasks
- integrated e-mail and fax messaging with message tracking and search
- customizable to better suit your specific industry
- remote access from any internet connection
- ability to easily share your information with others
- pre-loaded with a directory of industry contacts

Next you will need to either import your address book or do some data entry to get all of this the information into one place. You should get in the habit of storing data for every contact you do business with in this location. Every phone number, every e-mail, every call, every meeting etc. This one tool becomes your address book, your task list, your reminder system and your filing cabinet.

When you complete a phone call, make some notes about what was said and store it with the contact. It sounds simple enough, but trying to remember what different talent buyers told you during your last conversation can become confusing. Similarly, a record should be created for every upcoming task you need to complete. A list of venues that need to be called, packages that need to be sent, press releases that need to be generated etc.

The best tools in the world can't help anyone if there isn't a steady system of upkeep and interaction. Task lists need to be cleaned up and contact information constantly needs updating and maintenance. A system of centralization and organization is the key.

Performance contracts

After a few months of working your task list religiously, following up with every club and persisting until you are specifically told “Not interested,” you should be ready to book a few gigs. Many an agreement has been made based on a phone call and a virtual handshake, but if you want to live without headaches, get in the habit of sending a written agreement.

The story usually goes like this: you sent the CD in January, to finally book a gig in April for this upcoming August. It's just a Tuesday night for 100% of the door, a place to stay and some food, but it's a much-needed stop over between Colorado and Nevada. You call a week before the gig from somewhere in Texas and the club has never heard of you. What's worse, there is another band booked on that night and the other band has a confirmed written agreement.

Check out Faxwave, they will give you a free fax-to-e-mail phone number. This gives you the ability to have a buyer physically sign your agreement and fax it back to you, but instead of receiving a traditional paper fax, you will get an electronic copy of the signature in any e-mail inbox that you choose. This eliminates the likelihood of agreements or faxes slipping through the cracks. Most venues book a ton of talent and have their own problems keeping the information straight.

Promoting your shows

Now that you have been diligently sending out CDs, doing follow ups, landing gigs and issuing contracts; you need to be sure to update your fans as well as the local press about upcoming performances. If you have never played before in a particular market, then most likely nobody in that town has any idea who you are. And why would anyone come out to see you play if they have never heard of you before and have no idea that you are even playing. What you really need is some press or at a minimum just a listing with the local radio and print music calendars.

Your first step is to put together all of the contact names, fax numbers, e-mail addresses etc. for the local media outlets in a 30-60 mile radius of your gig. Then you will have to prepare a professional and concise press release. A good release should be able to convey all of the pertinent information on one page. Radio stations and newspapers get flooded everyday with hundreds of releases; they do not have time to read numerous pages that outline your band's Zen philosophy or all of your bass player's musical influences. Keep it to the point or they will not read it all. Keep your layout clean; do not use multiple fonts and font sizes or too many colors and graphics.

Make sure your release has a section with the performance details that is easy to pick out and includes: Performance Date, Band Name, Venue Name, Full Address, Phone, Website, Ticket Price, Set Times, Age Limit and any other bands on the bill. Also be sure to include your personal contact information: Contact Name, Phone, E-mail and Website. If someone needs to get in touch for a photo or an interview, you want him or her to be able to find you quickly and easily.

Here is where your CRM (Contact Resource Management) program really comes in handy. You could take the time to create numerous, personalized press releases for each press contact you have found. This could take you days depending on the size of the market. If we are talking about New York City, it could take you months. But if you have the proper tools like we outlined in the section above, you should be able to create one template and just click 'send' to issue a release, personally addressed, by fax or e-mail, to hundreds of contacts all at once.

Getting prepared for a tour

The gigs are booked and the important contracts have been signed and returned. You will now need to get a couple of things done before you leave. At a minimum you should prepare a tour itinerary that outlines all of the details of the trip for your whole team. Keeping your manager, publicist and band members in the loop is going to ultimately cut down on your own stress level. Give everyone a copy of each gig's address, phone number, set time etc. Someone is going to have to get directions from each gig to the next, so you might as well include those in with the itinerary. This will hopefully cut down on your only set of directions getting lost or destroyed.

Once you get on the road, someone can use the itinerary to advance your shows. Every venue needs to be called a week or so before the gig to confirm any last minute details. Getting into the habit of advancing your shows is the only way to eliminate any surprises. Sound systems blow up, venues close down and liquor licenses get pulled. Every band needs someone that can take on another simple task or two. This one is simple but arguably one of the most important.

In conclusion...

Many independent musicians make a living through touring, CD and merchandise sales. These mavericks represent everything DIY and grassroots. They are living their dreams through their art, but they thrive by the power of organization and information. It's a strange balancing act, but someone's got to do it.

OnlineGigs.com is a group of DIY musicians, bands and agents that built a central database whose members can contribute to and help to maintain. As a result, the information is constantly up to date and as more members join, it will continue to become even more accurate and grow. With access to the right tools and resources, every artist should have the ability to survive and prosper through practicing their craft. Visit OnlineGigs at www.onlinegigs.com

HOW CAN I GET BETTER GIGS?

by Les Vogt, Entertainment Consultant

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If you want something you've never had, you have to do something you've never done... nothing will ever change until you decide to do something different!

The first step is to find out where you really fit in the overall scheme of things. There are many levels of success. You may be booked for a year in advance and sell-out every performance with outstanding audience responses... on the Eagles Club circuit. Is this success? Of course it is. Can you push your achievements to another level? Very likely... if you are prepared to analyze how and why the acts that play the fairs, casinos and corporate events etc. have achieved these goals. Study the differences with an open mind and try to make the necessary adjustments. You will likely think you're ready for the next level before you actually are... this is perfectly natural. I receive promotional materials every day from bar performers who believe they belong on the concert circuit. Yes, there are less talented artists than you on the concert circuit... some whose talents may have diminished beyond acceptable levels. But, at one time, these performers had to earn their longevity through competence, hard work and popularity. The fact is, they still have a large, loyal and forgiving following that will purchase tickets to their shows. My question to the wannabe concert artist is always the same... how many tickets can you sell? When you can sell enough tickets to turn a decent profit, the buyers and promoters will be calling you.

Sometimes you have to take the initiative to promote a few of your own concerts to prove to others (and especially to yourself) that you can sell tickets. In the beginning self-promotions often bring a serious dose of reality... which is usually in the form of a much smaller audience than expected. So, learn to expect the unexpected. Always cover your tail with a "free ticket" giveaway program to fill the empty seats if required. You should always try and look good in the face of failure.

Offer a charity group (with a large membership) a portion of the ticket price for selling them to their membership at a special discount price. Their mailing list and/or telephone solicitation can often sell half your tickets before they go on sale to the general public. This, together with public sales and complimentary tickets can make the venue look full and build a positive momentum for future shows. With a little luck, you can publicize a "sell-out" which always creates immediate attention. And, more asses in the chairs means better CD and T-shirt sales at the back of the room.

Don't forget to collect as many e-mail addresses as possible as this is an excellent chance to build on your e-mail list. Learn as much as you can from each event... don't get discouraged, it can take a few years to build a legitimate following. It is more important to look good... perception is everything. Organize as many giveaway options as possible. You won't know until the last minute if you're going to flop or not... and you may need to distribute a lot of tickets quickly. So, have a contingency plan ready just in case.

A continued run of "no positive response" from your shows, auditions and promo packages are a sure indication that either you or your promotion method needs some improvement. Karaoke and track show success doesn't make you a good entertainer. It will be your long-term dedication to practice and learning that will make the difference. There is no shortcut to gaining the ability to deliver your talent to an audience with the magic and precision of a seasoned professional. The projected personality, confidence and attitude of a real pro, together with a dialogue that makes an audience laugh and cry, almost at will, is a talent that is developed only over time. This will come eventually with a lot of hard work... and possibly a little sooner with some professional coaching.

Technical ability is only a fraction of the total talent package required to become a complete entertainer. The other requirements (in no particular order) are creativity, image, attitude, charisma, persistence and determination. You won't need all of these attributes to reach success at some level... I know of many performers without much technical ability who have carved out very successful careers for themselves with charisma, persistence and determination. Some of the world's most successful entertainers were initially told "don't quit your day job" only to rise to the top through creative avenues that overcame their technical flaws. The music industry can't explain how an average to poor singer can become a superstar. And so, they qualify these unlikely wonders by labeling them "stylists" as though it is a worthy measure of excellence. And, surely, it can be. Some artists who's vocal abilities are average at best, are talented in other areas and find a way to combine a unique delivery with brilliant lyrics to produce hit records. A few classic examples of such success are: Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan and Chris Christofferson.

No matter what the musical genre, the process for "getting noticed" is always the same. Once you have acquired some degree of ability, you must assemble a professional promotional package that accurately represents your performance and continually send it to all potential buyers, agents, producers, promoters and party planners that hire your type of entertainment. Do not send your "promo pack" without first contacting the potential recipient by telephone or e-mail and asking permission to do so. Remember, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression. Your best opportunity to impress will be the quality of your promotional package. Don't exaggerate or include any bogus accomplishments... this can come back to haunt you. Update your promo information regularly and always include a "live" video sample which shows your performance, introductory rap and the audience response. A brief 10 minute variety sample will be sufficient for most buyers. However, a full performance video should be available for the occasion where a potential buyer wants to view an entire performance. This may be requested when the client wishes to be sure you can deliver a full-length performance or wishes to check out your ability to communicate with the audience. Websites have a purpose, but rarely reveal enough to hook a worthwhile buyer without some additional firepower. So, don't totally rely on technology

Of all the ingredients needed for success, I can't overemphasize the importance of a good attitude... with it, you stand a strong chance of getting assistance and guidance wherever you go... without it, your career will likely be filled with endless obstacles. And, you may never, ever really understand how or why you didn't get where you wanted to go.

Les Vogt was the lead singer in Vancouver's very first rock 'n' roll recording band... "The Prowlers" who gained local popularity by playing "live" on the "Owl Prowl" radio program. He shared the stage with Bill Haley... Gene Vincent... Buddy Knox... Eddie Cochran... Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis. Les is now an independent producer, promoter and entertainment consultant. Contact: www.members.shaw.ca/lesvogt lesvogt@shaw.ca

GET PAID WHAT YOU'RE WORTH!

by Lee Kennedy, Dunroven Music
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Are you getting paid what you're really worth? Probably not. If you want clubs to pay you what you are really worth then you have to change the way you think and approach things from the Club's point of view. Think as a business person not a musician.

Ask yourself this question "why do clubs hire entertainment?" TO MAKE MONEY! That is the bottom line, like it or not. Think about it for a minute. If you owned a club and had to choose between two bands, which of the following would you choose?

A) The worst band in town, who by the way would make you \$5000 at the bar!

or

B) The best band in town, who would only make you \$500.

As a business person which one would you choose? Be honest! Be a business person. Most bands believe that if they have the greatest singer or the hottest band that people will automatically flock to see them and clubs will pay premium prices to see them. WRONG!

Information is the key! Find out what the club makes every night that you play. Slip the head bartender \$20 and ask him/her to tell you what the final register count was at the end of the night. Keep track of what the club is making off your show. As the club's revenues start to increase, take that information to the owner and renegotiate what they are paying you. Believe me, if you have that kind of information it makes it very hard for a club owner to say no. Most club owners count on you thinking like a musician, they do not expect you to know or care what the club makes. So turn the tables on them - think like a business person and you will come out ahead of the rest.

Lee Kennedy is a solo performer in Lake Tahoe, NV who has been making a living as a musician since 1980. Lee is the author of "\$100,000 a Year Without a Record Deal!"

HOW TO COMMAND A HIGHER FEE FOR YOUR LIVE SHOW

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Whether you are booking your own band or have an agent, it is important to establish your value within your particular market. When there is demand for your act, your fees will increase and bookings will be easier to contract. At the beginning of your touring career, there is probably little or no demand, therefore, the fees are low and there is more difficulty booking dates. While you are building your reputation and following, it is important to keep track of the following factors, enabling you to begin to establish a track record and some value. Establishing value for your act helps to create some leverage when negotiating with promoters and booking personnel at each venue. So how do you begin to establish your value?

Review your promotional materials

Start with your bio. Within the bio, it is important to have information and facts that the promoter can use to sell your act to their audience. Make sure it is clear and concise with little or no fluff or exaggeration. Highlight your accomplishments to date so that the reader doesn't have to search through lengthy paragraphs in order to get to the important facts that help them sell your act. For example: If you were interviewed on a regional TV or radio show which is meaningful to the area where you regularly perform, don't bury it within the text, bullet the information to make it stand out. Have someone other than yourself read over your materials to pull out the interesting facts and then rework the page graphically to emphasize the selling points.

Create a user friendly press packet. When your press materials are designed with the promoter and media in mind, mention that to the promoter when attempting to book the date. For example: Supply the venue with ready to use flyers or posters. Let them know you will send promo CDs to local radio along with a press release for the date. Send them a sample ready-to-use-fill-in-the-blank press release so they may also send one to their media list. Ask to contact their publicity person and let them know you are ready to work with them in order to insure local media is covered.

Promote to your mailing list. Let the promoter know how large your mailing list is in their area and that you mail or e-mail to your list for each tour. If you don't have a mailing list, it is the easiest direct marketing tool you can create. Start one at your very next date. It only takes a pad of paper and a pen when keeping it simple or a nicely designed form or fill-out card for the more elaborate. Mentioning how many people are on your mailing list and that you target your mailing for each gig, lets the promoter know you will tap your fans to buy tickets for their venue.

Keep Accurate Records of Each Date Played

When establishing and growing your value in the market, creating a record of all previously played dates is one of the most important things you can do. Keep track of the following information and review it before making your booking calls. a. The venue's seating or standing capacity b. How many tickets you sold at the venue c. The ticket-price or cover charge d. What the weather was like that night (it may influence sales) e. How much merchandise you sold f. What the gross sales were/ what you got paid g. What kind of promotion was done? Press releases, advertising, posters/flyers, media coverage h. Was there any other major event in town that night? (Large cities will always have many events occurring on the same night, small towns may only have one other event which could influence the outcome of your date).

As you call new venues in a town where you've previously played, having the above information close at hand will help you negotiate a better deal. If you've previously sold out a 150-seat venue at \$10 per ticket and now you are attempting to book a 200-seat venue, the promoter has something they can reference. This establishes your value. This information places you on equal footing with other acts that are able to sell 150 tickets. Now you can begin to command fees according to your established track record in that area.

When booking dates in a new area where you have never played, you can still use the above information for comparison and to demonstrate what you have been able to accomplish. Don't expect to get the same kind of fees in an untested market, but the information lets the promoter know something about your professionalism and methods you use to develop your audience.

Once you get in the habit of keeping the above records, you will begin to refer to the information automatically. Booking calls will become more conversational and you'll find yourself using these pertinent facts which continually boost your act's value. Your negotiations will be based on factual information rather than emotion. As you become more adept at this, you will find that you have some leverage in many of the venues where you regularly perform. As you establish your value in each new market, demand for your act will increase and booking the act will become easier. Good luck.

This is a great time to take advantage of a year-end review for tax purposes and do some very strategic planning for the next touring season. Not only will you reap the benefits this year, but you'll jump-start your planning for next year as well. Good luck!

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

HOW PERFORMERS CAN FLUB THE INTERVIEW... BUT DON'T LAUGH

by Les Vogt, Entertainment Consultant

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When being considered for an "entertainment" position of any kind, the interview is often the determining factor. Performers will sometimes give the strangest answers to an interviewer's questions. The blunders being made are simply amazing...

So how does a manager or entertainment buyer handle a performer who mentions that they're not all that keen on working too hard? Or what's the proper response when an applicant is 25 minutes late for a follow-up interview, slouches back in his chair and then gives you an attitude when reminded about his tardiness? Well, for starters the manager or buyer should at least try and keep a straight face (both of these responses actually happened) and try to avoid the urge to burst out laughing. After all, that would be totally unprofessional.

According to my unofficial survey, most performers looking for work strive to make a favorable impression with managers and buyers during an audition, but many tend to blow it big time during the interview segment. Some of the most inappropriate comments made to me over the years are as follows...

- an applicant once stated confidently that there wasn't anything I could tell him that he didn't already know.
- one prospect told me all of the reasons he shouldn't be hired.
- a band leader applied for a job and when asked what he might not like about the job, he said "playing requests for the people."
- another candidate said he wasn't really that interested in the job, but he liked that the performing hours were short.

Dennis Compo, a long-time associate and entertainment consultant said that he wasn't surprised by my results. "I interview people on a daily basis and it amazes me how many inappropriate comments or blunders are made" said Compo who interviews about 10 performers every week for a variety of job opportunities. "I am seeing it across the board. It's not specific to any one category and it's all ages. I've had an individual say that he would prefer a job offer from a competitor."

Like other entertainment consultants and party planners, Compo says the job interview is crucial for an applicant because who you are can sometimes be more important than what you can do. "They should prepare for questions they are likely to be asked, for example, what do you know about the venue or company hiring you? Another common mistake is to speak negatively about a previous employer or venue. Speak only about the positive aspects of the proposed job on the table... the one you're so eagerly looking forward to."

Compo says that he believes it's best to listen respectfully to applicants when the interview is going badly and then take them aside later and offer some pointers for future interviews. "I think we should share that information with them and give them feedback," he said. "But no matter how poorly the candidate does, don't laugh," he adds.

Another recruitment specialist that I know disagrees about offering pointers to an applicant who does poorly on an interview. "That's not my role" she suggests.

Here are a few of my interview tips to help nudge you in the right direction...

Research the job opportunity

Find out as much as you can about the hiring company and/or the gig before the audition and interview. Check out their website and, if possible, talk to someone who has played for the company or the venue in the past.

Prepare intelligent questions

Once you've done your research, come up with some questions of your own to ask about the gig and the company. Incorporating some company related dialogue from the stage is always a good selling point and questions along this line are always received positively.

Listen

Pay close attention to the interviewer. To be a good listener you need to focus your full attention on the speaker and try to avoid thinking about what you will say next. Maintain eye contact and use non-verbal clues such as nodding, to show interest in what he or she is saying. Ask questions whenever anything is unclear.

Keep your answers brief

Your responses should be focused and concise. It's ok to think for a moment before answering... in fact it can make your answer seem more thoughtful. Avoid any further "chatter" beyond the direct answer. Natural pauses allow the interviewer to absorb what you have said.

Go easy on the "charm"

Although you want to appear personable, don't overdo it. Concentrate on showing that you have the ability to do the job at hand. If you work too hard at "winning over" the interviewer, it can come off as insincere.

Be yourself

Let your personality shine through... if you've got a "kooky" side (and it isn't over the top) don't suppress it entirely... let your interviewer get to know you.

Show initiative

If the interview goes well and you want the job, you might offer to solve a problem by providing the sound & lighting equipment or playing an extra dance set to further accommodate the buyer's needs.

Bring publicity material

Leave a professional promo package with the interviewer. Be sure and include something to remember you... a DVD and/or a CD plus a few newspaper reviews that highlight your most notable past performances. Perhaps a letter of reference from a comparable company function would be appropriate?

In closing, I would suggest that most interviewers are generally aware of a performer's skill set before the interview takes place. But the interview allows the buyer to become more acquainted with the person behind the talent... a glimpse into a candidate's candor, professionalism and personality, which can often be the deciding factors one way or the other. Don't blow your opportunity.

Les Vogt was the lead singer in Vancouver's very first rock 'n' roll recording band... "The Prowlers" who gained local popularity by playing "live" on the "Owl Prowl" radio program. He shared the stage with Bill Haley... Gene Vincent... Buddy Knox... Eddie Cochran... Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis. Les is now an independent producer, promoter and entertainment consultant. Contact: www.members.shaw.ca/lesvogt lesvogt@shaw.ca

AUDITION AND INTERVIEW COMPLETE BUT NO REPLY... WHAT DO I DO NOW?

by Les Vogt, Entertainment Consultant
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I have recently received a lot of e-mails from performers in the middle of the waiting game, sitting in that no man's land between a good audition and follow-up interview without any indication as to whether or not they were accepted by that big-time agent or got that really great gig they applied for.

The most common question... should I take another job offer while waiting for the gig I really want? The answer is yes. Don't take yourself out of the running for other opportunities until you've actually landed the job... and that means receiving an acceptable memorandum of understanding or a signed contract.

Some other frequently asked questions are...

Q. How soon after the interview is OK to follow up?

A. Send a thank you letter (e-mail is generally fine) within two days. Be sure and have the correct names and titles (and spelling) of the interviewer... thank them for their time and state clearly that you want the job and are excited about the opportunity. Simply showing interest and enthusiasm is a step nervous applicants often overlook. If you haven't heard back within a week, follow-up with a "just checking in" phone call.

Q. I have called back twice and was told that things look good but we are still in the decision process. That was two weeks ago and I still haven't heard back. Can I call again without seeming desperate?

A. Absolutely... it's appropriate to follow up every 10 days or so. Don't seem impatient. Simply say you are checking in, wondering what the status is and again, confirm your interest in the gig.

Q. The person who interviewed me was very casual, using slang and being very familiar. Should I be just as casual in return?

A. Let the interviewer set the tone for your conversations, stopping short of swearing or anything that makes you uncomfortable. Be more formal in letters and e-mails, which may be forwarded to other people and since you want to be seen as professional and appropriate.

The tone of these initial conversations provides an insight into an organization's method of operation. Is their level of professionalism (or lack thereof) comfortable? Can you imagine living with a steady diet of it down the road? Use the experience of this preliminary process to form your ultimate decision as to whether or not you want to accept their opportunity.

Q. *I didn't get the gig and I want to know why. Can I call and ask why I didn't get the job?*

A. Yes, but proceed with caution. Perhaps the more appropriate approach would be "How can I improve my presentation and become a better candidate in the future?" In the best case scenario, you will receive tips to strengthen your chances for future opportunities.

If you're lucky enough to get some honest feedback, accept it graciously, even if you don't agree with all of it. Be careful not to burn any bridges by pushing too hard, seeming indignant and arrogant or arguing the points of disagreement. Even when you don't get the gig, the process is not only a learning experience but a networking opportunity. Don't blow it!

Les Vogt was the lead singer in Vancouver's very first rock 'n' roll recording band... "The Prowlers" who gained local popularity by playing "live" on the "Owl Prowl" radio program. He shared the stage with Bill Haley... Gene Vincent... Buddy Knox... Eddie Cochran... Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis. Les is now an independent producer, promoter and entertainment consultant. Contact: www.members.shaw.ca/lesvogt lesvogt@shaw.ca

HOW TO USE THE RIGHT "FOLLOW-UP" TO BOOK THE GIG OF YOUR DREAMS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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You've chosen your touring market and selected the right venue and now it has been a week, maybe two and the club booker is keeping you dangling. You know you could do well in this venue and you really think it will work. You are so ready to play at this club yet the booker won't make a commitment. Time marches on, booking opportunities slip away, adequate promotion time dwindles and still you wait. How long is too long to wait for a gig commitment?

This is a challenging question that must be tackled each time you book a tour. Becoming emotionally attached and overly invested in landing a gig at one specific venue could be detrimental to your overall touring strategy. Even though certain clubs are important to play when making a push to the next level or attempting to gain media attention, you need a back-up plan in case that club is unwilling to work with you on your schedule. Not all cities have a variety of clubs suitable for your act. In most cases you may be lucky to find one. As you consider tour routing, travel distances and likely new markets to include in the tour plans, attachment to playing a specific club occurs often and we all fall into the trap. Here are some tips to help you avoid becoming overly invested in venue selection.

Use deadlines

Timing is an important factor to consider as you launch your booking campaign. Assuming you allow ample time to book your dates, (booking time frames are directly related to the type of performance venue being booked, clubs book ahead 6-12 weeks), assign deadlines to each venue attempted. The further out you begin your booking campaign, the more flexibility you have waiting for a commitment. Prepare yourself to move on by setting a timeline for each venue and state that deadline up front to the venue booker. For example, "I need to complete my booking by October 1 for this leg of the tour, if you could get back to me by September 19, I would appreciate it." Or you may want to be less forthcoming and simply say, "I need to hear back from you by September 19." Once the deadline is stated, there is less emotional attachment to the situation. You can take action when the deadline arrives if you haven't heard from the booker by making one last call for confirmation and if they say, "no," then move on to another prospect. Before hanging up, remember to leave an opening for future dates. If you know that you'll be touring through the area later that year, mention the time frame and suggest they place a hold on a future date. Now the plan is laid out for you before you even get close to panic time and have to begin scrambling to find a replacement date should this one not come through.

As you attempt to get your gigs reviewed, invite the music critic especially when you open for someone better known. They are very likely to have interest in seeing the main act, but your invitation just might get them there early enough to finally catch your show. Again, as you keep your media contacts informed about upcoming gigs, they may eventually accept one of your invitations.

The guest list

Once you've offered the invitation, make sure to have their name on your guest list. If your contact actually comes to the gig and finds they have to pay to get in, they may very well turn around and leave. The club may only offer you a few guest slots so plan your invitations wisely to accommodate everyone important to you. Don't offer more invites than are stated in your contract. That's irresponsible, unprofessional and shows a lack of respect for the club and demonstrates that you don't read your contracts. If you want to invite additional guests and you've reached your comp limit, you can check with the club booker and ask if your guest list could be expanded to accommodate a few more. If that is not possible you could offer to buy the tickets for your important guests if they show up. It won't matter to the guest how they get their tickets as long as they don't have to pay for them. Let your intended guests know that their name is either on a guest list at the door or that tickets are waiting for them at the box office under their name as your guest.

Plan alternatives

While researching potential gigs, gather information on multiple venues in the area. Begin preliminary contact with other venues that may prove valuable at some point. If there are larger venues in the area that you are really not ready to play yet, it doesn't hurt to begin contacting them simply to get your name in front of the booker. Ask which acts are booked around the time you are planning your tour. Perhaps there is an opening slot that your act could fill. If they already have your information and you've begun talks with the booker, calling these other venues when your choice gig falls through, won't seem like a desperate act, but simply a follow-up call with your new availability. Having back-up alternatives places you in a pro-active position rather than a reactive one. Activating a contingency plan becomes part of your routine instead of an act of urgency.

When touring to cities with only a few venues or even one suitable venue, find nearby towns that could also be included in the routing without adding extended distances to the tour. Similarly, explore alternative venue types such as colleges, organizations, city or corporate events to add to the possibility of choices, increase your income and avoid an off night draining your travel budget.

Another benefit of having multiple venue options is to prevent needing to accept a gig when the terms are unacceptable. For instance, the gig you've been waiting for actually comes through. The booker offers the date, but the terms are unfavorable. You have the option of turning down the date if you have alternatives. When you stake your hopes on a single venue, then you have placed yourself in the position of having to accept the date or have nothing. As time passes and you become more desperate to fill the date, accepting the unacceptable may be necessary. Be careful not to set precedence for future negotiations with this booker. If they were able to wear you down by letting the time run out this time, they may use that tactic with you on future dates. The inadequate terms under which they booked your act this time, may set the standard for future bookings and make it very difficult for you to raise those standards.

I've often heard stories of frustration from artists who plan their tours with one venue in mind. They focus all of their attention on landing the gig at that one venue. Time passes and they are upset by the lack of response coming from the booker. At some point after your third call, you must heed the message the booker is sending by not returning any of your calls. You need to either move on to other venues or change your approach and try a new contact method. Perhaps you're leaving messages on a line that doesn't go directly to the booker, cross check your numbers with other directories to be sure. Ask other acts that have played the club for their contact number. Plan your options in advance. When I was booking my acts, if I hadn't heard back from someone within four days to a week, I'd contact them again by placing another call or by e-mail or fax. I try to maximize the possibility of reaching them by expanding the methods of contact without it seeming like a barrage of incoming messages. Some bookers have their preferred method of being contacted, try to adhere to it.

However you manage your booking campaign, be pro-active by planning your strategy in advance. Set deadlines and give yourself options. Your tours will come together with less frustration and greater efficiency. Good luck.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY BOOK FOLLOW-UP GIGS WITH CLUB OWNERS AND BOOKERS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Keeping your band on the road gigging is a constant challenge for any artist. As a self-managed, self-booking artist, you need to be even more diligent in your attempts to book tour dates. In your efforts to build a loyal following in specific markets, it is important to book return dates at venues you've already played. There is no better time to begin negotiating a return date as at the time you are settling the current date.

Before heading to the room where you will settle the night with the club's manager, make sure you have your tour calendar with you along with your current contract. You want to have a copy of your contract to make sure the actual settlement matches the contract figures. This also gives you a chance to write all the pertinent information about that night's gig right on the contract, such as how many seats were sold, how many of your comps actually showed up and if you have the information then, how you did in merchandise sales. Next, write the name of the person settling the show if it is not the person with whom you originally booked the date.

After you finalize the settlement, you now have current information available about this date to use as leverage to open a discussion about booking a return date. Hopefully everything went well and everyone's expectations were met or were surpassed. If this was your first time in the venue and you did some business, then the club might be more enthusiastic about helping to build your following by bringing you back soon. As you look at your calendar, begin making a few suggestions about convenient future dates. This is a great time to ask who they've got coming up that might work for you to open the show and get in front of a larger audience. The person just saw you perform, they may be more eager to think about placing you in front of some main acts they booked. Even if the person settling the show is not the person who books the talent, beginning this discussion with them captures their enthusiasm for the gig just played. Mention that you'll be calling the booker in a day or two and it would be great if the person with whom you are settling could pass along comments about how well the show went that night.

While you have their attention, you might ask how they felt about the show. Now that you know the venue a little better having just played it, perhaps you have some additional ideas on how you can work together to boost some area publicity for your next time in. If you demonstrate your enthusiasm for returning, it is infectious. If you don't have these discussions about future gigs right then, everyone's excitement about the evening will dwindle as they are busied with the next night's gig and the next artist coming in. Capture the moment while your show's memories are still hot.

If the person who settles the date actually is the booker, then you have an even greater chance of at least getting a hold on a date or two. The booker would have a much keener sense of how the upcoming calendar is shaping up. They would know where you might fit in or who might be the perfect match for you to be the opener. They may not actually book the date right then, but there is a good chance you might be able to consider a few specific dates, get holds on them and then when you call back you beginning your conversation in a much better place with some momentum behind the call. There is greater likelihood that you will finalize a return date much sooner by initiating the discussions while at settlement.

What happens when you wait? Most artists get involved with their travel and the current touring schedule. They may not call the venue for a return date until the tour is over and the band is home. This loses the impact and the immediacy of opening the discussions on the night of your last show at the club. Capture the excitement of a good gig. Wouldn't it be great to return from a tour and all the calls you have to make are simply ones confirming most of the next tours dates? This would be fabulous in a perfect world. You will probably have to do some juggling of dates, a number of callbacks, but the essential question of whether or not they want you back will have already been answered. Now finalizing the right date is all that is left. The really hard part was taken care of the night of the gig. Give a try, good luck.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED.

She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

ATTENDING BOOKING CONFERENCES

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Booking conferences seem to be cropping up in every state during all times of the year. I thought I would offer some tips on how to approach attending a large booking conference.

Let me make a few distinctions first. Among the many varieties of conferences one may attend, some are geared toward bookings, (agents and artists connecting with promoters and club bookers) and other conferences are more media events where an artist may connect with prospective agents, managers, record labels and create a media buzz about their act. Promoters do attend these media events as well and there is always potential for getting gigs, but much less so than at a conference specifically set up for promoters to see new talent. I would like to discuss the booking conference and specifically address how to maximize your showcasing efforts when you have been selected to showcase. In other articles I talk about how to benefit from the exhibit hall, attending workshops and networking techniques.

Set goals

Before planning to attend any conference, it is best to set some career goals or review your long-term goals and marketing plans that you may have previously established. Conferences cost money, so it is important to select the most appropriate conferences based upon your career goals for the upcoming two years. If you want to expand your touring in a specific region, select a conference that opens doors to that region. Perhaps you are ready for national attention, then set your sights on some of the larger, national conferences. Avoid attending a conference that you are not ready to attend. Choose the conference that will offer you opportunities to jump to the next logical level in your career, not leap to a level for which you are unprepared.

Here are some examples of specific career goals as they relate to selecting the appropriate conference.

1. Build a local following by attending conferences. Even though attendees come from all over the country, there will be a concentration of venues, bands, managers, agents and media from the local region. All styles of music are represented.

2. Build a national following: Attend SXSW in Austin, TX (www.sxsw.com) held in mid-March each year. This conference has grown over the years and attracts promoters, media, managers, agents, film industry, recording industry from all over the country and Canada as well as some international attendees. If your goal is to create a national buzz as you look for management, record labels and stir up some major media attention, this may be the right conference for you. This is a very large conference and one can easily get lost in the crowd if you are not prepared to make a big splash and invest in some promotion for the conference.

Some conferences are international, some genre specific, some are event specific. It is likely that you will find a number of conferences right for your next career move.

Once you are confident in your conference selection, consider applying for a showcase slot. Some conferences select their showcasing talent by a jury selection committee and others work on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is an application fee and a showcase fee. Along with the officially juried showcases, many conferences also have opportunities to self-produce your own showcase in either designated rooms which you must rent or in rooms or venues of your own selection and at your own cost.

The official showcases sponsored by the conference get major promotion from the conference and are most often attended by the greatest number of attendees. Depending on the conference set-up, independently promoted showcases tend to attract a great deal of attention when extensively promoted. Creating a buzz about your showcase is key to drawing the attention of those you desire to see your act. There is a lot of competition, with multiple showcases happening simultaneously. Each showcasing artist is vying for the attention of many of the same people.

Key Elements to Successful Showcasing

It is important to make yourself stand out in some unique way: Ask yourself, "What is unique about my act?" Emphasize that aspect in all of your promotional material, during the show and after the show with every follow-up contact.

Advance promotional campaign

Some conferences send registered attendees an advance attendee list. Use this list to send e-mail or printed invitations to your showcase to those you have identified as people you want to know about the act, promoters, agents, managers, labels, media. Make pre-conference phone calls to personally invite specific people. Contact local media in the conference town and pitch them a story—you'll need a hook to attract local media, can you find one? Pre-conference contact is so important if you are trying to create interest prior to everyone's arrival at the conference site. Once people arrive, there will be an inundation of flyers and promotional materials for every act's event. Concentrate your efforts on setting up meetings and issuing personal invitation prior to the conference.

Promotional campaign at the event

Check over the official conference attendee list. Identify people who you have previously contacted and those who are new in the official list. Create attractive flyers to post in designated areas around the conference. There will be thousands of similar flyers so make sure yours is graphically attractive and readable from a distance. If there is a major event that most conference goers will attend, check for permission to place table tents on tables or seats promoting your showcase. So many acts will be attempting similar promotion campaigns so that the information about showcasing events begins to become diluted. It is important to make personal contact, hand each person a clever, uniquely designed, invitation/reminder of your showcase. Find a promotional item that is different from the general flyer or paper sign. At one conference, an artist had a remote control blimp with their name on the sides. He floated the balloon over the heads of the attendees as they gathered in lounges, bars, dining areas and other general meeting places. He definitely attracted attention. Be creative - competition is fierce!

Your showcase

As you plan for the actual showcase keep the following in mind:

1. Know exactly how long your set can be. Some conferences allot very short times, like 15 or 20 minutes - some give you 45 or 60 minutes.
2. Plan to perform material that is the most familiar to you. You are under enough pressure when showcasing, this is not the time to try new material or take chances. You want to be impressive.
3. Time your set, music and talk.
4. Rehearse your set many times until it is second nature.
5. If you are offered a sound check, take it and use every minute to make sound and lights work for you. When you are using a sound company provided by the conference, find out contact names prior to the event and forward all sound and light plots ahead of time. Be in touch with the engineer and review your specific sound requirements to understand what will be provided and what you must bring to avoid surprises when you arrive. In situations when you are able to provide your own sound, arrive in plenty of time to set up and sound check.
6. With so many acts rotating on and off-stage, showcasing can be unnerving and sometimes frustrating when things don't go as planned. If you are solid in your performance, even if the sound and light go bad, stay cool and do the best show you know how. The audience appreciates that and sympathizes and such situations can often work in your favor when you remain in control.
7. You never know who might be in the audience, no matter how many people show up to your showcase. The two who attended, could be the one's to offer you some deal. Show them what you're made of!
8. Finally, if there is a chance to meet people after the showcase, get out there and shake some hands, have plenty of cards ready or offer promotional packets or CDs if you have them.

Having a successful showcase can be a major career boost. Attracting the attention of movers in your field can change your life. It can also simply be a well-done showcase that caught the attention of some new people and not provide any monumental changes immediately. For the most part, showcases and conference events require consistent follow-up after the event with contacts you made during the conference. The impact made may not be realized right away. If you don't come away with the deal you were hoping for or get the number of dates you were planning, don't be discouraged. Act by keeping in touch with those you met after the conference is over to move toward your desired goals. My experience has been that some connections may take a number of years to result in significant deals or bookings.

For those of you who are ready to take a serious step toward the next level in your career, attending and showcasing at appropriate conferences could be the boost you were seeking. Good luck.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED.

She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

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5. CONTRACTS

PREPARING A PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT CONTRACT

by Les Vogt, Entertainment Consultant
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Every dollar earned in the entertainment business is the product of a negotiated contract. That contract should clearly reflect the engagement details confirmed through previous discussions with the purchaser...

Engagement contracts should be kept as simple as possible... together with a basic contract rider for additional details. In addition, it never hurts to review and improve the contract you've been using for years. The object is clarity rather than bargaining strength on either the Performer or Purchaser's side. The goal is to lay out the deal so everyone is on the same page. The simpler a contract is... the more likely it is that a purchaser will agree to sign it.

In some situations, a handshake or verbal agreement is quite acceptable... it's legal, but difficult to enforce. People who think they don't need contracts must either have a well known reputation or really trust the people they're dealing with. But things change and misunderstandings happen and a contract protects both parties. Of course, the more money that is involved, the more need for a contract. If you are performing as a hobby, then you may not need a contract, but if it's your business... you should have one. If you haven't prepared your own contract before, it can be intimidating to ask someone to sign it, but the other party will actually respect your professionalism by doing so and the worst that can happen is they won't sign it. If they don't, it's usually because the contract is too one sided or perhaps even unfair.

There is no perfect contract for every situation and there are too many clauses to touch on in this article. A common practice is to make a brief standard contract and attach a rider for specific needs and requirements. Here are some important considerations...

Contract header

Always display your name, address and telephone number clearly at the top of your contract form. It is important that your client knows where to return the signed contract. Be sure all your computerized forms contain the correct address.

Date, Time, Compensation & Signature by BOTH parties In some cases, this is all you'll need... but, more information is always better.

Definition of performance

Both parties should know what is expected for a "perform-ance." Provide a clear and concise description of the nature of the performance, the number of musicians and singers, including set length, set breaks and anything else unique to the performance.

Location, date & time

This seems like a no-brainer, but I have heard horror stories about performers showing up on the wrong day, two performers booked for the same date... enough said. Length of performance can be described here or in the definition.

Compensation

It should be clear whether the fee is a fixed amount (guarantee) or a percentage of door or revenues or both. Include when payment will be made, to whom, how and any deposits as well. Be very clear here as to payment method and who specifically receives it. For example, if the deposit goes to the agent and the remainder to the performer, it should be in the contract. If payment is based on a percentage of the door, both parties should have the right to be present in the box office and have access to box office records or gross receipts. When percentages are involved, the contract should specify ticket prices and how many complimentary tickets are permitted.

Recording, reproduction, transmission & photography

This is usually the artist's right to grant specific permission, but press and publicity is a good thing. So, flexibility is the key. It is common for the Purchaser to have the right to use the Performer's name and likeness in advertising and promotion, so always make sure the Purchaser has the appropriate promotional materials. It will benefit you greatly.

Right to sell merchandise on premises

For smaller venues and engagements, this right is usually the performer's... because this revenue can often form a large part of the performer's compensation. But for larger venues, there will likely be specific terms for merchandise sales and the venue may have their own people to sell it.

Meals, transportation & lodging

This usually depends on the type of performance. Corporate and Promoter gigs usually cover most everything, but for a local public venue gig, the benefits can be less gratuitous. Guest lists, passes, dressing rooms and other hospitalities will vary or, in some cases, be non-existent.

Sound & production

It should be clarified who supplies sound & lights and specifically what equipment is to be provided. All too often a performance is ruined by improper sound production... so it is always beneficial for the performer to designate their own representative to control sound equipment whenever possible. If the Buyer is providing Lights & Sound, a suggested equipment list should be part of an attached rider.

Acts of God

A specific course of action for these eventualities, such as weather or illness, is needed to protect both parties. A definitive clause should be included.

Cancellation

There are a number of ways this is handled and again, it depends on the gig. Usually, if there is enough notice, neither party is penalized. It's not supposed to happen... but, sometimes it does. Again, it helps to be clear and specify what happens if either party cancels or reschedules the engagement.

Permits, licenses and/or royalties

It is customary for these to be covered by the Purchaser. A simple concert performance only requires that the promoter or venue pay a compulsory (standard) royalty for use of copyrighted material. However, it doesn't hurt to clearly state who is responsible for payment of these fees.

Specific requirements/restrictions

There may be certain requirements of the Performer or the Purchaser... such as thanking a sponsor, announcing the performer, attire or language at corporate or private gigs etc.

Agent terms

Often the Agent is the Seller and the agent may have a separate agreement (as the Purchaser) with the performer. Or the contract is directly between the Performer and the Client and in this case, the agent's compensation should be clarified in the contract, along with the obligations (if any) of the agent.

Insurance & security

Personal liability insurance and property insurance are usually the responsibility of the Purchaser or the Venue. Although not often included in a contract, the performer should be certain they are held harmless from any public liability and should have their own insurance against damage or theft of personal equipment.

There are numerous other clauses that can (and sometimes should) be included, but the above mentioned are the most common. I would recommend that you look at a variety of contracts and decide which clauses best apply to your situation. I also welcome you to request my sample contract... but only with the awareness that NEITHER the sample contract NOR the opinions in this article constitute legal advice.

Les Vogt was the lead singer in Vancouver's very first rock 'n' roll recording band... "The Prowlers" who gained local popularity by playing "live" on the "Owl Prowl" radio program. He shared the stage with Bill Haley... Gene Vincent... Buddy Knox... Eddie Cochran... Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis. Les is now an independent producer, promoter and entertainment consultant. Contact: www.members.shaw.ca/lesvogt lesvogt@shaw.ca

THE RIGHT DOCUMENTS FOR BOOKING GIGS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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You've probably read numerous articles espousing the benefits of having a written contract for all of your gigs. You might have even experienced one of those moments when you wish you had had a written contract for that one gig you did for your friend, who just didn't have the agreed upon amount money at the end of the night. Never mind — you are wiser now.

Below is a listing with explanation of a variety of types of contract agreements and supplemental documents that can be used when booking your gigs.

Letter of confirmation

There are those times when a formal performance contract may be inappropriate or unnecessary. This type of document is friendly, yet describes the details of the booking agreement fully. It's written in paragraph, letter format and it includes the essentials such as performance time, date, place, producer, artist, who provides what and who is responsible for each item included. This type of letter may be used with organizations and individuals unaccustomed to music business industry standards, such as charities and private parties, for example. The key here is to have a written record of all the important details and for each party to have a signed copy.

Performance contract- non-union

A performance contract includes the same information as a letter of confirmation except that it is written using legal art language or legalese. Rather than business letter paragraphs, the contract has numbered paragraphs and is more formal. If you work in clubs, universities and concert halls or for concert promoters, a performance contract is recommended. As you prepare your own contract, check with an entertainment lawyer to make sure it includes the necessary clauses appropriate for your state.

You can find sample contracts that can be adapted to your needs in a variety of places. I have a set of forms in my book and available by e-mail in PDF format from my website. There are numerous books now available that have ready-to-use contract forms. You'll find a short list at the end of this article. Most of these books are available on Amazon.com in the music business category.

Performance contract-union

The AFM, American Federation of Musicians has a specific contract that their members ought to use. The AFM contract requires information that allows their members to credit their Union pension plans and it meets specific union stipulations depending on the type of music and area in which you perform. If you perform on radio and television, you may be a member of AFTRA, American Film Television and Radio Artists Union. AFTRA artists are required to use the AFTRA contract when doing radio and television performances.

Performance contract rider

The purpose of including this document is to help define exactly what is necessary to enable the artist to present their best performance. It serves as an extension of the Performance Contract to aid the promoter in taking care of all the details. As such, artists should be mindful when preparing their Contract Riders to include only those necessities that enhance the performance. Many club owners and promoters scrutinize Contract Riders and cross out unnecessary items that serve only to inflate their budget and take undue advantage of the promoter. Some often cross out the entire contract rider considering it frivolous and inconsequential to the main contract. Be considerate and thoughtful of your real needs.

Technical rider

This document details the artist's sound, lighting and stage requirements. It should be attached to the performance contract with instructions to have copies distributed to the appropriate technical personnel at the venue.

Stage plot

It is a detailed layout of the stage with all the sound equipment and instruments positioned. The stage plot should accompany the Technical Rider.

Lighting plot

This diagram describes the type and placement of lighting that best highlights the performance. It may include song lists and lighting cues.

Hospitality rider

This describes the artist's food, housing and travel requirements. This is the place to list dietary restrictions and necessities when meals are provided.

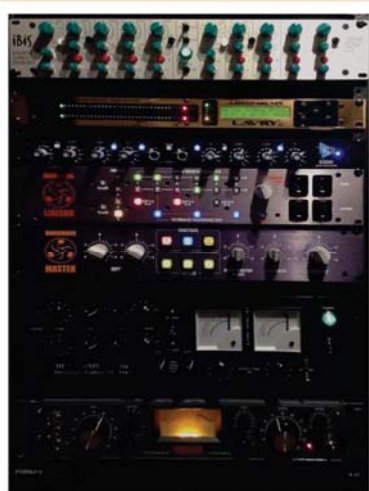
In most club bookings, a simple performance contract will due. As you begin to work with promoters or perform in larger clubs and concert halls, some of these other documents will be useful and should be included each time you issue a contract. Remember to put it in writing. Good luck.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Jeri has released a 3-hour seminar on CD-ROM, Marketing Your Act. The Seminar is set up in 5 modules with information about Marketing, Creating Effective Promotional Materials, How To Access the Media, A Marketing Template and Niche Marketing. No expensive conferences to attend-learn at your convenience to boost your career. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com



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6. COLLEGE GIGS

WHAT IS NACA?

by Fran Snyder, Concerts in Your Home
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The National Association of Campus Activities, established in 1960, is a non-profit organization that puts on regional conferences where music acts, comedians, lecturers and other entertainers showcase in front of campus activities programmers from around the country. There are 1200 member colleges and 600 associate members (talent or agent) which makes NACA the largest organization of its kind.

Acts like Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Suzanne Vega and Toad the Wet Sprocket have all used NACA and the college market as a stepping-stone to success. Comedians also thrive on this market, which has helped the careers of Carrot Top, Jay Leno, Sinbad and many others.

The organization covers the entire U.S. and is divided into 11 regions (Southeast, New England, East Coast, Upper Midwest etc.). Each region puts on one or two conferences per year, most of them during the fall semester and lasting two to four days. Depending on the size of the region, delegates (students) from 35 to several hundred schools will attend in order to check out 30 to 60 performers who have been selected to showcase.

Membership

To participate at these conferences, you must first become a NACA member. There are two membership options in NACA. You can be a regional associate member (one region only) for \$265/year or for the price of two regions (\$530/year) you can be a national associate member, operating in any or all regions of NACA. An artist can avoid these fees by getting an agent who is already a member. More on this later.

Showcasing

The best way to get gigs on the college circuit is to showcase at the regional conferences. There are several different types of showcases that take place during a NACA conference weekend. Music acts perform at either Main Stage (for bands or name acts) Showcases or Club (for solo acts and small bands) Showcases. These showcases feature four to six acts with one act (usually a comedian) taking the role of emcee. Each performer gets 20 minutes on a stage with good sound, lighting and crew, in front of an audience that can range from 100 to 1500 people.

Getting a showcase

You must submit a showcase application for each conference that you wish to showcase. You or your agent fills out extensive forms and provides a 3-minute sample (video, cassette or CD) along with some basic promotional materials. Showcase application deadlines can be up to six months in advance of the conference and acts are notified months before the conference takes place. It costs \$30 per application and hundreds of acts compete for the coveted showcase slots. If you are selected to showcase, you will have to pay an additional \$200 for the privilege. Pay to play? Absolutely. Some of these colleges have tens of thousands of dollars to spend each year on campus entertainment and cultural programs. These colleges send a group of students to their region's conferences to choose which acts and programs will receive that money. A successful showcase can lead to more than \$10,000 of income for a club act and even more for a main stage act.

Gigs

Colleges need entertainment for weekly and monthly events, orientation week, homecoming etc. Their entertainment needs are very seasonal, with little or no work during summer and winter break. They use all styles of music, though pop and rock acts seem to fit the bill most often. Some of these acts perform strictly original material but most mix in some, if not tons, of covers.

The venues and audiences for these shows can vary greatly. Concerts are sometimes held in beautiful auditoriums with hundreds of people in attendance and some "nooners" take place in dingy cafeterias at lunch time with half the audience facing the other way.

It's not necessarily glamorous, but the money is definitely better than in nightclubs. Music groups and solo acts usually perform 75 minutes and gross \$500-1200 (solo) and up to \$3000 for bands. Schools also typically pay for one night's lodging at a decent hotel and will supply one meal before or after the show. Performer's pay for their transportation and all other travel expenses.

Marketplace exhibit halls

Every conference has a central exhibit hall where agents and artists meet their prospective buyers. Each talent agency or self-represented artist with a showcase must purchase an exhibit booth and this is the only place where they can distribute their promotional materials during the conference. Many agencies set up a television and VCR to play their artist's videos and bring stacks of brochures and CDs to give away.

Marketplace usually takes place after each round of showcasing and students immediately flock to the booths representing the acts that just showcased. After a "hit" showcase, it is not unusual to see thirty or more people gathered at a performer's booth. Students line up to meet the act and to talk to his/her agent. They will also pick up some promotional materials to bring back to their campus.

CO-OP - possibly the best part of NACA.

Performers and agents are expected to encourage schools to "block" dates together. In other words, if several schools from a region are interested in the same act, there is a standard money incentive for them to "co-operate." They do this by booking the act and scheduling each school's show to occur during the same week. This cuts down on travel costs for the artists and these savings can be passed on to the schools.

For example: If one school in Iowa wants to book me as a solo act, my price is \$1000. However, if they can form a block with two other schools in their region, so that I can perform at all three schools within a five day period (a 3 of 5 block,) my price drops to \$850 per school. Finally, if many schools in one region want to book me, my agent will try to form a 5 of 7 block and each school will get me at the bargain rate of \$750. Some of these blocks will form during co-op sessions at the conference, but usually your agent has to follow up for weeks and months after the conference to make this happen.

To recap

One School: \$1000

3 of 5 (3 shows in 5 days or less) \$850 each

5 of 7 (5 shows in 7 days or less) \$750 each

This is a standard rate for "Club Showcase" acts and many "Main Stage Showcase" bands charge twice as much or more.

Booking gigs - agents vs self-representation

You thought nightclub owners were a nightmare! The campus activities department is usually run by a group of students who are supervised by a faculty advisor. These students usually have short, weekly office hours and sometimes don't show up at all for them. Furthermore, drastic changes in personnel happen every year if not every semester, so many of these programmers are inexperienced at booking and producing shows. Finally, most schools will not book a particular act or band more than once per year. That's a lot of keeping up to do for one act. When you receive your new long-distance phone bill and after a few of your press kits get lost or stolen, you start to think "hey, maybe having an agent would be cool." For me, it's the only way.

Agents on this market charge 20% off the top and earn every penny. They call schools year after year on behalf of many artists and they develop relationships with many of these colleges. In this business, as in others, relationships mean sales/gigs. And we know musicians aren't good at relationships!

Agents also bear the costs of membership (\$530+ per year,) costs of exhibit hall booths (\$300-500 per conference,) and the largest expense, telephone calls. Finally, a good agent makes you look like a pro. After all, "He's great" always sounds better than "I'm great."

How to get started

First, get some information from the source. You can reach NACA by phone at (803) 732-6222. The address is National Association of Campus Activities, 13 Harbison Way, Columbia SC 29212-3401. Their website, www.naca.org is also very helpful. Ask for information on how to join and a list of the agents that work on the market (available on the website).

Second, attend a conference. Ask NACA for the necessary credentials (day passes) to attend some showcases and some exhibit halls. See what you'll be competing with and ask yourself the following questions:

- *Are there acts similar to me/us that are having success on this market?*
- *Am I unique in some way that could serve this market?*
- *Would my show appeal to these college kids? (65%-75% of the decision makers are women)*
- *Can I put together promotional materials to be competitive in this market? (video, brochure, CD etc.)*
- *Do I have the patience to persist in this market if things don't take off quickly?*
- *Am I willing to travel long distances to perform?*
- *Can I be away from home for weeks at a time?*

If you can answer yes to most of these, talk to some agents. You can learn a lot by watching and listening to them work the exhibit hall marketplace. Ask them questions when they are not talking to clients. They usually have more acts than they can handle, but the smart ones will accept your promotional materials if you are not obnoxious. Some patient, persistent and polite follow up over the next few months (yes, months) will produce the best results.

Is there some other way?

There is a smaller, but growing organization that also serves this market. The Association for Promotion of Campus Activities (APCA), now in its fifth year, appeals to schools with smaller budgets due to the lower membership and delegate costs it charges. APCA's membership (200+ schools) is based largely in the southeast, but the organization plans to expand northward next year. For now, they have one annual conference in the spring. The next one takes place February 10th-13th in Charlotte, NC and will feature 55 showcasing acts.

APCA is owned and run by Eric Lambert "with the performer in mind." Although the conference is run much like a NACA conference, with showcases and exhibit halls, Mr. Lambert is proud to note that his conference leans towards original acts. He screens all tapes and CDs personally - up to twenty minutes of material per act, which "allows for a better understanding of the act." Compared with NACA's three-minute limit, it's hard not to agree. Here are some other differences between NACA and APCA, straight from the APCA website:

APCA exhibit hall booths come with a guaranteed showcase or booth demo opportunity or the applicant will be refunded all conference fees. Additionally, we charge no showcase submission fees and limit the number of booths in our exhibit halls to give associates a better opportunity to do business with school members attending. Any act wishing to showcase may send in their video and promotional materials so that they may be reviewed for showcase approval.

There are a few other differences to note. Yearly membership to this organization is \$99, but it actually costs more (\$1000 covers booth and showcase fees) to showcase at APCA. Last year 135 schools attended.

Visit their website at APCA.com. You can also reach them by phone at 800-681-5031 or by e-mail at apcamail@apca.com.

NACA and APCA are not exclusive organizations and many talent agencies use both to work the college market. While NACA is older and has more participating schools and performers, APCA is growing and is gaining respect as a reasonable alternative to NACA.

Summary

Many acts have taken off quickly with NACA. Acts like Christine Kane and Beth Wood each performed 50 shows during their first year in NACA. Several music acts perform over one hundred shows a year (do the math). However, it's a mistake to expect to make a lot of money right away. In the short run, you are more likely to spend a lot of money. Most acts take a while to fine tune their promotional materials and their showcasing skills. Furthermore, you have to be selected to showcase regularly and that process is equal parts effort and pot-luck. You never know what college students are looking for at the moment.

It took me a year and a half to get an agent. It took another year to get a showcase and another 6 months before I finally made a profit. In those first two years I spent over \$1000 in showcase fees, application fees and promotional materials. It's taken over three years for me to establish myself on this market.

Why bother?

Eventually these college gigs allowed me to profitably tour the country. Also, there is something about hitting the road that makes you feel like your career is going somewhere, too. People always seem to treat you a little better when they know you've come a long way.

With some additional work on your part, you can book some nightclubs and coffeehouses on the way to and from, as well as in between these college gigs. College shows are usually 75 minutes long so it's also feasible to perform two shows in a day. This, along with the better pay, has allowed me to work with backing musicians that I normally couldn't afford to take on the road.

The college market is not for everyone. But if you find yourself in the happy hour, smoky bar rut that I found myself in a few years ago (and last week), it's certainly worth looking into. The pay is better, the audiences are typically nicer and even if you don't become a NACA star overnight, a dozen or so gigs per semester can be a great kick-start for booking your first out-of-state tours.

Fran Snyder is a singer-songwriter based in Lawrence, KS, who is in love with doing house concerts. Fran created www.concertsinyourhome.com, a site dedicated to creating more opportunities for artists to perform "gigs where people listen." The site is free to use, but artists may join (\$25/year) to promote their act. The site also funds a national press campaign to increase the popularity of house concerts. Fran Snyder's music can be heard at www.fransnyder.com

NACA AND THE COLLEGE GIG HOW TO NAVIGATE THE EDUCATIONAL MARKET

by Will Morgan, Performer Magazine

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The college gig, in one respect, can be thought of as the generic store brand in the music industry supermarket - only a few people seem to be aware of it, despite its relative value. As a culture of advertising-inundated consumers, we instead reach for the big names on the shelf or for the purposes of this example, the principal venues with established reputations. And more often than not, especially if you're a musician, these items are beyond our means, financially and otherwise. Like any business, a musical career requires growing before we can expect to reap the rewards and a college gig can often be the answer as to where to begin.

For many artists, the college booking process seems to be one shrouded in mystery and understandably so. Schools do not share the same business mentality as standard venues and hosting concerts is only a small part of their ongoing effort to keep students content. Not knowing how to approach this unique niche of the touring market can be discouraging for artists. Yes, landing a college performance requires a methodology unfamiliar to many, but it is certainly a revenue source worth tapping into. And thankfully, there is a set of fairly well-established guidelines and channels that will enable you to make the most of eager students and deep pockets.

In effect, there are two standard avenues for getting a college gig. The first is the do-it-yourself method: direct solicitation with press, flyers, music and the like. The second is through cooperative agencies, the most predominant of which is easily the National Association for Campus Activities or NACA. The Association for Campus Activities (APCA) has also emerged as another helpful organization. So which plan of attack should you choose? The artists who have negotiated the process and the booking agents who understand the collegiate business mindset will quickly point to four important influencers in making the decision - money, reputation, attitude and entertainment value.

NACA, as its website notes, "links the higher education and entertainment communities in a business and learning partnership." In other words, the organization serves as a meeting ground for artists and colleges, thereby facilitating the booking process. Among NACA's offerings are the Artist Matching Service, Block Book It Now (an online service that allows neighboring colleges to view each others' schedules and book the same artists), and, perhaps most importantly, the Regional and National Conferences. Clearly, performance opportunities abound. Syd, a Boston-based singer/songwriter who estimates he has booked "a couple hundred" shows through NACA's service, refers to the organization half-jokingly as "musician's crack."

Understanding NACA

Joining NACA is costly, but it can also yield you an "astonishing amount of money," notes Syd. Those artists who decide against membership cite expenses as the main factor. An associate national membership (designed for companies doing business in the college market) costs \$632/year at press time. Membership provides access to all the organization's services and enables you to apply to both regional and national NACA conferences. Syd's college booking agent, George Hornick from Wally's World of Entertainment, affirms that conferences are the driving force for membership and are definitively the best way to book shows, especially if you land a showcase opportunity. Terri Mazurek of Peppermint Booking, whose roster includes Ellis, a Midwestern singer/songwriter who has had great success with NACA, echoes Hornick's sentiment: "If you showcase well, it is THE best way to get attention in the college market." And indeed, a little research will reveal just how lucrative one conference performance can be. Following Syd's very first showcase, he ended up scheduling 50 college dates that same day, all paying \$500 each. These results are not uncommon.

Be advised, though, that getting a showcase requires serious investment. To attend the conferences as an artist, you must first have a booth and pay the Campus Activities Marketplace fee. Then you must also pay the showcase application fee and, if selected to perform, you must pay a showcasing fee as well. Herein lies the financial trade-off that typifies NACA. Also keep in mind that showcasing slots are not reserved solely for musicians. College representatives are looking for acts that can entertain students, meaning comedians, magicians and other performance artists are also vying for coveted performance slots.

How to Succeed

Be personable and active. Even if you do not land a showcase, it can still be worthwhile to pay the booth fee and make an impression with your music if you have a positive demeanor. Not only does a certain amount of flexibility and a good attitude make you more pleasant to work with, but it will also confirm to prospective college buyers that you can interact well and potentially entertain an audience. This personal effort can have very tangible results, ie: increased bookings. Mazurek notes that "many students have heard of Ellis because ... they just met her at a conference and liked her," and points to the fact that for "about half of her bookings, the schools are calling me directly asking for her; she has a very large number of repeat bookings." Hornick mimics her comments, remarking "when it comes to somebody like Syd, his personality and his music have proven invaluable in the NACA eyes. To the students on program committees, they find that endearing." He continues, "Not only is he talented, but he can also keep a set of students entertained for a period of time. NACA is all about entertainment. Students want to be entertained. To some of them, a musical act is right there with the magician, the novelty etc." Syd agrees: "Everyone who's decent or charismatic I should say, will have success with it." In this respect, it becomes apparent how college gigs differ from standard venue performances, in that entertainment value and accessibility are paramount.

Consider an agent

The trick with student activities committees, college program boards and the like is that they are largely student-run, meaning personnel turnover occurs very frequently. Also, because they still have all their academic worries outside of booking entertainment, "it's not the most prioritizing thing in their life," as Hornick puts it. If you are a self-represented artist, trying to maintain relationships with one college, let alone hundreds, can be a job unto itself. Certain agents work specifically with colleges, making sure their relationships remain intact through all the transitions. Again, the conferences are prime territory for strengthening these bonds. Additionally, those agents that have clients with proven track records are very appealing to schools because they can then book not just one, but many acts through one contact.

Use NACA as a springboard

While college gigs can certainly pay well, they do not create the same benefits as a real venue performance. Take advantage of the fact that you have generated interest among a seriously buzz-driven community and aim for playing at a local venue next time around to draw paying fans. Mazurek warns, "if you don't follow up these shows with ticketed concerts at nearby venues, you then have a whole audience of folks who are now used to seeing you for free. They may not pay to see a show down the road." She continues, "there is a danger of becoming just a 'college artist' and the students may not take you as seriously. It is important to have a balance of college shows and ticketed club shows." Hornick concurs that "[artists] should use it to financially supplement their tour," but that having success in the college market shouldn't be the ultimate goal.

The Grassroots Option

Colleges are not bound in any way to book exclusively through NACA once they become members and if you can present them with a compelling package, you can have just as much luck as NACA-associated artists. Granted, this method requires significantly more grunt work. Choosing this process is where having an already established reputation can help, as name recognition will often move you to the top of the pile. You may also want to choose this path if you or your group might have trouble competing with the various novelty acts that go through NACA. In this case, you save on membership and showcasing fees by directly soliciting schools. When asked how she approaches colleges outside of NACA, Mazurek replies simply "lots and lots of calls to schools, keeping in touch and letting them know about open dates of our acts." Sending flyers and one-sheets is effective when followed-up on. Developing and maintaining an up-to-date list of college contacts will allow you to conduct mass mailings easily; there are various resources for gathering all this information (see the directory that follows). Allegedly, Dispatch, certainly one of the most ingenious groups when it came to grassroots work, made their now well-chronicled entrance into the school market by making a huge list of private schools and contacting each one.

Food for Thought

Both methods take a lot of work and a certain amount of money. Do not spring for either until you are sure you are ready and need to do so. Syd advises curious musicians to bide their time and establish a following prior to joining NACA. Also, in this digital age, industry insiders are beginning to notice changes to the standard formats of booking college shows. Mazurek highlights this shift: "[Conferences] seem to be somewhat less effective recently, with more student reps finding their artists via the internet [MySpace, artist sites etc.]. It used to be that a successful showcase would result in 40 to 50 bookings, but now it seems like 'success' is 20 bookings." Hornick agrees: "There's not as much co-op buying going on at conferences. Now, you're lucky to get a couple blocks." He concludes with an observation indicative, perhaps, of the whole college booking process, stating, "It is a long-term investment; you have to put in three years of sticking with it in order to get turn-around."

Will Morgan is a writer for Performer Magazine www.performermag.com will@performermag.com

A MUSICIAN'S ADVICE ABOUT THE COLLEGE MARKET

by Derek Sivers, CD Baby

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From 1995-1998 I made my full-time living playing at colleges. Got hired by over 350 schools for about \$300,000 (gross, not net) on the East coast (from Florida to Maine, as far west as Arkansas).

I'll try to put into one article, here, every bit of advice or wisdom I could share with my fellow musicians, from my experience. (Disclaimer: These are my opinions and observations from my unique experience only! Others may disagree).

Who does the hiring at colleges?

One thing to get straight: don't confuse college radio with college gigs. The kids that run college radio are the real music fans. The ones deeply into music for music's sake. But the ones with the big budgets for entertainment and activities are called the "Student Activities Office".

These are usually made up of the girls in pink sweaters who won the election for Class Treasurer in high school. (Think Reese Witherspoon in the movie "Election"). It's a very play-it-safe environment because they want everyone (yes every last person) to be happy, so they can get re-elected.

This means that the Student Activities Office wants to hire the most fun, safe, lively, crowd-pleasing entertainment possible. Whether it's a hypnotist, comedian, rubber sumo-wrestling suits, the guy that brings the exotic lizards, a famous talk-show host, hot-wax hands, a magician or musician - they just want entertainment.

When approaching them, you need to emphasize what a safe bet you are. Your marketing should be filled with testimonial quotes like: "One of the finest performances we've had here all year!" - the College of St. Angus. "...the crowd couldn't stop laughing at his lyrics!" - the Thirsty Whale. "A real joy to work with - we can't wait to have her back!" - Siberian Sunbathers' Convention.

Your bio should mention all the awards you've won and what big-mainstream-media sources have also recognized your talent.

It's not glamorous

Ask anyone who's done over a dozen college gigs without a big track record. You often play at lunchtime for a depressing cafeteria of stressed-out students who are trying to study and scowl at you for disturbing them. But at least you get paid afterwards. Some actual situations I've had:

Their contract said they had an adequate P.A. system but it turned out to be a tiny microphone that plugs into the wall for the principal to address all classrooms. (I did the gig anyway and sang into it). We drove 22 hours for a \$4500 gig in Arkansas, but they forgot we were coming, so we played to 8 people in a backyard in 40-degree weather (fingers numb) in a big echoey gymnasium, having to set up next to the noisy cotton-candy machine, because that's the only power outlet in the room.

An example

See my diary from two typical weeks on the road, here: www.hitme.net/tourdiary

It's not a perfectly-scheduled tour

The idea of a real "tour", where you cross the country in a perfect line, rarely happens. The way I was able to make a full-time living out of it was by saying yes to everything. Ohio on April 8. Connecticut on April 9th. Michigan on April 10th. Maine on April 11th. No problem! Play for 2 hours. Drive for 14. Play for 2. Drive for 16. Repeat and fade....

Another scenario

You live in New York. You mail your flyer to colleges from Florida to Maine, imagining a nice long tour. Instead you only book two gigs: one from South Carolina, one from New Hampshire.

Because of this, doing the college circuit on the East Coast is a lot easier than doing the West Coast. There are 500 colleges within an 8-hour drive of New York City.

But you're a road-dog, right?

You can perform in any situation, right?

Your guitarist quits the night before a gig and you've got another guitarist to take her place, right?

You've got enough money to pay for your own transportation and hotel both ways, in case something goes wrong, right?

After driving 14 hours, you're clean, lively and friendly, right?

When they change their mind at the last minute and want you to perform at 11am instead of 11pm, you roll with it, right?

When the drunk frat boys heckle you and run their "play some Skynrd!" joke into the ground, you keep your cool and do your best show possible anyway, right?

You know plenty of crowd-pleasing cover songs for emergencies, right?

You've played in the cold with numb fingers, sang full-voice at 9am and can do three 2-hour shows with no break in one day, right?

If not, prima donna, this is not for you.

They usually book long in advance

Rule of thumb: they book the Spring semester in the Fall and the Fall semester in the Spring.

Exceptions

I always booked a lot of April shows in February and December shows in October. But these are usually the smaller "last-minute" shows.

Secret

June is a great month to contact the colleges. The staff-employee, the Director of Student Activities, is there working for the summer when things are quiet. This is a good time for her to book some "Welcome Week" entertainment for the end of August and beginning of September.

Consider being flexible in your size

I mainly got into the college market to promote my 5-piece funk band (Hit Me). But I figured since I was going to spend all that money on membership fees and marketing, I might as well make some other ways to book me, too. So I made:

- for \$1000, the 5-piece funk band
- for \$600, the acoustic two-person version (me & one other band member)
- for \$450, me alone
- and as an afterthought, I made the Professional Pests, where I would run around campus in a black fabric bag, bothering people. Price? \$1500. See it here: www.agentbaby.com/artist/pests
- (Of course the Professional Pests got as many bookings as my musical acts)
- Point being, I was able to work with any budget they had. Of course I wish they could always book my \$1000 full band. But if not, I could always sell them on the scaled-down version.

About NACA and their conferences

There's an organization called the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) that puts on conferences where all the Student Activities buyers can get together to check out showcasing talent. Their website is www.naca.org

It's VERY hard to get a showcase spot there. You're up against the best-of-the-best that are spending thousands on making a super-professional video submission. Artists on the Billboard charts, performers with 20 years of college experience, comedians from Saturday Night Live etc. Everyone puts together a great 3-5 minute video of their live performance sampler. Quality matters. Edits matter. That's a whole other subject, though. In short: your video needs to be amazing. Once a year (summer) you can submit it for showcase consideration. Out of appx. 250 submissions, they pick around 20.

And it's expensive to get involved!! First you have to be a NACA member (~\$300) then buy a booth (~\$200) then a registration (~\$125) then a submission fee (~\$50) and after all that the odds are 19 out of 20 that you'll be rejected. But if you get accepted, a showcase-acceptance fee (~\$150), then the cost of going and playing (~\$500). Now I'm not complaining. I don't think NACA is getting rich. This is just what it costs to do everything they do.

For my band, I submitted for three years, (and spent \$20,000 doing it!) until I finally got a showcase spot. But once my band played on that main stage showcase on the opening night, we booked 30 gigs at about \$1000 each, right there on the spot (another 100 or so over the next year). So it CAN all be worth it if you're really going to commit to this and really think it's your thing.

On the other hand, some people spend years trying to get a showcase, finally get one and don't get any gigs from it. My band was a VERY fun-party-crowd-pleasing band. I think that's why we did so well.

NACA or no-NACA?

Every month, I would send out flyers to the Student Activities buyer at every college in my area. My advice on making a good college flyer is here: www.cdbaby.org/collegeflyer

Out of the 350 schools that hired me, I think over 200 of them came because of my flyers. Which made me think if I had to do it all over again, I might just skip the NACA conference completely and save the money to spend on marketing methods that go directly to the college buyer.

My advice: If you are considering doing the college scene, start with the mailing list and sending flyers. Get a few shows that way and see what you think. If you love it and want to commit years to doing it, no matter what the startup expense, then either join NACA or get a NACA-friendly booking agent.

Derek Sivers is the President of the extremely popular online music store, CD Baby. In the first week of 2006 alone, CD Baby artists were paid \$429,023!! As of the end of 2005, CD Baby paid over \$23 million directly to their musicians for over 2.1 million CDs sold. To get your music online, visit www.CDBaby.com

BOOKING COLLEGE SHOWS

by Dan Ostrowski, Alive! with the Arts
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What does it mean when you hear someone talking about the “college market”? Well, it depends on whom you talk to. Some will say it is an opportunity for your band to play at fraternity parties, make lots of young fans and eventually get on MTV’s Spring Break. Others will say that schools present performers in an environment enriched by culture that is for the most part open minded and very interested in promoting music and arts of all kinds. And still others will say that the college market provides an artist the opportunity to play at packed bars and clubs on their way to becoming the next Hootie and the Blowfish.

Regardless of whether you have been a performer for some time or are just starting out, you probably have heard about the good money, easy routing and target audience associated with college towns. So this is a no-brainer, right? Let’s go play some college dates! Well, although the above statements are all reasonable to some extent, it has been my experience that to truly succeed in the college market, an equal amount of risk, resource and patience is needed on the part of the artist or booking agency.

Witnessing the success of artists such as Dave Matthews Band, Ben Folds Five, Rusted Root, Guster and God Street Wine in college towns across America throughout the ‘90s has been tremendous. These artists generally started on a grassroots level by playing at college bars, fraternity parties, Spring festivals and eventually back on the college campus for big money when they got huge. That’s one side of the story. Because on the other hand you have artists such as Life in General, Beth Wood, Domestic Problems, Keller Williams, Winefield, Granian and Dispatch that regularly tour schools and make a decent buck playing college campuses. Some do so with the help of a booking agency, some with little or no help from an agency.

I will provide some basic information you can use to get a jump-start on reaching the much sought-after college market. As a developing artist, there are many avenues and vehicles you can utilize to reach an audience in a college town and some are not quite so obvious. Read on and you can find out about how I got involved in the college market and how agencies, promoters and national organizations can help artists like you break into the market, as well.

“Hello, Mrs. O’ Riley?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“My name is Dan Ostrowski and I am going to be attending classes at St. Francis next semester.”

“Great, how can I help you?”

“Well, I am a musician and seeing as you are the chair of the music department I thought I would call you. I have several questions I’d like to ask.”

“OK, well, I’m kind of busy right now giving a lesson. Can you get to the point?”

“Sure. I need a place to play my drums on campus when I get there. Any suggestions?”

“Well, I certainly do not want a drummer practicing here at all hours of the night. Here, call Dom Peruso, the Director of Student Activities, he will be glad to help you. Be careful though, he will probably rope you into helping him move the stage from time to time and that could easily lead to helping him run sound for entertainers who perform on campus. Then you’ll be so involved you won’t have time for school!”

“Thanks for the advice, Mrs. O’Riley. I’ll be careful not to get too involved.”

Not get too involved? Little did I know that this phone conversation in August of 1990 would eventually lead me on a path to becoming the owner of an entertainment agency, "Alive! with the Arts," which specializes in the college market. Who could have seen it coming? Not I, that's for certain. When I left my hometown of Erie, PA to attend college at St. Francis in Lorreto, PA, I had merely been playing in a Rock band with my friends in high school. Enjoying the creative energy of music was a passion of mine and I never even thought about the "business" side of entertainment. It seemed so distant and I really was not that interested. "Let's just jam!" I would say, "worry about the other stuff later." Well, that "other stuff" has now consumed my life and I could not be happier. What happened? Read on.

After I hung up the phone with Mrs. O'Riley from the music department, I called Dom Peruso at his office in the student union. I explained my situation to him and he said that I could set up my drums in the school's auditorium with access during the evenings. Cool - a place to jam and he didn't even mention anything about moving the stage! This was going to be a good deal.

When I finally arrived at St. Francis and got settled in, I began to notice the different types of entertainment scheduled to perform on campus. Naturally, I was interested and I thought to myself, "How could I get MY band to play on campus?" I went and asked Dom how they review and select performers to play on campus. Dom said that his office receives materials from artists in the mail and takes calls from agents and the school attends a college booking conference sponsored by the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA).

NACA is a non-profit, national organization that brings together school programming boards, concert committees and other collegiate booking organizations on one end and artists and agencies on the other. There are 11 regional conferences held each Fall (East Coast, Great Lakes, New England, Southeast, South Central, Upper Midwest, Far West, Heart of America, Pacific Northwest, Illinois and Wisconsin) and one national conference in the Spring. The host city for each conference changes from year to year, but NACA does a pretty good job of making them centrally located for everyone in the region to attend. All agencies and schools sign up with NACA on a yearly basis, pay a membership fee and participate in the conferences.

At a NACA conference, artists and agencies are offered a unique opportunity to actually perform live showcases for college buyers, build blocks of tour dates through "co-op" booking and very efficiently offer their entertainment directly to the college demographic. Without a doubt, the most powerful tool for getting booked on the college circuit is to showcase at a NACA conference. In 1999, my company "Alive! with the Arts" showcased five different artists at regional conferences. These showcases resulted in over 60 bookings for the Spring of 2000, which is really just getting started in NACA world. There are artists such as Dave Binder, Howie Day, Five O'clock Shadow and Matthew West that play upward of 100 college dates a year for an average fee of approximately \$1,500 per show + expenses. Not a bad living when you add it all up and this success has everything to do with the talent of the artist, but also has quite a bit to do with the benefits of utilizing the NACA organization, as well.

After discussing NACA with Dom, he mentioned the possibility of my band coming to play at one of the many campus Open Mic Nights.

Recognizing my interest in all things musical, Dom quipped, *"Oh, by the way, Dan, we need someone to host and organize the upcoming campus Open Mic Night. Can you do it?"*

With a reasonable amount of trepidation I answered, *"Um...well...I guess that I can do it. Only this once, right? And I don't have to move the stage or anything like Mrs. O'Riley warned?"*

Dom replied, *"Yeah, only this once, Dan. And I promise, no stage labor. The regular guy will be back next time to run things and we will have the maintenance crew move the stage."*

"Do I have to run sound?"

"Maybe, we'll see. Really, just do as much as you like. Anything will help."

"Alright, just this once."

Well, it was now only my third day of college and unbeknownst to me, I had just made a commitment that would last my entire college career. The Open Mic Night arrived, we did have to move the stage, I did run sound and I had so much fun that I asked if I could do the next one. Turns out that the guy in charge was leaving school and he was also the chairperson of the programming board that booked entertainment on campus. So Mr. Peruso, from his years of experience getting people to work and learn for free, offered me the chairperson position to the Soft Rock Café, our campus programming board. All of a sudden, there I was, in charge of spending a \$15,000 budget on entertainment, not having a clue about how to do it and I just wanted a place to play my drums. That's what I got for not listening to Mrs. O'Riley.

How schools select entertainment

I sat down with Dom and he began to show me the ropes of college booking. This is where I got my first glimpse of how a school selects "on campus" entertainment. In the student activities office, there were hundreds of files on all sorts of acts: comedians, bands, solo musicians, hypnotists, lectures, Velcro walls (yes, there is a Velcro wall - get one for your next family reunion and watch gramps stick upside-down to an inflatable, sticky wall of Velcro), leadership training and NACA conference materials. Dom said that as part of the overall Student Activities Organization, I would be responsible for operating a committee of people (called Soft Rock) who would book the entertainment on campus for the following semester.

Generally, most schools select the acts that they want to bring to campus each year in some sort of committee form. Usually, there is a chairperson with a little more influence who can sway the vote his or her way. The committee goes over materials that are sent to them in the mail and they review acts from NACA conferences. In fact, there are often several different committees responsible for booking entertainment at a college: the student activities people, the concert committee, student government and specialized clubs (ie: Women's Group, Earth Day Committee, Black History Month). Most of these organizations will attend a NACA conference or some type of meeting that brings together school buyers, artists and agencies. Every school has a student activities office or an on-campus programming committee of some sort. So, if you want to play on a college campus, the most logical place to start is the student activities office. The NACA main office publishes a yearly directory containing hundreds of school contacts (included with your NACA membership) and virtually every school has a web-based resource where you can find information on organizations and clubs on campus. The latter takes a little more time, so another benefit of joining NACA is that they do much of the work for you in researching who to call and publish it in the yearly directory.

The NACA conference

"Hey Dom, what's this?" I said pointing to a NACA conference program lying on the table.

"That's where you go and spend most of our money for the year. I go golfing," he said with a smile.

"You mean we go to a conference and book acts on the spot?"

"Yep. Pretty efficient and the quality of the entertainment is very good."

"When do we go? And where is it?"

"In about three weeks. We will go to the East Coast regional NACA. It is in Lancaster, PA this year."

"Lancaster, PA?"

"Yeah, it's Amish country, so bring your boots."

Lancaster, PA. Not exactly the Entertainment Promised Land of the world waiting to spawn new artists and agents, but my first visit there turned out to be a real eye opener and one of the most inspiring moments in my booking career (although I did not realize it at the time). At the NACA conference, the Soft Rock delegation and I witnessed a wide variety of great entertainment to bring to our school. The key being, witnessed. We went to showcases where bands played for us in 20- minute spots to show us what they were all about. From a buyer's standpoint, what better way to preview an act before you hire them? Much better than getting a press kit and CD in the mail, don't you think? NACA conferences offer the college buyer an opportunity to see an artist live before making the decision to book them.

Obviously, this gives an advantage to the artists who perform at the conference as opposed to those who do not. Not to say that you need to showcase at a NACA to play on a college campus, but it certainly streamlines the process of getting your act noticed by college buyers.

Our delegation also attended co-op buying sessions where we built blocks of dates with other schools to route an artist to our campus at a reduced cost. So we saved money as an organization, too. In the end, we participated for the first time in the entertainment “business,” left with half our calendar filled for the next semester and now had tons of ideas to fill up additional months of entertainment when we got back to campus.

If you are wondering why some of the above is important information for helping you get booked at colleges, think about the buyer for a minute. First of all, as an artist or an agent, we are trying to sell something to the schools, a performance. It is worth something and they are willing to pay for it. But since the schools are spending money, they generally want to make booking decisions easily and affordably. Often in the case of booking entertainment on a college campus, there is a great deal of time wasted between the artist and buyer trying to get each other on the phone, getting the committee to make a decision to book your band or not and general run-around type of stuff. At NACA conferences, all of the people needed to make these decisions are in one place, ready to do business. Calendars are open and contracts are getting signed. This is great for the artists or agents because business gets done and the “run around” factor is reduced. It’s good for the school because they get to plan their events and spend money more effectively and confidently. When selling your act to a college, try to make it easy for people to book you. Becoming involved with NACA can help you accomplish this.

“Hey, Dom. We spent the entire budget for this year at the co-op buying session. It was easy and now our calendar of entertainment is completed for next semester.”

“Oh yeah, that’s great. I shot a 105 this morning. Not my best game.”

“That’s OK, because now you have more time to practice. You won’t have to be on the phone all day booking acts for next semester, we just took care of it all.”

“True. NACA sure does make it easy to get the job done.”

“Yep and I also picked up some information on how my band can get involved in NACA.”

“Great. Maybe we’ll see you showcase at the next East Coast conference.”

“You never know until you try!”

“True.”

How to get involved and utilize the NACA tool

Taking the first step to getting involved as an artist or agency is as easy as picking up the phone and calling the NACA main office at 1-800-845-2338 or log on to the NACA website at www.naca.org. You can get information about how much it costs to join, when and where to submit your materials for showcase selection and information on the location and time frame for attending regional and national conferences. There are essentially two ways for an artist to get involved with NACA - self representation or representation by a NACA-accredited agency.

Representing yourself in NACA

Representing yourself in NACA is definitely a great place to start if you have the drive and determination to see things through and the patience to follow up on lots of leads. If you are one to give up easily, then try to find representation. Some of the most successful acts using NACA as a booking tool are self-represented. Self-represented artists such as Dave Binder, Travelin’ Max, Rick Kelly, Mark Rust, Karen Goldberg, Barry Drake and Craig Karges like the control of doing it themselves and they get to keep all the money, too (ie: no commissions to an agent). If you do choose to self-represent, there are several fees you should be aware of.

As mentioned before, there is a membership fee to join the NACA organization as an artist or agency. Regional memberships are available for \$230 and National memberships cost \$530. The membership fee gives you access to the National Directory of college contacts and also makes you eligible to apply for showcase spots at the conferences. It can be expensive at first to join NACA and attend the conferences, but if you are patient and work the system well, it pays off in the long run. Expenses for attending a NACA conference range from showcase application fees (\$35 each), buying a booth at the conference (\$200), hotel for three days (\$250), travel (\$200) and paying an attendance fee (\$150). In the end, you can expect to spend approximately \$1,000 for every regional conference and for this reason alone, many artists are interested in being represented by an agency because the agency picks up most of the fees and there is considerably less risk of the artists' investment of time and money.

Work with an agency in NACA

This is by far the most popular avenue that artists choose to pursue. There is a huge list of agency names with NACA memberships on the NACA website at www.naca.org. Go there and look through them, as one may be the important connection you need to make in the college market. Agencies have years of experience dealing with the NACA organization and you may even find an agency that specializes in your particular type of entertainment. I have received many, many solicitations from artists via our listing on the NACA website alone. So if you are a booking agent thinking about investing in the NACA system, having your listing on the NACA website and in the National Directory will pay for itself over time. Some of my most recent and most promising clients have come from them seeing my ad in the National Directory or my spot on the NACA website. In fact, if you are an artist who'd like to contact me and my company "Alive! With the Arts" for college representation, visit us at www.alivearts.com.

When you are an artist represented by an agency, the agency will submit your materials for showcase selection and if you are chosen by the showcase selection committee, bam! You're in! Now you just have to go to the conference, deliver a stellar performance and wait for the dates to roll in. It may sound simple, but you must be aware that competition for the showcase spots is always fierce, especially in the larger regions such as East Coast, Southeast, Great Lakes and New England. Competition is less severe in the smaller regions like Upper Midwest, Far West, Pacific Northwest and Heart of America. So getting involved with one of the less competitive regions may be a strategic way of approaching things in the beginning.

Some agents will say that the key to getting a showcase is sending in a great video for the committee to look at. I recommend to all of my artists that they produce a 5 to 7-minute video highlighting the best elements of their show for showcase submission. So if you are seriously thinking about giving NACA a whirl, I strongly recommend getting together an excellent video. It will pay off in the end because you can use it for a promo piece to send to schools later, as well as use it for showcase submission. It has been my experience that buyers like to see what you are doing, just as much as they want to hear what you are doing.

What is a middle agent?

You may have heard of this term, so let's just take a moment to explain it. A middle agent is someone who generally works with a school or other organization to book national-level entertainment. The middle agent works for and is paid by the school to negotiate a good price for an act and usually takes partial interest in the production values of the show. Some NACA agencies operate as middle agents almost entirely, like Concert Ideas, specializing in providing big-name entertainment to college campuses. The middle agent charges the school a 10% fee based on the price of the act and the national agencies like this arrangement because they don't have to deal with the schools and they don't have to give up any additional commissions; the schools like it because they can have an experienced college agency negotiating on their behalf. The whole "middle agent" position is not very important to young developing talent, but it can be important once you become more popular or if you are an agent interested in making money by offering this additional service to schools along with your regular roster of acts.

Choosing not to use NACA

People choose not to get involved with NACA for lots of reasons. Mainly because joining NACA, participating in conferences and pursuing the general “college market” can be expensive and very time consuming. Some artists and agents also find the environment within NACA to be very interested in entertainment, but sometimes not at all interested in promoting the arts, so they don't bother with it. In the end, the NACA experience is what you make of it, really. It is clear that NACA supports an industry of agents, artists, college professionals and student programmers who book lots of entertainment for their schools, but it is also clear that you can book an artist on campus without the help of NACA at all.

Maybe you are just interested in touching base with some local colleges and universities. The “local talent” avenue can offer a different approach to the overall college market by promoting your act as readily available and cost-effective. Most schools will gladly pay out \$500-750 to a quality local act because most touring NACA talent is more expensive. Selling your act to the local college can also be easier if you are playing around town a bit and have your own PA and light arrangements. Invite the student programming board to a gig and show them your stuff. I've seen this used very effectively in large college towns like Columbus, OH; State College, PA; and Syracuse, NY.

As mentioned before, there are other ways of getting involved in a college town's music scene - bars and clubs, fraternities, miscellaneous clubs on campus and benefits. Getting on campus without the help of an agency can be tough, but you can do it if you spend the time researching who is on campus and who is doing what. You need to first locate the student activities office and then any clubs, organizations or committees that you think would be interested in booking live music. If you have the time, visit the campus and find the information. You could set up a face-to-face meeting with the music chairperson to present your material. The only way you know is if you call and ask. When I was booking at St. Francis, someone used this approach and we hired them. Don't ever be afraid of calling and asking too many questions of a school. A few minutes spent on the phone can land you at the desk of the exact person you want to talk to.

General Advice Regarding NACA and Playing on College Campuses

As an agency owner in the large but relatively specialized world of college bookings, I can attest to some of the rewards and pitfalls of this niche market. Many agencies will tell you how expensive it is to exist in the college market, specifically NACA. The college market tends to be a specialized market for a few different reasons and it takes patience and time to wade through the massive amounts of information. Here are a few general pieces of advice that I have found helpful over the years:

Focus on building relationships

Many artists and agents who join NACA at first set themselves up for big disappointment by expecting too much in too little time. It takes time to work your way into the college booking world. It is vastly different from club booking and for that reason you should treat it as such. I have seen many an artist join NACA expecting to immediately fill their calendars with college dates and when only a few (or none) happen, they get discouraged and quit. In your first year, focus more on meeting people, forming relationships that will last years and building credibility within the system. Go to the meals and educational sessions at the conference with the initial intent of meeting people, not selling your act. Once you meet them and have a relationship going, then put on the booking hat.

Stay away from pressure sale situations

This more or less goes with the above, but it's important enough to mention on its own. No one likes the high-pressure sales situation. I have seen many artists and agents try this and in the end only wind up with one or two bookings and a bad reputation for being too pushy. Focus on the people first and then once you get comfortable with them, offer them info on your act.

Contracts, rider and paperwork

Now that you have the gig, what next? A little paperwork, of course! One of the benefits of playing at schools is that everything is contracted and legit. Whereas a local club may not want to offer you a contract (nor even pay you for that matter), a college almost always will. The money is guaranteed and I have never had a school not pay an artist the contracted amount. Design a standard contract to use with all of your college gigs and many of the same issues will then be covered. If you have no idea what should be in a standard contract, see the attached Artist Performance Contract for guidelines to create a contract that suits your needs.

An increasing number of schools are now presenting additional paperwork to the artist (aside from the artist's contract with the school), in order to protect the liability of the institution for anything undesirable that may happen as a result of the artist's show. What was once a simple performance contract ends up being a dozen pages by final execution. In these days of lawsuit culture, we can all understand why this is so. This is just another good reason for you to have a contract with them, as well (aside from payment). Use contracts for all of your performances, no matter where they may be. Cover liability and all financial issues thoroughly and keep good records. Be prepared to give financial data to the school. They will ask for a Tax ID or Social Security Number in order to issue a check. If you do not have a Tax ID for your act, get one. Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts should be able to help you with this, for free. In some situations, schools will issue individual checks to band members and you can put all that information in your standard contract. You would need to supply the Tax ID or Social Security Numbers of each member or employee of the band and a payment schedule. If you are a solo artist, this really isn't an issue (your SS number should suffice). The point here is, just get the Tax ID, go legit and start making money. It's the only way to go.

"Riders" are also very important to make part of your contract. A good rider is a set of documents that are attached to your contract (they "ride" on the contract) that very simply outline all of the technical needs required for the artist to perform. If possible, I recommend working all production costs into your base fee and handling sound and light details yourself. Most schools will generally arrange all production values, but be sure to be specific and detailed in your rider. College gigs can be notorious for missing the fine details of sound and lights and a developing artist certainly does not want to compromise their show and image with inadequate production. Go out of your way to be detailed with the production of your show well in advance. Organization on the production side of things will pay off down the road in terms of presenting yourself as professionally as possible and that will get your act the return gig.

Be ethical

This doesn't just go for NACA, but for business overall. Treat people kindly and they will return for more business. Don't take advantage of people and their money. Many of the school delegates attending NACA conferences are learning about the booking process, so if you are more experienced than them, be willing to explain things and treat them with respect.

Be professional

When performing on a college campus, be professional. Be on time and remember where you are. This is not a bar or a club, so in general there is no alcohol or club-like atmosphere going on. Don't screw up a return trip to campus by drinking, doing drugs or carrying on like an idiot.

Be willing to teach and learn

Many of the students and staff attending NACA conferences are learning about the booking process, just like you. If you are more experienced, take time to explain things like contracts, riders and technical requirements. Also be willing to learn about how certain colleges operate. Not everyone conducts business in the same way and take the time to show your attention to detail when dealing with situations that are less than "normal".

Don't give up

It takes time to build the relationships necessary to succeed in the college market. Expect to spend two to three years developing a plan that works for you and one that you can measure success with in terms of milestones along the way. Don't be discouraged if things are not working out as you had planned. Be willing to adjust along the way and make changes that will put you on track to long-term success in the market. Ask for advice from people who have succeeded before you and be creative with new ways of presenting your act to buyers.

Other College Booking Opportunities

Aside from NACA, there are other organizations that you can target to get gigs in a college town. A few are listed below

Fraternities

Fraternities in general can be risky places to play (mainly because they are infamous for bouncing checks and skimping on production), but they can also be great places to generate a solid fan base in a college town. The best way to obtain frat gigs is to contact the school and get a list of the different social chairs at each house. Make contact with the social chair and send them your stuff. Give them a good price and cover all the details of your show, including production and power requirements. I have played many fraternity parties where the house electricity was not enough to withstand our PA. Take care of these details in advance so things go smoothly.

Another great way to get into fraternities is to tap into your own social circle. Do you have any friends at fraternities? This is how my band got a major start in the fraternity market at Penn State University. Try to identify schools with very active Greek life and go after them. Some include Penn State, Bucknell University, Vanderbilt, West Virginia University and University of Alabama. Most major universities and larger colleges have an active Greek scene. You could also ask to attend one of the monthly meetings held by the campus Greek Council. Here you could present your act and offer to send information to interested parties.

Specialized campus groups

If you have a specialized show celebrating some aspect of our society or culture (ie: female performers for Women's History Month, culturally diverse groups for Black History Month, family programs for Parent's Weekend, roots rock for Earth Day etc.) then chances are that there is a need for your act at some point during the school year. Many colleges recognize these special times with performances and programs. Look for an organization on campus that may share the ideals you have as an artist. Sometimes there are high-profile benefit concerts that are sponsored by groups on campus. Try to identify these and offer your services. One performance at a well-attended benefit can lead to gigs down the road.

College bars and clubs

Becoming popular in a college town through the bars and clubs is a sure way to eventually landing a gig on campus. Lower-paying club gigs can serve as a springboard to popularity in a college town and can be a good way to get noticed by fraternities, as well. My band, after becoming popular in bars around State College, PA, found ourselves very busy the next semester playing at frats for better money. And let's face it, college students like to drink, so eventually most of them will frequent bars and clubs and see your band. How do you get the bar gigs? Well, usually you have to start by opening up for other acts and basically play for little to no pay. It's a labor of love, really. Identify a popular band in a college town and pursue the opportunity to open for them.

Arts associations

This could be a completely different article all in its own. Just like there are NACA conferences, there are all types of arts associations that hold booking conferences and cater to the performing arts centers on campus, theaters and community groups. Joining and participating in these types of conferences is often more expensive than NACA, but in general, they are attended by experienced music and art buyers who know what they are doing. NACA tends to be a place of learning for many people, just as it is an established place of conducting business. But go online and search for arts associations such as the Southern Arts Exchange, Mid-West Arts Alliance, Western Arts Alliance, Northeast Arts Alliance and Arts Presenters.

Dan Ostrowski is the founder of Alive! with the Arts, an entertainment company operating within the college market. He represents artists such as Keller Williams, House of Hoi Polloi, One World Tribe, Rubberneck, Joules Graves and Pat Burtis. Dan played drums for 6 years in the group Plato's Cave, from Erie, Pennsylvania. He has toured colleges and universities, booked and managed artists to success in college towns, worked with schools to present national acts and founded/produced music festivals with national and local talent, such as NW Pennsylvania's Grape Jam Music and Arts Festival. He resides in Baltimore, Maryland with his wife, Lisa and can be reached at (410) 882-1191 or alivearts@aol.com www.alivearts.com

HOW YOUR BAND CAN BREAK INTO THE (LUCRATIVE) COLLEGE MARKET

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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School's in session! I thought I would lend some insights into playing the college market as you begin the fall touring season. For some artists the college market is a gold mine and for others it simply offers frustration. Many acts successfully use the colleges as a point from which to launch their careers while others have found it leading to a dead end. There are a number of drawbacks to playing this arena as well as benefits. As we explore both ends of the spectrum, keep an open mind about how this market might fit into your booking plans.

Colleges and Universities offer a variety of performing opportunities. Many campuses have multiple facilities available for use as performance spaces. Facilities may range from a performing arts center fully equipped soft seat theater with dressing rooms, curtains, proscenium stage, lighting and sound to a transformable gym, cafeteria or lounge.

The various facilities are often booked or programmed by different departments. A director who schedules theater productions, classical, jazz, dance and popular artists touring internationally usually books the performing arts center. The director of the center generally coordinates outside performances with classes and college productions making the facility rarely available to other college departments. The other major booking entity on a campus is the Student Activities Center. Supervised by a faculty or staff member, student committees do the majority of programming, depending on the individual college. There are a few colleges whose programming is completely scheduled by a faculty member. The most popular student committees are often the concert and coffeehouse committees. Here, students decide how they will spend the huge budgets available from student fees collected each year dedicated to campus activity planning. Programming may also be scheduled through other individual departments on campus that generally have very small budgets. Fraternities and Sororities offer further performing opportunities.

If you feel that your act belongs in the performing arts center environment, then begin your booking efforts by contacting the director of the facility. The other method of capturing the attention of many performing arts centers directors is to attend a booking conference. The Association of Performing Arts Presenters www.artspresenters.org, holds a major annual booking conference in New York City each January. During the fall, there are a series of smaller regional conferences that help an artist to concentrate their touring in a targeted area. These conferences are: The Performing Arts Exchange sponsored by the Southern Arts Federation www.southarts.org.

Mid-America Arts Conference sponsored by Arts Midwest www.artsmidwest.org and the Mid-America Arts Alliance www.maaa.org.

WAA sponsored by the Western Arts Alliance www.westarts.org

Although attendees to these conferences also include performing arts center programmers not associated with a college campus, many college performing arts center programmers attend at least one of the regional conferences and often attend the national conference in New York as well. Your chances of gaining the attention of some of these programmers are increased should you decide to attend and possibly showcase. These are expensive conferences to attend and organizations to join, so please be certain that your act is appropriate for this type of college venue.

Similarly, those programming for the Student Activities Center have a number of conference opportunities from which their various committees may select acts. The oldest and largest organization is NACA www.naca.org, National Association for Campus Activities. NACA hosts a national conference in February each year along with eleven regional conferences. The other organization now running a booking conference for college activities is APCA www.apca.com, Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities. APCA, the much smaller of the two offers new acts an opportunity to break into the college market without the requirement of spending big bucks for the chance to do so. Although NACA is often in the forefront of showcasing new talent to colleges, it is more challenging for individual artists to break into the organization and reap the benefits in their first year after showcasing or exhibiting.

I mention these conferences and organizations simply because many college bookers rely on them for the bulk of their talent buying. It is not impossible to break into the college market on a campus by campus basis, but there is a greater chance for recognition if you use these conferences as your entrée.

Now the down side to playing the college market:

I think one of the most challenging issues that agents and self-booking artists must deal with when booking colleges is the student turnover rate. On those campuses where the student committees are in charge of booking the talent, an agent or artist often finds the task frustrating and sometime totally disheartening to the point of giving up. You are dealing with rotating committee chairs, graduating students, students who join a committee for one or two semesters, students with varying office hours or no office hours forcing you to track them down in their dorm rooms. One attempt at a solution is to always get the name and number of the faculty or staff supervisor advising the student committee. They are usually the one with the authority to sign the contracts and they usually have office hours. When you begin to run into trouble finalizing a date, contact the faculty supervisor and ask their help in facilitating the booking.

Since these committees are part of the student's education, you are often required to play the role of teacher and walk them through the booking process, one painstaking step at a time. This holds true for each step after a contract is signed. If you want your date promoted on campus, make sure you follow up with every aspect right up until the gear is packed and loaded in the vehicle after you've played the date.

Most campus activity gigs are paid for with the collected funds from student fees. There are a few facilities that are run like a professional club—THEY NEED TO MAKE MONEY IN ORDER TO CONTINUE. However, most campus activities DO NOT NEED TO MAKE MONEY. The committees are allocated a budget and if they want to get the same amount or more money the next year, they must spend the money allocated in the current year. This leaves the committees in the enviable position of spending great gobs of money without having to be fiscally responsible. They are not always concerned whether the money was well spent or whether any of the students whose money is funding the event ever show up and take advantage of these activities. This of course impacts you, the act being booked. I have heard from so many acts playing the college circuit that the money is great but the audiences are small and often non-existent. As a professional performer, you are attempting to treat your career professionally.

Playing the college market may stress you in that department since those with whom you are dealing are not professionals. To be fair, though, every once in a while you will happily find a student who takes his/her committee-work very seriously.

6 Hot Tips for Playing the College Market

Use a college date as an anchor date for a tour

Yes, there are some benefits to playing this market. The money is just one of those benefits. I've known artists who played the college circuit for years and made very good money. They were often getting three or four times better fees than artists working the club circuit. Use these dates as anchor dates and surround them with a tour of other lesser paying more prestigious club gigs. Often college dates may be booked during weekday nights and sometimes even during the daytime. This leaves the weekends for the clubs. A good paying college gig can often help fund other portions of a tour.

Enhance a college booking with other on-campus appearances

Get contacts for some of the specialty departments such as the English, music, theater departments and offer to do master classes prior to the actual gig. Not only might this add money to your pocket, it may help increase your audience for the actual gig.

Do your own promotion

When planning a college date, it is necessary to do your own promotion along with any done by the college. Get in touch with college radio and newspapers. Send notice to anyone on your mailing list in that area. Contact local media sources. Use the College PR person (if any) to coordinate your media surrounding the gig.

Use college radio

Unless the campus station is a commercial station, (and there are only a few campuses that have commercial stations), it is very likely that you can get airplay and a live interview on one of their shows. There are some incredibly, influential college stations around, so don't miss your opportunity to tap into the benefits they may provide. If you are going to tour colleges, you might consider subscribing to CMJ, the College Music Journal. www.cmj.com to keep abreast of what's current on the college stations.

Contact media in the college town

While promoting your date on campus, don't forget about the in-town media. Another benefit of playing college gigs is that most of them are open to the public. If you do some in-town promotions and get some non-college audience, that's great for future gigs in the area.

Make sure your dates are reported

Playing the college circuit gains you a reputation within the college circuit. There are reporting mechanisms from NACA that help campus programmers review artist's previous tours. So, if one campus reports that you did a great gig, it is likely that other campuses will be influenced by the report and also book you.

There have been many major recording artists who began building their careers in the college market. I can recall seeing a brand new act, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, at one college concert on my campus. The programming committee took a chance on booking him and as I recall it was a great show with a really large crowd for the small student union all-purpose room. Gee, I wonder whatever happened to that act?

Good luck!

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

HOW TO GET INTO THE COLLEGE MARKET IN 4 STEPS

by Derek Sivers, CD Baby

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I was hired by over 350 colleges around the Northeast. I made good money doing it, but also wasted TONS of money sometimes, doing things wrong. Here's my best advice, from experience, on what works and what doesn't...

1. Get the database of colleges and complete contact info for the current person that does the hiring of entertainment at each college

There are about 2800 colleges in the U.S. that constantly hire entertainment. You better have a good database or contact management program. I recommend Indie Band Manager. Though other popular ones are Filemaker, ACT, MS Access, Claris Works, MS Works, MS Outlook, Goldmine etc.

I used to maintain a database of college contacts. I stopped in 2006. If you search the web a bit, I'm sure you'll find someone selling a current list.

2. Send a one-page flyer to every school

A GOOD one-page flyer with picture, price, testimonial quotes, contact info. Fun, colorful, exciting. Describe things in their terms. Don't talk about the drummer's background or the member names. Prove in 6 seconds why you will be a reliable good time for an evening at their college.

Name your price clearly! (I recommend \$950 for a band and \$450 for a solo act. If they like you, charge a little more next time. But for a new, unknown act even in their circles, don't expect more than this).

My advice on how to make a good college flyer is here: www.cdbaby.org/collegeflyer

3. Tell them, on the flyer, to call for free CD and video

Send it ASAP when they DO call. Follow-up until they say no thanks. Once they say "No" do NOT call them back. They hate that.

4. When one school books you, call ALL the other schools in the area

Send them great promo material. Have colorful posters, table tents, postcards. And do not be depressed when you play to 4 people on a Tuesday afternoon in a fluorescent lit cafeteria. Be nice, take the money, go home, thank them and keep in touch...

Voila. That's it. The best bang for the buck in the college market. (And believe me I tried MANY other ways of doing it. Don't waste your money. Do it this way).

College FYI

Sending 500 flyers will usually get you 4 phone calls. 2 of those will hopefully turn into bookings. But it only costs \$150 to mail 500 flyers and you'll make that back with one gig.

They often book a semester in advance. In October they book their February - May entertainment. In March they book their September-December calendar.

Don't e-mail

Don't call unless it's crucial. Just send a short flyer that can be read in 10 seconds. Send more than that and they won't read it. Trust me. (I once spent \$3000 sending every college the ultimate kit with video, CD, 10 pages of info etc. I didn't get one single phone call!!! A few months later I sent a single effortless one-page flyer. I got 20 calls and 10 gigs. Go figure...).

Student activities people that hire you are the squeaky clean girls than run for class treasurer. College radio people are the rebels with pierced faces. The two camps do NOT communicate. If you want college radio play, it's a whole different world. Don't think that they'll just fall into place for you.

Don't bother joining NACA and going to the conferences and all that mess unless you're totally committed to it. Yes it may get you some more gigs, but you'll spend \$3000 to find out. Those conferences are way too expensive. My band HIT ME got the big main stage showcase one year and yes we booked 30 gigs that weekend. BUT - it took me three years, 12 conferences and about \$20,000 to get it. My best advice to start, is to save the \$, go with my plan #1-4 that I mentioned earlier in this article.

Derek Sivers is the President of the extremely popular online music store, CD Baby. In the first week of 2006 alone, CD Baby artists were paid \$429,023!! As of the end of 2005, CD Baby paid over \$23 million directly to their musicians for over 2.1 million CDs sold. To get your music online, visit www.CDBaby.com

BOOKING COLLEGE SHOWS WITHOUT USING NACA

by Meredith LeVande, Singer/Songwriter

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Most artists believe that one has to go through NACA, The National Association for Campus Activities, to get college dates. While NACA can be beneficial, it is also costly and easy to get lost in the massive amounts of material that gets passed around the NACA system. I've played countless college dates and instead of going through NACA, I found that my material stood out among the piles collected via NACA. College and non-traditional venues made sense for me. My background is not the traditional "I've been performing at clubs since I was a teenager" sort of thing. I've been told that for a musician, my thinking is a bit on the academic side and my business sense unusual.

Just today I was waiting for the PATH train from New Jersey with two heavy bags and my guitar leaned up against a telephone booth. I live in New York City and earlier had performed at a college in New Jersey. To many musicians, an acoustic college gig is a lame and crappy way to spend a hot, sticky Sunday afternoon. Especially when I have another supposedly lame gig that same evening at a Starbucks coffee shop, playing and singing my material for two hours over and over again. But truth be told, in my singer/songwriter world, those gigs have done far more for my career than playing some of the obnoxious traditional NYC venues.

Whenever I'm waiting for a train or a bus (which lately is quite often), more than frequently someone approaches me and asks me what I do, where I'm playing etc. So, as expected, a man approached me and asked me what I do. I told him I'm a singer/songwriter. With one headphone off his ear while lowering the volume on his Sony Discman, he asks, "funk, jazz?" No, I say "folk pop, women contemporary singer/songwriter." I show him my CD, one already opened, of course and he asks if he could listen to it. I hand it to him and he smiles while talking and tells me that he owns a jazz club and is looking for an opener for this huge jazz festival similar to my style of music...

My CD, "Through The Clouds," was released informally in August of 1999, though the material on it date back as early as '96. At the time, my fear of performing live and going out on my own kept me from performing as rigorously as I do now. I thought then - very naively - that playing out acoustically was lame, especially since my guitar playing was far from perfect. I felt I wasn't versatile enough to carry a whole show and that unless I was some virtuoso, I couldn't play out solo without sounding like just another folky chick with a guitar. My backing band was comprised of top-notch musicians, who in their heart of hearts were not all that excited to be a part of my project. As great as these musicians were, I was very caught up in how I would be perceived by industry people and I would anxiously prepare for my once-every-two-months show at an NYC club like the Bitter End, CB's or Luna Lounge and treat it as some huge event. Truth be told, what I really should have been doing was playing at every open mic and every acoustic venue I could find, just to get myself in front of people.

End result, my band grew frustrated and annoyed. The band environment was full of tension and very non-conducive to the vibe of what my music was about. So my band broke up and I was faced with a brand new, long awaited released CD, but my confidence was at an all time low and nothing scared me more than the thought of getting out there and doing the solo thing to promote the CD and myself. To add insult to injury, I simultaneously got fired from my job. As I tried to put my music career together, getting fired from jobs became a hobby. Managing and booking yourself consumes daylight hours and no matter how much I tried to stay focused at a job, my music and everything related to it inevitably came first or shall we say, came through. Nevertheless, until then I had to work menial day jobs to support my career and myself. I wondered how all these singer/songwriters were able to tour all over the country. Did they all have trust funds?

But a week before I was fired, my cousin, a professor at Monmouth University, gave my CD to the student activities board. They called me up and asked me to perform, offering me what then seemed like an inordinate amount of money. Back then, any small profit from gigs was an ungodly amount of money. I played the gig and was amazed that I was getting paid for it. A week later I had booked a Starbucks Coffee show and the managers there loved me so much that they gave my number to the district manager, who called me to come play in other stores for guaranteed pay. So in-between relentless calls to NYC clubs and getting the runaround, people were calling me to play for money. I then sent my CD to two local colleges, which also called me and booked me for close to \$1,000! The wheels started rolling and I went home, called all the people I knew in different places, found out the names of their local colleges, called these colleges and sent my CDs to the appropriate booking people. This was in December and during the following academic semester I played over 20 different colleges. Some even had me back twice in a semester. I called everywhere, made the contacts, followed up like mad and in the end I played over half the colleges and coffeehouses that I submitted my material to.

I have no band and no manager (and at the time I had no booking agent) and I truly believe that having a good product and a sense of friendly professionalism over the phone is what got me the gigs. Many colleges and alternative venues are sick of dealing with agents and managers, because they are often too pushy and ask for higher prices. When I contacted the schools that I performed at, I sincerely wanted to play there. I let them know what I was about as an artist, what type of crowd I appealed to and what my overall message was. I also thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the people I was talking to and I think that people were more apt to give me a shot because of the time I spent with them over the phone getting to know them and allowing them to get to know me. There is a fine line between being pushy and persistent and I tried very carefully not to cross it. The students who liked my CD were also excited to speak with me directly and establish a relationship before I played at their school. I've had various types of college gigs, some great, some not so great. But I've also had various types of club dates, some great, some not so great. The main difference is, at the very least, I was guaranteed some good money at the college shows.

One of the best experiences I had was playing Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. The school made a real effort to promote the show by putting fliers everywhere and playing my CD on the college radio station. Students actually heard new my material before I even got there, which set the stage for an awesome show and a warm welcome. They made it into a huge coffeehouse event and took me to dinner before the performance and I got to know some of the students and really get a feel for who they were. They were so open to new music, so quiet during my two-hour performance and so friendly asking me questions about my lyrics, about who I was and how some of them wanted to do what I was doing. They even came to a University of Rochester show two days later, which also set the stage for another awesome gig because I now had a built-in fan base. And besides selling CDs and making great contacts and a nice following, some students frequently send me e-mail telling me that my music has helped them understand themselves. This is just one school of many that were so enthusiastic.

Because I am a woman singer/songwriter, many young women really relate to what I'm saying and I actually feel that I'm making a difference and a statement - something that I set out to do early in my career. Don't get me wrong, I have really bad days getting work and getting rejected, but when I get all these wonderful messages and e-mails, I feel so important and so part of a culture and generation that I want to influence. There are countless times that young women tell me that they want to do what I'm doing and ask me how. I make it a part of my job to sit with them and talk to them about who they are and how to establish the beginnings of a career in singing/songwriting. I've already heard from some of them letting me know that they are actually doing it and that my encouragement and just doing what I was doing gave them inspiration. For me, this is the sincere end all and be all.

I've played countless colleges, Borders bookstores and chain coffeehouses and most of the time it's not like a "real gig" with a good sound system and a definite listening audience. But in all honesty, these are the places where I've met the most genuinely interesting people who have a real feel and hope for my music. If not there, it's literally on the way to and from there - like the guy I met on the PATH train who contacted me for a nicely paid opener at his music festival.

After living in New York City, Meredith LeVande's talent for singing and songwriting became stronger than her fears. She channeled the spirit of her Nanny and also of her own emotional struggles that she felt were inextricably linked to that of many women and the fragile human condition. Her songs reflect the destructive force of broken promises, the vulnerability of the mind and many more untraditional topics not usually found in catchy pop tunes. In addition to touring both the east and west coast College Coffeehouse Circuit, Meredith used to play the NYC club venues more often, but prefers the College Circuit and the Coffeehouse scene. www.meredithlevande.com

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7. TOURING TIPS

STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL TOUR

by David Hooper, Music Business Radio
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Anyone who has ever been on a tour will tell you that it's not all fun and games. In fact, a lot of times it can be just the opposite. Still, bands come to me all the time wanting to hit the road for what they think will be the thrill of a lifetime.

Here are some important points to consider when you are planning your tour.

The Big Four

You're going to need reliable transportation

First of all, don't buy a van your first time out. Lease one and see if this is something you really want to get involved with. If you're ready to take the plunge and do want to buy something, a new van is always best as far as reliability, but you can also find real bargains at rental companies. These companies are great about keeping their vehicles and keep accurate records of all maintenance done.

If you do buy something or use your own van, don't even think about hitting the road without a AAA membership. Not only will they pick up your broken down car, they'll also make sure you don't wind up in jail...at least for speeding.

You're going to need somewhere to crash

Hotels can get expensive. Can you live without HBO? Campgrounds like KOA are a reasonable option if you just want a shower and don't mind sleeping in a tent or the van.

Another great option is staying with other bands. People love to help other people. Take advantage of the internet to meet people and work on your relationship ahead of your tour.

You're going to have to eat

Get some camping gear and get used to cooking your own food whenever you can. You'll feel better than you would eating fast food all the time. You'll also save money.

Another advantage of hotels is that many offer free breakfasts. Take advantage of this when you can and be sure to make a few trips to take care of as many future breakfasts as possible.

You're going to need money

Don't count on getting paid for every gig you have lined up. Sooner or later, you're going to run short on funds. Panhandling or selling CDs on the street is an option and may very well get you the cash you need to get enough gas to get to the next city.

Make sure that you have a credit card for emergencies!

Other Important Rules

1. Avoid calling cards! The surcharges really add up and you'll definitely need the money for something else.
2. Get plenty of sleep. If you don't your performance will suffer and you won't be able to do interviews, visit record stores or anything else you'll need to make this tour a success. Sleeping bags are a must. They're great in the van, strange houses and wherever else you happen to end up.
3. Pack light. This isn't a vacation, it's work. The less junk you bring, the less there is to clutter the van/bus and annoy the neat-freaks in the band.
4. It's sometimes cheaper to go thrift-store shopping than to spend money at the laundromat.
5. Avoid buying anything in states with a high sales tax. Buy your cigarettes in NC, KY and other tobacco states. Avoid buying them in NY, PA and NJ.
6. Avoid alcohol. It dehydrates you, costs a lot of money and tends to make everyone irritate each other much more quickly. Remember, this isn't a vacation.
7. Be NICE to people. It will go a long way and be well worth it when you come around next time.
8. When unloading and loading your equipment, keep one person at the van and one inside the venue to keep an eye on things. NEVER leave your equipment unattended, even if you think you can trust the people...you can't.
9. Drive the speed limit. You'll get better mileage and will not have any problems with the police. One speeding ticket can screw up the whole tour budget.
10. If possible, take a laptop computer with you. Yahoo and Google have great information on the places you're visiting. They have maps and things you really can't live without.
11. Print off a list of all your contacts, including your mailing list and keep it with you. If you get in a bind, try contacting someone in the area & see if they can help you out.

Good luck with your tour!

David Hooper is the founder of Kathode Ray Enterprises and host of Music Business Radio. The show features interviews with various industry professionals giving the listener their insight and expertise into the business. Our wide-ranging guest list include Grammy Award winning producers, artists, musicians and songwriters...as well as, record executives, promoters and artist managers. www.musicbusinessradio.com

TOURING STRATEGIES: RENTING TOUR VEHICLES

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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When you are in the start-up phases of establishing a new group, you may not want to make an investment in a touring vehicle. Instead, more pressing items require investment dollars such as promotional packages, photos and recordings. Rather than increasing the wear and tear on one of the group's own vehicles, renting a touring vehicle may be the best method of getting around.

In these early stages, the tours may not be more than one or two weeks long, sometimes even four or five days each. These are the perfect situations for renting. I offer some strategies to make your rental experience become more fluid and hassle free.

Before making calls to any rental company, it would be helpful to create an overview of your upcoming tour dates as far into the future as possible. Once you find a company that you like, you can leverage your rental rate if you reserve multiple dates with the company and assure them of ongoing rentals. Here are a few factors to keep in mind as you research the perfect rental company for your group's needs.

The vehicle size

Many companies have mini-vans but do not have cargo vans or a van that will comfortably seat 15 passengers. The reality is that you won't need to seat 15 passengers, but the normal mini-van leaves very little room for five people with luggage, instruments and equipment. Depending upon your specific requirements, you may have to pass on many favored companies in order to find the vehicle of the appropriate size.

National companies vs local companies

The value of a national company is evident. If you have a problem with the vehicle on the road, the likelihood of finding a replacement vehicle in small town, USA is greater with a national company. The national companies also are working on volume and have the ability to discount more widely. One of the problems with the large company may be that they are often only located at the airport, depending on where you live. Airport rentals often carry additional airport taxes and surcharges, increasing your daily rate substantially. If you have a chance to rent off-airport, you can sometimes save up to 12% on- airport surcharge taxes depending on the city. For example, if you live in New York City, renting a van in the city is almost impossible and renting at a major New York airport carries huge taxes and surcharges. If you take the time to travel into New Jersey, not only can you find van rentals, but also, the rates are much better.

When you are touring close to home, using a local company may provide some advantages. You have an opportunity to establish a relationship with the owner. The owner may have more flexibility since they don't have to answer to corporate headquarters that sets the rates. You may even be able to work out some sponsorship deal with a local owner. If you find a local company that has the appropriate vehicle, make a proposal to them for a sponsorship deal for the next year. They give you the van rent-free; you place their name on all your promotion during the year and mention their name on posters, in articles and on radio. They get free advertising within their local community where they normally do business and you get a touring vehicle. Trying this with a national company is possible but more difficult since you have to make proposals through the companies advertising departments or agency. If your tours are regional, a local company has more to gain by creating this sponsorship. Anytime you are building regional support, using regional companies to build your network benefits the communities where you and they live and work. That is a powerful point to make in any proposal for sponsorship.

Make personal contact

Whether you have chosen a local company or a national company, after your initial phone conversation, meet the manager or owner in person to make your proposals and discuss your intentions for a working relationship. Get the names and if possible meet the other staff. The manager or owner may not always be available when you arrange for your rentals. Be sure that anyone with whom you deal knows about any special arrangements you have made.

Mileage

This is an important consideration. Whenever you can, ask for unlimited mileage. Unless you have calculated the cost per mile to be under the distance you intend to travel, you will always pay more for rentals without unlimited mileage.

Corporate accounts

These accounts are always available even if you are not a legal corporation. Many times, however, corporate accounts carry rates that are higher than the promotional deals often offered. Depending on how often you will be renting, it is worth checking into these rates to establish yourself or your group with a corporate account. Once the account information is entered, you will receive similar treatment each time you rent. Keep in mind, though, that if you meet the manager and set up a profile with the company, having a corporate account may not be necessary and then you are not locked into the corporate rates. You want flexibility along with service.

Advance reservations

This is a must if you want to take advantage of any promotional opportunities offered by the company. They often have notice of upcoming promotions. You can always take advantage of larger discounts when making reservations in advance. Once you have established your relationship with the staff at your chosen rental outlet, call there for reservations in other cities at times when you are flying and then renting a vehicle. They will attempt to get you the best deal possible even in a different city. When you reserve in advance you can always take advantage of full week rates and special weekend promotions.

Last minute reservations

If you find yourself in a situation needing last minute car reservations, you will always get a lower rate when you call the toll free number for a major rental company and make a reservation. Rates are always higher at the counter without a reservation. So when you land at the airport, go to a pay phone, call the toll free number and make a reservation first. Then go to the counter where they can simply pull up the reservation and you will get a much better rate.

Discount cards

These can save you money each time you rent. AAA usually saves 15%. If you have frequent flyer airline memberships and you are renting in conjunction with a flight, you can get points. Most of the major car rental companies also offer discount cards that often come with professional memberships. As a member of a number of organizations, my membership card arrived with a discount card from Alamo, Hertz and Avis. Each was good for a specific time period and had certain restrictions and specific codes identifying the organization. Always mention the discount card you have when making a reservation. They will calculate your rate accordingly and make a note of it on your reservation. When you go to the counter to actually pick up the vehicle, all the discount information will be included. However, you will have to show any discount card at the counter.

Extra insurance

This can add a substantial amount to your daily rate. However, you may be comforted knowing you will not have any out of pocket expenses should an accident occur if you accept the additional insurance liability coverage. If you have a Gold or Platinum VISA or MasterCard with a rental provision, it may not be necessary for you to take the extra coverage. Check your credit card information or consider applying for a card that has a rental rider to use for all your vehicle rentals.

Pre-purchase gas

This can often save you time, but if you rent from an office in a town where you are familiar with the local gas stations, it may be more cost effective to refill on your own before returning the car. When renting in an unknown area, the pre-pay option is convenient. You don't have to rush when trying to make a flight even though you may pay a few cents extra and you have to purchase a full tank. Unfortunately, you have to make the decision before taking the car.

Leasing and working with car dealers

This is another option when looking for longer-term rentals of larger size vehicles such as vans. When checking for rental companies, include car dealerships. They may have the van you are looking for and be willing to work a lease agreement for those tour plans that are at least one month or more. If you plan on touring consistently throughout the year, you may even discuss a one-year lease. These agreements do restrict mileage, however and may be a large enough deterrent to send you to a rental company. Read any lease or rental agreement carefully before signing.

Considering a local car dealership also opens the potential for a sponsorship deal. Here is another opportunity to present a marketing proposal to the dealership in order to compel them to offer a vehicle or reduced lease rate in exchange for advertising on your tour.

With any rental or lease situation, the fees are tax deductible since the rental is clearly for a business usage. Once the touring becomes regular and there is steady income, it may make more sense to explore purchasing a touring vehicle. Unless someone in the group has the perfect touring vehicle and is willing to offer it for the band's use, renting an appropriate vehicle for each tour may be the most cost-effective way to travel.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, [How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED](#). She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program [Manager-In-A-Box](#) and presents [The Performing Biz](#), seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at [www.Performingbiz.com](#) or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at [jg@performingbiz.com](#)

BAND SAFETY TIPS - NIGHT CLUB FIRES AND STAMPEDES

by James Blakely, Go Listen Live

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In the past we have seen some devastating tragedies in night clubs. The night club fire in Rhode Island and the stampede in Chicago cost many lives. This problem affects our industry. Safety is something that performers need to take into consideration.

The people at your shows are your fans. They are supporters and are part of your extended family. Their safety should be important to you. It would be terrible for any artist to have fans die at their show.

We all know that a lot of bars and clubs that indie artists perform at are not up to code. Many of them are falling apart. That's why you should be extra careful when playing at a dump. Maybe you should reconsider gigs where possible problems could arise.

I want to present some common sense tips to ensure band safety when you are out playing live at a venue.

1. Check the exits. This is so important. Make sure you know where all the exits are in the venue you are playing at. Also make sure that the rest of the band and some people in the crowd know. Make sure that the exits are not locked and are available for escape, if necessary.

If an emergency happens and you are on stage, direct people to the exits. Don't panic. Do your best to get everyone calmed down. You are the center of attention. You have the microphone. Help get the people out.

2. Don't do stupid stunts. Something that sound real cool may put people in danger. If you don't have a professional operators, don't use fire or water during the show.
3. Don't incite a riot or fighting. We all know that people like to mosh and dance, but don't let people get out of hand. Don't encourage something that could become dangerous.
4. Let employees of the venue know about people that are getting out of hand. I don't know how many fights I have seen at shows that could have been avoided if members of the band, who see people getting aggressive, reported them to the staff. Everyone there wants to have a good time without having to worry about bullies in the audience.
5. Connect with the staff. Meet the bartender, security and anyone else that works at the venue. Ask them about their emergency plans. If they already have an emergency plan in place, find out what it is.

Be prepared and it will pay off in a big way. It may even save someone's life. Don't get caught in any situation without some sort of plan.

Go Listen Live is a totally free resource for indie bands to promote themselves. If you are interested in signing up with Go Listen Live then contact us www.golistenlive.net

GIG CHECKLIST: PREPARING FOR A GIG OR SHOW

by Dennis Damp, Media Web Source
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It's a good idea to prepare a gig checklist to remember everything your band will need for an upcoming show. The band would not want to forget any equipment or necessary items, especially if your show is miles away from home. Below is an example of a Gig Checklist that you may find useful for upcoming gigs for your band.

Gig Checklist

Venue: _____

Show date: _____

Time of show: _____

Setup time: _____

Directions: _____

Equipment Item Checklist

- ___ Guitars
- ___ Backup guitar
- ___ Guitar chords
- ___ Hex wrenches and guitar tools
- ___ Mics
- ___ Mic chords, clips and stands
- ___ Drums
- ___ Drum key, stands and bass drum pedal
- ___ Drum sticks
- ___ Guitar amp and cabinet chords
- ___ Bass & backup bass
- ___ Bass amp and cab chords
- ___ Lyric sheets and music if necessary
- ___ Keyboards/synth/any other instruments
- ___ Direct box or boxes
- ___ Effects pedals and racks
- ___ Tuner
- ___ Extra strings or tools
- ___ Miscellaneous items

Miscellaneous or Special Items

- ___ PA rental or your PA and mics
- ___ Book sound tech (if applicable)
- ___ Book lighting tech (if applicable)
- ___ Transportation of equipment and band
- ___ Business cards
- ___ Demo CD
- ___ Press kit
- ___ Invoice or contract for venue

We've included business cards and press kits to ensure that your band never misses a chance to promote future shows. You never know who may be at your gig so always have your promotional tools ready.

Good luck in preparing a gig checklist for your band's next show!

Dennis Damp runs MediaWebSource.com - a website that provides music industry resources for any songwriter or band to find band press kit & demo tips, recording studios, CD duplication, songwriting resources, record company submission guidelines, music industry information, band promotion, music industry articles, how to get gigs, music business books and music equipment. www.mediawebsource.com ediawebsource@yahoo.com



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8. PROMOTION

PERFORMANCE MARKETING / TOUR SUPPORT

Vivek J. Tiwary, StarPolish.com
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Live shows are often the best way to develop a new artist and expose new music. Seeing a band live can be all it takes to convince their fans to buy a CD, a radio station to play their single or a publication to review their album/demo. Therefore, tour support should be an integral part of your marketing plan. The term “tour support” is used in the music industry to define either:

1. The amount of money a record label gives an artist to help cover the costs of touring and keep/send them on the road.
2. The efforts of members of your business team (record label personnel, marketing reps, your manager etc.) to promote your shows and take advantage of marketing opportunities surrounding a live performance.

For the purposes of this article, we’re going to focus on the second part of the definition, related to marketing. In this context, tour support isn’t just about marketing a tour as a whole, but also about marketing each individual performance separately and marketing the artist around their live shows. So even if you are a local act playing a few shows in your hometown, this article is still of critical importance to you. In fact, this article is relevant for any artist, of any stature, anywhere - as long as they’re playing some live shows. Tour support is definitely not just for those on a formal “tour.” That’s why I prefer to use the term “performance marketing.”

Performance marketing is a very involved process that begins a few weeks before every show date and continues for about a week after. It also incorporates all the other elements of the music marketing mix (ie: retail, radio, press etc.). Therefore, you may want to create a personal checklist to ensure that you cover all your bases in performance marketing. Your checklist should cover the suggestions from all the major sections in this article.

I’m Not A Live Act!

If your act or your music doesn’t lend itself to live performance, you will definitely be at a marketing disadvantage. My first piece of advice is to re-evaluate and brainstorm ways that your act could in fact translate live. Is there a way to incorporate drum machines and computers on stage alongside voice and live guitar to convey your songs? If you are a solo artist who records with a backing band (one that you can’t afford to pay for live shows), can you arrange and play solo acoustic versions of your songs? Just give it some serious thought... and if there is an acceptable way to translate your material live, I very much suggest that you experiment at small clubs and in front of close friends (who will still support you if your live experiment fails miserably). You never know until you try and you may be surprised that your live performance adds a new and exciting, albeit different, facet to your act.

If, after brainstorming, you come to the conclusion that your material simply cannot translate live, then I recommend you organize several listening parties where your music is played. Throw listening parties like you’d book shows. Once you “book” a listening party, market and promote it exactly as you would a live show. In other words, if your act can’t perform live, you should still find a method where you can present your music to the public in a venue or club-like setting.

If you are not performing live, you should mitigate this marketing disadvantage by increasing your efforts in other elements of the marketing mix (ie: retail, radio, press, lifestyle marketing etc.). There are several artists - from Top 40 radio-friendly popsters to critically-acclaimed alternative acts like XTC - that are very successful without performing live. But they all fill this marketing hole with something more than just good songs and music.

Booking Shows And Other Preparation

Obviously, before you can market a performance you need to book that performance. Once you have a show booked, get ready for a series of important steps to maximize the marketing exposure from that gig.

Marketing/Promoting A Concert: The Nuts And Bolts

Use Your Mailing Lists

Send announcements to your mailing lists - flyers to street addresses (if you can afford it) and e-mails to your online list.

An initial e-mail should be sent about 10-14 days before the show date and a reminder e-mail about a day or two before the show. If it's a particularly important gig, longer initial lead time and more reminders is a good idea. Below is an example of a particularly good e-mail show announcement, from StarPolish Artist Advisory Board Member Rob Siano of the band Spinning Images:

-----Original Message-----

From: SPImages@aol.com [mailto:SPImages@aol.com]

To: undisclosed-recipients;

Subject: THE WORST ALTERNATIVE BAND, EVER!

Hello.

Spinning Images are threatening to play at The Last Chance in Poughkeepsie, Saturday July 1st. Come and protest. Petitions are available online to stop these maniacs from coming anywhere near the building. The show starts at 11pm. Get there early and bring your pickets and air horns. For more info, go below.

Thanks,

Rob
SPImages@aol.com

SPINNING IMAGES LIVE!
SATURDAY JULY 1 ST -11PM
THE LAST CHANCE
6 CRANNELL ST., POUGHKEEPSIE

DON'T FORGET: WWW.SPINNINGIMAGES.COM

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE OFF THE MAILING LIST, SIMPLY REPLY WITH AN

"IF YOU SEE K YOURSELF"

Directions: Taconic North to the Poughkeepsie Exit (Rt. 55W), get off the exit and go straight for 10 minutes. You will pass a McDonald's on your right, so you are on the right track. Keep going until you see a Getty Station on your right. That is Hamilton St. Go to the next left and make a left. Make another left into the parking lot. The Chance should still be there.

I can't tell you how many e-mails I get from artists that don't take care of the many important little things that make up an effective promotional e-mail. Rob covers them all, from top to bottom:

He Blind Carbon Copied (BCC'd) everyone (made them "undisclosed-recipients"), so that the addresses of everyone on his list are hidden. This respects the privacy of his list members.

The message has a catchy subject title, “**THE WORST ALTERNATIVE BAND, EVER!**” that also implies the tone of the rest of the letter, which in this case is tongue-in-cheek - a style that makes sense for Spinning Images.

The main text of the message is short, memorable and in this case funny (which also makes sense for Spinning Images).

It's personalized with a simple “Thanks, Rob,” so it doesn't feel so much like chain letter. He also includes his contact information.

CRITICAL: He repeats the main information (Who, What, When, Where) in a small block of uppercase text - so as soon as the e-mail is open, readers can get all the pertinent details at a glance and don't have to hunt through the main text for the venue, time, date and address.

He notes the band's website and alludes to going online earlier in the text.

He gives the list members polite instructions on how to unsubscribe and mentioned “If You See K Yourself,” the name of Spinning Images' album. However, he should have noted this is the album title, because list members may have forgotten.

Finally, he gives clear directions to the venue. But he could also have included the venue's phone number and noted whether it was a strict 21+ or all-ages show. Most readers will assume it's 21+ if you don't say otherwise. If it's a 21+ club that has a loose door policy, that's worth noting, too.

Hard copy flyers

Hard-copy flyers for street mailings should take into consideration the same issues as the e-mail example above, though of course, they should also have some visual/design element that is eye-catching and that, hopefully, will make list members want to hold onto the flyer until the gig (and maybe even afterward, if you've got a really great visual).

Hard-copy flyers should be mailed out well in advance so they arrive 10-14 days before the first show announced on the flyer (ie: mail them out at least 2 ½ weeks before the first show). Because it's expensive to manufacture and mail flyers, you may need to use one flyer to advertise multiple dates. If that's the case and some dates are in different parts of the country, try to break out the mailings and ship to different markets at different times, so that each person on the list gets the flyer 10-14 days before their nearest show date. Since e-mail is free, you should put in the time to send out one e-mail per show.

Basic / grassroots concert promotion

For a few weeks prior to the show date, you must promote the event to the entire local music community outside of your mailing lists - ensuring that everyone knows this show is happening and developing some excitement for your appearance long in advance of the actual show date:

Inform all your contacts about the upcoming show and try to get the date added to all appropriate concert calendars in local press, radio and retail accounts. If you have the budget, you can take out a key ad in key press also noting the show. Keep in mind the same guidelines noted above with respect to effective announcements. Even if you have the money, radio ad spots are less recommended, as they are often more expensive than they're worth.

Design flyers and posters advertising the show. If you have an album out, these should also mention that it's availability at one or several local retail accounts. The flyers can be the same ones you used to mail to the street addresses on your mailing list. Keep the posters on the smaller side, 11" X 17" recommended, so that they can fit on crowded kiosks or in small stores.

Distribute your flyers throughout the local music community, remembering to include college and high school campuses - in dorms (underneath doors), student unions, record stores, coffeehouses, skate shops, tattoo parlors, jewelry shows, concert halls and clubs, underneath windshield wipers on cars etc. - wherever appropriate.

Hang posters noting the show throughout the local music community, remembering to include college and high school campuses - in record stores, on campus kiosks, on street bulletins in cool parts of town, in student unions, in coffee shops, smoke shops etc. - wherever appropriate.

Hang posters noting the show in the venue where you're playing and other venues if possible. This is called "merchandising the venue".

Design and execute creative promotional techniques specifically tied to your act, the venue where you are playing or the show date (we'll get into this a little more later).

CRITICAL: It is important to emphasize that you should perform all these efforts even if your act is unknown and the people who see the flyers and posters don't recognize your name. While the flyers/posters may not convince these folks to go to your show, they will definitely start to put your name in their minds. When they get a flyer for the next show or see a poster the second time around, they will at that point (however vaguely) remember your name and perhaps even subconsciously think they know your act ("Hmmm... I've heard of them."). And that is the beginning of the all-powerful "buzz" that you're trying to create via music marketing.

Work with promoters

Every venue has a promoter who books the shows and is additionally responsible for generating awareness for the clubs' events - or more specifically, filling the house with paying customers. For booking purposes, you should already be developing relationships with these various concert promoters at the venues in your target markets. But once you confirm a show date, as much as possible you should still work with the promoter to support the event.

Don't just ask them how you can help market the show - actively suggest ways you can work together for mutual benefit. For example, in return for flooding the difficult-to-reach college community with announcements about the band's appearance at the promoter's club (perhaps even noting other upcoming shows at that club), the promoter could give you a number of compensations - including extra display space in the club for posters, possible use of the club before or after the show for a post-show party or even extra tickets to the show to use in giveaway promotions. Those artists who develop especially good relationships with promoters may be able to convince them to sell discounted tickets to their shows to anyone showing a student ID or meeting some other preset criteria. The possibilities for collaborative, creative cross-promotions with venues are endless and depend on the nature of the relationship you can foster with their promoters.

The downside to the wonderful marketing potential here is that depending on the market and the venue, you may find that promoters are extremely difficult or totally unwilling to work with you. Do your best to point out why working with you will be good for them. Think about what their objectives are - selling tickets to their shows, selling drinks at the bar, marketing their venue etc. - and make your pitch in firm accordance with these objectives. And as with everything in music marketing, don't be offended if working with promoters doesn't go as well as you'd like. In some markets, it's hard enough getting the promoter to book your band, much less work with you creatively. But you should still try and try again. When a difficult promoter who wouldn't creatively work with you notices that you pack their venue with ticket-paying folks who're also buying drinks and/or food, that promoter will unsurprisingly be more available/agreeable to you in the future - both in terms of booking future appearances AND working with you creatively to mutual benefit.

Monitor other artists' concerts

Take advantage of any opportunity to promote your upcoming shows at someone else's events. For example, if there is a popular local or national band performing in town that you know has a similar fan base as yours, you may want to pass out your announcement flyers along with other promotional items to the people leaving that show. If possible, these promotional items should be stickered with your show dates and album availability information, noting a retail account and/or announcing an upcoming tour.

Note that it is always better to pass out promotional items at the end of shows - people are generally more excited after a show and are usually more willing to hold onto flyers and promo items that they received on their way out than on their way in. This way they don't have to hold onto your stuff during the concert and if you gave out music-related items like cassette samplers, they may pop the cassette into their car stereo on the way home. It's also worth mentioning that placing flyers under windshield wipers of cars in the parking lot is an effective way of capturing the attention of an exit crowd.

Ticket requests, the guest list and ticket distribution

As soon as you confirm a show date, ask the promoter how many spots on the guest list (or how many promotional hard tickets) you may have for business contacts. Explain that you will not pad the guest list with friends and family, but really want to bring music-industry contacts out to see your act. If the promoter is unwilling to give you enough free admission tickets/guest list spots to satisfy your business needs, ask him or her whether you can purchase a few additional advance tickets at a reduced rate for your business contacts. If he or she is further unwilling to give you a discount, budget permitting, you may still want to purchase a few extra tickets for your contacts. What I'm getting at here is that it's important to be able to get key business contacts into your show for free, as an extra incentive for them to stop by and check you out.

I strongly recommend that as a matter of policy, you NEVER guest list friends and family, especially in your earliest stages as a developing artist. The reason is simple: your earliest and biggest supporters will be your friends and family; they will likely be the most willing to pay to see you live. In many cases with shows, you will be paid via a percentage of the ticket price and if you explain this to friends and family, they will feel even more comfortable paying. Furthermore, remember that when you pack the house with paying customers, the venue will be happy and the promoter will most likely offer you another, better show in the future. If you also explain this to friends and family, they should feel even more comfortable paying to see you live. The point is, take the support where you are most likely to get it. But be strict about it. If you're not guest listing friends and family, don't make exceptions - make your girlfriend/boyfriend, siblings and parents pay. If you start to make exceptions, the policy breaks down, some friends will feel slighted and you may lose some future support.

To reiterate, I strongly recommend that promotional tickets and spots on the guest list be solely reserved for key business contacts. Additionally, you may want to also hold a pair or two for promotional giveaways.

As you inform your contacts about an upcoming show, find out how many of them would like to see the show. This will give you a sense of how best to distribute promotional tickets or guest list spots. Be careful not to over-promise and wind up in a situation where you can't fulfill all the requests you have received. If this situation arises, I suggest purchasing the extra tickets for your contacts as opposed to uninviting someone to whom you promised a ticket - don't jeopardize a business relationship over a concert ticket. It's a good rule of thumb to keep a few tickets off to the side and available for as long as possible. Often, an extremely important contact who you did not expect to have to procure tickets for will request tickets at the very last minute. If you have set aside some tickets for last-minute requests, you will be able to accommodate those important contacts. Again, if you don't have the tickets, I recommend buying them for these important contacts, budget permitting.

Finally, remember to prioritize whom you give tickets to - key contacts and contacts who have long supported you should come first.

Promotional giveaways

In promotion of an upcoming show and to generate excitement about your act, you may want to hold a giveaway with one of your radio stations, press, record stores or lifestyle accounts. Giveaways can be simple ballot box raffles or call-in-to-wins. Better yet, think of creative giveaway contests. Prizes for giveaways can include T-shirts or other promotional items, music samplers etc. Ticket giveaways can also be effective promotions, especially for shows that are having difficulty selling advance tickets or for whatever reason you are concerned will be empty (this is a good time to work with the promoter, who will also not want to have his or her club empty and may supply you with extra tickets for promotional giveaways). Remember to insure that you have or can acquire the tickets or guest list spot before organizing and committing to a giveaway.

Stock and placement at retail accounts

Record sales often increase surrounding shows, due to localized attention the performing artist. You must ensure that fans who seek your CDs can find them easily - that the stores are stocking the CDs and placing them in the right section. Try to get the owner or manager to place your album(s) in a prominent section of the store surrounding the show date - for example, on the counter with a little note like "Appearing next week at The Khyber Pass."

If you are signed to a record label, you or your manager should make sure that your label and/or their distribution company have taken care of stock and placement at retail accounts surrounding shows and tour dates.

Interviews and press conferences

Show dates present an excellent opportunity to solicit in-person interviews from your radio, press and video contacts. They're more likely to interview you around a show date, because there's more of a story to report and cover (ie: the show). And of course, if you're a touring act and only in town for the night of your show, the show date may be the only opportunity you have to solicit an in-person interview.

As much as possible, these interviews should be set up in tandem with a review of the concert. With that in mind, the best time to set these interviews up is at sound check or shortly before the show starts - that way the interviewer can stick around for the show immediately following.

If you find that several of your contacts are interested in interviews, rather than trying to schedule many short interviews you could request and organize one longer, informal "press conference" to accommodate all requests in a single event. Make sure you organize all the logistics of the event (time, securing the space etc.) well in advance so everything runs smoothly. Keep these press conferences informal and fun. For example, the conference could be held at a bar, restaurant, coffee shop etc. near the venue. As much as possible, try not to place too much physical distance between your band and the interviewers, in order to maintain a feeling of intimacy. Similar to one-on-one interviews, you will find that often the most convenient time for a press conference is before or after sound check.

Promotional performances

A pre-show, promotional daytime performance is often the best way to promote a nighttime concert. These events can take place on the air at a radio station, in-store at a retail account or at a more creative location altogether - ie: a college cafeteria, a local café or coffee shop, a public park etc. When I worked for Sony Music's College Marketing Department, we set up a promotional performance for the group The Presidents of The United States of America at a hot dog stand. It was a totally unforgettable and successful event.

Promotional performances work best when they're acoustic, due to easier logistics and less production costs, but you can experiment with electric too. Try to organize promotional performances in locales where you might expect a good-sized and somewhat captive audience, but do not be disappointed if you wind up playing to a small crowd - remember that every little bit counts and one new fan turned on and one CD sold is an extra bit of buzz you are generating. That one new fan might be excited to come to the show later that night and might bring a few friends.

At the beginning and end of each promotional performance, mention your band's name, the information of the nighttime show and the availability of your most recent CD, if applicable.

College cafeterias and popular local cafes/coffee shops can be great places for promotional performances, because those venues often have built-in daytime crowds. On the other hand, if that crowd will be unappreciative of live music played during their lunch hour, perhaps the venue is not ideal. If you are unsure of the merits of the venue, do as you should with most performance opportunities during your early days - take the chance and play the event, just be prepared for possible disappointment.

Most colleges have concert or entertainment boards/committees that book shows for the school. You should identify the concert boards in your target market and make contacts there in order to identify opportunities for promotional college performances.

Additionally, most cafes and coffee shops, if they have the physical space, are also willing to book developing artists for acoustic performances... although many outlets of the larger chain stores may be less willing due to national corporate policies.

When pitching a promotional performance request (as with any pitch for that matter), keep in mind the needs of the venue you are pitching to and point out why the performance will actually be good for them - that it will enhance the atmosphere of their lunchtime crowd, that you've met with enthusiastic audiences and had great success playing similar locales in other markets etc. After you are successful in securing a promotional performance, be sure to find out as many pertinent details as possible - how much of your time it will take, location of the event and distance from the nighttime venue, who needs to provide sound equipment if necessary (in certain venues/rooms, even acoustic shows require some basic sound equipment), whether it will cost you anything etc. In order to guarantee awareness and a good turnout, you should market and promote the free daytime performance in much the same way that you promote the nighttime show. Make sure that your promotional materials mention both performances.

Promotional performances should be free of charge to audience members, since the major point of the show is to encourage people who are not familiar with your act to come and see the nighttime performance, which will most likely carry a ticket price. Because promotional performances are free-of-charge, the venue may not be willing to pay you to perform. Since they're not directly making money from your performance, this is somewhat fair. On the other hand, college concert boards often have substantial budgets and cafes/coffee shops that do good business may be willing to offer you a little compensation. You should politely ask about payment for your performance, mildly suggesting that you are used to being paid for such performances and that you usually expect a little something - but be prepared to play for free and think about this performance as it truly is: a promotional event for the nighttime concert, not a money-making venture.

Meet and greets / dinners / parties

If you believe there would be enough interest from your business contacts - and you have the budget - you can organize a pre-show dinner or "meet-and-greet" (as the industry calls these events) with you and your band or a post-show party. These events are laid-back opportunities for key contacts to meet and hang with you in an informal environment. These events can go a long way in convincing a contact to help your act, especially if you or your band mates are particularly funny, engaging or otherwise personable. Be creative but reasonable with your ideas for meet-and-greets, dinners and parties. Pick an unusual, cool and memorable location for the event.

For example, when I ran the Alternative Marketing Department at Mercury Records, we held a meet-and-greet for the band James at a bumper-car amusement park to promote their then-new record "Whiplash". The event was memorably called "Get Whiplashed with James." Just be careful to figure out the associated costs of creative events like this in advance. Make sure you stay within your budget; post-show parties in particular can get out of hand with large bar and food tabs.

If you have no budget, at the very least, I strongly recommend that after every performance you and your band mates come out from backstage and mingle with the audience, fans and key contacts. The Mighty Mighty BossTones do this after every single show they play and have been doing it for over a decade - at every stage in their career, no matter how large the venue. This attitude will go a long way toward creating intimacy between your act and the fans and business contacts. And that kind of intimacy will in turn go a long way toward supporting you and building your buzz. It's no surprise that The BossTones have accumulated and kept both a devoted fan base and a stable of business contacts who believe in the band and find it a pleasure to support their ongoing musical projects.

Creative use of your time

As much as possible, develop, design and execute projects to creatively use your time surrounding a show date - particularly if it's an out-of-town show and you are only in that market for a day or two. For example, you could organize a guitar clinic at a local high school to be taught by your lead guitarist. Or you could arrange a spoken-word café performance, if you're particularly opinionated and vocal.

When I worked in the Sony Music College Marketing Department, we organized a "Play Basketball with Pearl Jam" event at the University of Pennsylvania's Palestra that was unforgettable for the few folks in attendance (the band was in their developing stages at the time and not that well known).

Of course, you should pick an event that fits your vibe and projected image and will be comfortable for all the participating members. Remember to promote both upcoming concerts and new record releases at these events. Also be careful to work out all the logistics and associated costs of creative events well in advance, to avoid any financial or other surprises.

Pre-show

Get to the venue well in advance of sound check and neatly hang your posters throughout the place but in accordance with any venue restrictions, so as not to annoy the club manager or promoter. In industry terms, this is called "merchandise the venue." Restrictions might include "clean" areas where posters cannot be placed or hanging requirements (ie: no staples/staple guns - always carry both tape and staples to cover all your bases). Posters should note any new record availability and tag a local record retail store that's stocking your record, if applicable.

Introduce yourself and be very nice to the doorman/bouncer and the sound guy. If these guys like you, they can make your show a lot more enjoyable for both you and your fans and see that things run smoothly. If they don't like you or your attitude, I guarantee you're in trouble. In one developing band I managed, we had an internal policy that we always bought the sound guy and doorman a drink before the show. This courtesy always came as a surprise and went a long way in developing good relationships with these folks. As a result, we enjoyed better treatment both at the door and onstage during our repeat performances at their venues.

Bring a list of contacts who you know are coming to the show and if possible, meet up with them at the venue before you hit the stage. Offer to lend a hand to club personnel or the promoter. Sometimes, assisting a stressed-out promoter with something unrelated to your performance will be all it takes to cement a good future working relationship with that promoter.

And most importantly... play a great show!

Post-show

Just before the show is over, arrange for one of your marketing reps, a friend or a fan to position himself or herself by the exit and distribute promotional items to the exiting crowd. Remember that it is better to distribute these items after the show, when the crowd is excited about having just seen the band and is more likely to hold onto free giveaways. As mentioned before, another good post-show place to distribute applicable items is under the windshield wipers of cars parked in the venue's parking lot.

Promo pieces you could distribute after a show could include stickers, posters, cassette samplers or specialty items. Be careful to find out in advance if the club has any restrictions with giveaway items. For example, some clubs don't allow artists to pass out stickers. If none of these items have been manufactured, design a simple flyer noting your album's availability at one or more of your retail stores and distribute that. You might even ask one or more of these stores whether they would be interested in honoring a "coupon" to sell your CDs at a discount to anyone who attended the show. This coupon could be a flyer that you design and hand out after the show or a cassette sampler stickered with the discount information (ie: "two dollars off the new album at Amoeba Records with this cassette!").

Selling stuff

The best time to sell your CDs and merchandise is after a successful show. In advance of the show, find out where the club will allow you to set up your goods for sale and any policy they may have surrounding merch sales (some venues demand a % of goods sold and request that their staff sell the stuff for you). Make sure that at some point during the show you announce that you will have merchandise for sale at the venue after the show. The band manager should start selling merchandise directly after the last song and the band members should join and assist him or her as soon as they are finished moving their gear off the stage. There are two reasons that the manager and the band should be directly responsible for selling merchandise. First, selling merchandise obviously involves handling your money and only those you trust should handle your money. Secondly, friends and fans will want to hang out with the band members after the show and will most likely approach them at the merch booth to say hello - an excellent time to ask them to buy some merch. As with distributing free tickets to your show, I strongly recommend that you do not give away any free merchandise to friends and family. They will be your earliest and biggest supporters, so they will likely be the most willing to actually pay you for your stuff. Especially in your early days, take the support - financial as well as emotional - where you can get it.

Mailing list

The best time to solicit new names for your mailing list is after a successful show.

Follow-up

For about a week after the show, you or a member of your business team or one of your marketing reps should perform follow-up activities. This is an extremely critical, often forgotten final step in the performance marketing process.

Call your contacts who were in attendance to thank them for their support and see if they enjoyed the show. Ask for their feedback, make them feel like their opinions matter (because they do) and take criticism well. Make updated pitches to each contact as appropriate (trying to get an add on the radio station, a concert review in the press etc.).

Call the venue and thank all the folks who helped make the show possible - the promoter, owner, bouncer, sound guy etc. this will go a long way towards developing good relationships with venues. If you are unable to get the appropriate folks on the phone, write simple thank you cards and mail or drop them off at the venue. Just make sure they know you put in your thanks.

Call all your family, friends and fans who were in attendance and thank them for their support. Don't take their attendance for granted.

A week after the show, check to see if sales have increased at your retail accounts, if airplay has gone up at your radio stations and if concert reviews appear in your press accounts.

For a week or two after the show, you may want to distribute flyers to the music community noting the album's availability at your retail stores. This keeps your act fresh in everyone's mind and helps to maintain the buzz developed from the performance for as long as possible.

As founder/CEO of The Tiwary Entertainment Group and StarPolish, Vivek J. Tiwary is involved in production, management, marketing and investment in film, theater, music and television. Vivek is also an accomplished writer and director of music videos and short films and a record producer of musicians in all genres. Vivek is the writer and director of "The Fifth Beatle" www.fifthbeatlemovie.com a feature film currently in development and based on the life of Beatles' manager Brian Epstein. www.starpolish.com

HOW TO TURN YOUR GIGS INTO MAJOR MEDIA EVENTS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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So you're barreling along, booking tour dates, doing your promotion, playing the gigs and generally feeling pretty good about the way things are going. Yes? But you're thinking to yourself, "How can I spice things up, make them more exciting for everyone, especially the media and bring a bit more attention to this road show?" The answer—Themes.

Upon returning from New Orleans where I moderated a panel on "Accessing the Media." My panelists were a music critic, a publicist and a radio programmer. At one point during the workshop our attention was focused upon creating media events to capture audience, press, TV and radio. We were not talking about media events for visiting dignitaries. We were discussing a simple CD release and how, with a little creative mind expansion, some planning and some outreach to community businesses and organizations, you can turn that simple CD release into a media event. So what does it take to make the media notice you? How can you incorporate this approach each time you want to stir things up?

First, let's talk about themes. I always teach my seminar attendees to crystallize a description of their act into a single sentence and then into three to five words. If we take this approach a bit further, think about how you can create a theme around a CD title, the type of music you play, your name, the title song you want to push to radio, create a name for the upcoming tour etc. For example, the publicist on the panel had worked with B.B. King. Not only did they focus on the Blues genre by working the color blue into all the decorations when hosting a restaurant event, but they manipulated a menu of foods to include everything with "King" in the name—King Crab Legs, Chicken a la King, you get the idea. When planning, these ideas were incorporated into the invitations, press releases and all of the pre-promotion to get people and the press excited about the event and what they could expect when attending this shin dig. It grabbed their attention.

Another angle that becomes very important is how you involve community businesses and organizations. When you approach a restaurant or club about hosting a CD release, they are likely to pull out their room rental sheet and begin tallying up costs to give you an estimate. But, if you approach them with a theme that reaches beyond just you and your CD release and incorporates a local, regional or national charitable organization, then they start figuring "in-kind" services as their donation and the media attention the event is likely to get. The theme gives them something to get excited about and gives them a creative jumping off point. As a marketing tool, all involved in supporting a theme become inspired co-workers eager to add their specialty to the overall product or event. It really does get people's creative juices flowing. When the event is coordinated so that a charity is the ultimate beneficiary, media coverage grows exponentially. Businesses are more likely to donate services in exchange for association with the event and the subsequent media attention they'll receive. This attention far outweighs that which they might receive from straight advertising. The event takes on a new meaning as you bring a great deal more attention to the cause and ultimately your CD, your act and the event than would have been possible using a non-thematic approach.

It takes creative thinking, even exercising some outrageous ideas to move beyond the basics and into the realm of staging media events. Finding a theme to ignite your ideas makes it easy and more exciting for all involved. Here are a few suggestions as you consider incorporating a thematic approach into your career.

1. Think about your plans for the next two years - What events, projects, tours are in the works? Begin to think about themes for these new projects. Brainstorm with group members, managers, record labels and publicists as you discuss the next projects. Work the theme into your plans as you develop the project, tour or recording. As you begin planning for each event and begin to incorporate the theme for that event, consider the following:
2. Think about the businesses that you could involve in the theme. When ready, create a proposal that will get them excited about being an integral part of the event. Think about how this will benefit them and share that with them when presenting the proposal.
3. Think about community charities that you could align yourself with that would be a natural fit with your theme. If you are particularly interested in a specific organization, strive to create a long-lasting relationship that might span the years as you grow your career.
4. Consider your graphics, posters, colors and any design features that will enhance the overall execution of the theme to expand its impact on the media and the public.
5. Will food be involved in the event? If so, how can the theme be carried over into the catering? This can be very simple and low cost. When all the players involved are participating because it benefits a higher cause, the sponsor donates most of their costs. When you have a clever theme and a good cause, sponsors will be attracted to your event and want to participate.
6. Will a specific location be important to the theme's execution? Get any licenses you might need from the city or county. Check local event calendars to make sure your event won't interfere with another scheduled for the same day.

Now might this cost some money? Yes! Will the payoff be greater? Many times greater than sending out a few press releases hoping they get printed or even noticed. If you plan ahead and build associations as you incorporate these themes into your plan, donations, sponsorships and in-kind services will cover many costs. When you consider the cost of a large mailing or a phone campaign to get radio attention, a media event approach has potential to impact a much broader audience. As you get used to creating budgets for each project you undertake, it becomes apparent how you might dole out bits of your budget to prospective sponsors to have the costs of various line items completely covered by the sponsor. When you begin incorporating a thematic approach to each project, the planning, the budgeting and the creativity all become worth the effort as you evaluate the results. Yes, it is a bit more work initially, but the outcome is magnified many times over, placing you among the true professionals to be reckoned with in this business.

Step out of the ordinary and place your act among the unique, the outrageous and the extraordinary, who are gaining momentum in their careers because they dared to be more interesting than the competition. It all starts with choosing a theme for your next project. Work that theme from all angles and you will be pleasantly surprised at the end results.

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UNDERSTANDING "DRAW"

by Diane Rapaport, Jerome Headlands Press

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Understanding draw

In old Western movies, "draw" meant pull out your six shooter. But in the music business, the word "draw" has a different meaning. For presenters of music club owners, concert promoters etc. - a band's "draw" defines how many people will come to an event on a particular day at a particular time and for a particular price. There have been many occasions when a band that is popular in New York will draw 2500 people to a concert. But in San Francisco, it cannot bring 100 people to a small club. It has no "draw." Some concert halls will fill up for a particular band when ticket prices are \$15, but not \$25. How do presenters figure out a band's draw? They will do market research. First they will look at a band's performing history (available from a band's bio, current tour dates etc. and try to ascertain how many people may have attended their shows). They may talk with other club owners and concert promoters. They will try and correlate the number of people that have come to their performances and the variables that may have affected those numbers. Variables that provide information about draw are the size of the band's mailing list; the effort the presenter put into drawing people to the gigs; the recognition of the band's name (branding); popularity of the band's CD (if they have one); word-of-mouth notice; airplay and reviews; competing bands; competing leisure activities (movies, sports, festivals, day events) etc. The results of that research will tell them what to pay a band, what to charge customers, what date to book, how large an auditorium to hire and so on. Bands that understand the needs of these businesses will work hard to tell them what they think their draw is, pulling on history, reviews, airplay etc.

Building draw

Bands who don't have a draw need to build it by playing as much as possible in the community in which they live, thereby building a local following. Here are some solutions-some standard, some creative-that help bands build draw. They can be packaged on a night with bands that do draw and who attract audiences that would be sympathetic to their music. Either they ask the club owner to help them find a band to share the stage with. Or they approach the managers of other bands and persuade them to let them open their shows. Club owners usually prefer having a strong package presented to them than trying to figure out compatible shows. Opening acts usually earn less than the expenses it takes to do the gig, as little as 10% to 20% of what is charged at the door or paid to the headline band. Doing break-even or low paying gigs is better than spending the same time in the rehearsal room. Opening for other bands is cheap education in working audiences, developing showmanship and professionalism and building draw. Once bands have played three or four times to enthusiastic audiences as a result of being packaged with draw bands, they persuade the club to let them play on their own on an off night (such as a Monday night), and, should the owner agree, the band will work extra hard at getting people into the club. If nothing else, they load the club with friends and family to ensure a full enthusiastic audience. The club owner will be impressed with the bar business he/she does that night, the band's efforts to make a good audience and the general feeling of excitement in the room. Bands most always supplement the club's promotional efforts and use the gig to spread their name around. At the very least they provide club owners with additional promotional materials to send out or put up a week before the gig.

They put up flyers in key places in their community. They are diligent in collecting names for their mailing list and using it to let friends, fans, followers and hangers on know where and when they are playing. They invite reviewers to help familiarize them with their name. Club owners are always impressed with this kind of cooperation, but most importantly, spreading the band's name around helps build draw.

Here are some imaginative ways bands have helped get people into a club so they and the club owner can make money.

Band A persuaded the club owner to underwrite a two-for-one beer tickets for the night they were scheduled to perform. It was a good advertising gimmick: tickets were handed out generously two nights prior to the gig to help attract people to the club.

Band B attracted a lot of publicity by playing for the late lines at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Band C is popular in one town, but has few fans in a nearby city. They contact a band in that city that performs on a regular basis and asks if they can do the first warm-up (opening) set. They offer to do the same for them in their town. As an added incentive, they offer to share their mailing lists. The mutual interests of both bands are served; and so are the needs of the club owner who may book the new band sometime in the future.

Building draw is more than just promoting the gig and showing up. The band has to put on a good professional show for its audience. They start on time; they don't take a long time tuning, adjusting, talking among themselves and forgetting they are being watched by an audience that comes ready to be entertained. They pace their sets well. They handle transitions between songs easily, without too much lost time. They speak clearly into the mic, say what they have to say briefly and then get going. They relate in a friendly way to the audience. They make themselves interesting to watch as well as to listen to. If they have a "beef" with a band member, they wait until they are off-stage.

Diane Sward Rapaport, founder and president of Jerome Headlands Press, Inc., has been a pioneer in the field of music business education. In 1976, after extensive work as an artist's manager for the late Bill Graham's Fillmore Management, Ms. Rapaport began teaching. Music Works was the predecessor to Ms. Rapaport's successful book How to Make and Sell Your Own Recording, now in its revised fourth edition. The book teaches all the steps involved in setting up and managing a small record label; and how large and small labels operate. Ms. Rapaport lectures at numerous colleges, audio schools and artists' advocacy conferences and is currently teaching music business classes on the internet through the University of Colorado, Denver. She is available for seminars and speaking engagements. For booking information, please call Jerome Headlands Press, Inc. at (520) 634-8894.

HARNESSING YOUR FAN POWER WITH STREET TEAMS

By Daylle Deanna Schwartz, author of "Start & Run Your Own Record Label"

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Independent success is usually based on the amount of grassroots promotion that's generated. Street teams are a great way to spread the word about your music to potential fans. They can effectively generate a buzz on a your CD before you even release it. If you have the budget, you can hire street marketing companies to put them together in any market across the country. If you can't afford it, create one from fans, which I believe is the best way. This can be the single most valuable tool you cultivate to market your music. When you have fans that love your music, street teams are a very cost effective and productive marketing campaign. Tony Brummel, president of Victory Records in Chicago says, "They do anything from various promotions on the Internet; going to retail and setting up displays; securing in-store play; filling out stock check lists for us; giving us reports on what programs they see other labels' product in; compliance for listening stations that we pay for, especially at the chain level. The big thing is going to concerts and passing out posters, stickers or samplers and doing everything in their community to promote our records."

Often music lovers who are passionate about a specific genre know others who are too. Loyal fans work will work hard to spread the word. They can create excitement in record stores and keep you informed of sales and any marketing opportunities. Jay Woods, Senior Vice President and General Manager of New West Records in Austin is a big believer in having people talking up your record in stores. He says, "We don't have the luxury of a big staff. So we constantly try to recruit people to be the eyes and ears for us in the stores. There's only so much you can do over the phone. You've got to let people know you're out there." Street teams can help accomplish that.

Using street teams makes sense for getting new fans. Think about it. Which might pique your interest more? - an advertisement for an act you don't know or fans enthusiastically telling you why they love an artist. Enthusiasm is contagious. Fans are happy to help you when they're asked to. They will go to many lengths if you show appreciation for their efforts. Let fans know that you have a street team. Recruit members whenever you can. Get them excited about helping you. Have a place on your website for people to sign up to join. List what specific things you'll need help with.

You need help with your website? Let them know. Someone to call media or radio stations? Ask! A fan may have or know someone who has, the skills you need. Valerie Vigoda, lead singer and electric violinist for GrooveLily, is a great example of an act that's harnessed the power of their fans. They had a member of their street team act as their publicist for years. This fan went on to actually work for a PR company, so it was mutually beneficial. Announce what you're looking for at all gigs. Encourage people to get friends involved. Keep a record of where fans live so you can tap into those in markets you tour. Fanpower is a force that can seriously help advance an artist's career. It can create the grassroots awareness that's necessary to sell CDs, book gigs, bring people to your website, get press and get you to the next level.

When you tour, ask for help in each market. Street team members can give out flyers, hang posters and do whatever they can to promote your gig. They can recommend radio stations to approach, ask stores to bring you in for in-store promotion and get stores to carry your CD. They can even help you find a gig if you don't know venues in their region. Recruit fans to work a merch table when you perform. In return, give them free tickets to your gigs, T-shirts and whatever else you can do to make them feel special. Hang with them a little at the gig. Ask fans to go into chatrooms and post messages on the bulletin boards of artists who are similar to you. They can talk you up to music lovers who might love you too, if they knew about you. Make sure you have a good website that these potential fans can be invited to.

Show great appreciation for members of your street teams, whenever you can. Create a separate newsletter for street team members. Let them know your news first. Make it personal. Talk to them like friends, because they are! Thank individual members for specific things in the newsletter. It will inspire others to do things to get their name in it. You can't make fans feel too special! And, that's all most want for helping. Give them special t-shirts, advance copies of new releases, a song no one else has and any perks you think of. When fans feel like a part of something special, they'll work hard.

Create a community among your fans, as GrooveLily did when they began their Petal Pushers (PP) program, which you should all check out on their website. www.groovelily.com Valerie Vigoda says they create a sense of community to make their team feel special – because they are. They work together to spread the word and it's very organized. Vigoda explains, "The Petal Pushers turned into their own vibrant, growing community of friends. They have gatherings and parties. There is an active online discussion group and we make "exclusives" available to the PPs as often as we can. We put one very avid Petal Pusher in charge of the program. He's the point person - asks each PP how they'd like to be involved and encourages them to do what they're comfortable with: postering, flyering, contacting media, giving sampler CDs out, helping at the merch table at gigs and in some cases, promoting shows. A small group of PPs funded our bumper stickers, which say 'Petal Pusher Powered!' People enjoy being part of a community, helping to spread the word about music they like... all we do is show appreciation as much as we can and try to channel their incredible energies!"

Street promotion is important for grass roots awareness. If you give posters to your street team members in different markets, they can go to retail stores and talk to buyers about pushing your CD. Ask street team members to go to any place that a potential fan might go. Encourage them to let you know when they're going to music events that fans of your genre attend, especially at a large venue. Give them T-shirts (preferably with your website on it) to wear. Ask them to give out postcards, samplers, stickers or any swag with your name and website on it. Onno Lakeman, of Red to Violet, a duo based in Holland, says, "We have given people T-shirts and flyers for UK festivals and it works. In the U.S. we did the same during events so that thousands of music lovers visiting the festival see someone wearing the shirt and handing out flyers." Street team members that can tap into the fans of other artists can help increase your following greatly.

Where might potential fans shop? Fans can bring promotional material to retail stores that music lovers may go into. These stores don't have to sell the CDs. But they might give out swag to support the music, if enthusiastic fans approach them. Tony Brummel says, "That's a big alternative marketing area for a label like us - a lot of alternative type accounts that might be interested in our artists will do things for us, outside regular music retail. For example, we continually supply skateboard shops, surfboard shops, place like that, with free music, t-shirts and giveaway items. In turn, they'll give out our samplers, put up posters and play the CDs in their store. They don't sell the CDs. We still want sales to be in music retail." Many stores play music. Why not yours! And if you don't care about retail sales numbers, ask them to sell it too.

If someone from a foreign country orders your CD off of CD Baby, contact him or her and invite them to join your fans. Offer to send them 5 free CDs for their friends with a pile of postcards advertising your music. They can leave the cards in record shops, clubs and other places that music lovers can pick them up. People who've done it say their orders in those cities picked up when a fan distributed cards. Then all of those people can be invited to join your street team too. With the Internet, street teams can be anywhere. Tap into this source of fan power and your career can spread its wings more.

Daylle Deanna Schwartz is a music industry coach/consultant, speaker and author of the best-selling I Don't Need a Record Deal! Your Survival Guide for the Indie Music Revolution, Start & Run Your Own Record Label and The Real Deal: How to Get Signed to a Record Label (Billboard Books). Daylle also publishes Daylle's News & Resources, a free music industry newsletter and Self-Empowerment Quarterly, also free. daylle@daylle.com www.daylle.com www.idontneedarecorddeal.com has resources for advancing in the music industry.

DOING YOUR OWN PUBLICITY

by Jay Flanzbaum, Onlinegigs

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So you finally put a bunch of dates together and are going to do a small tour. I realize it was hard work putting the shows together but your job is hardly done. The same processes that apply to booking gigs also apply to doing your own publicity. You need to compile the press contact information, send them out your own performance information and then have a consistent, professional follow-up procedure.

Presumably, most of the shows on your tour are in markets that you have never been to before and in places where no one has ever heard of you. Well that certainly sounds like a good time but you'd better have a good publicity plan. And while some may think it romantic to play a few of your gigs to nobody but the bar staff, most clubs will never take another chance on you unless you have worked hard to publicize your show. That means every show equally as hard, the Monday night in Osh Kosh as much as the Saturday night in Gotham.

Every venue should have their own official media list, (and if they don't you should compile one for them and they will forever be indebted to you). The list should be full of the specific contacts that the talent buyer has relationships with. These are also the people most likely to be interested about your particular event.

You will need the media list for every venue you are playing on your tour and the organization to send out a formal release to each of them. You will need to create a separate release document for each gig and for each media contact in the market. Your release should be brief and to the point, three to four paragraphs at most. Local newspapers and radio stations are pummeled with information everyday; they do not have the time to read more than a few paragraphs.

Don't forget your vital event information. At a minimum you should include: Location Name, Location Address, Location Phone, Location Website, Event Date, Event Time, Age Limit, Ticket Price, Other Bands On the Bill and any Notes you want to include. Releases should be sent a maximum of 6-8 weeks before your event. Every media contact will have a deadline for you to submit your event information. Some contacts will require a fax be sent and others will prefer e-mail, be sure to send your information via the proper method or you risk it getting lost in the shuffle.

Wait a few days or a week before starting to follow up. Get to right the point when you call: you are following up on the release that you sent and seeking possible coverage or interviews. Have your information ready and be prepared to sell yourself.

Jay Flanzbaum of Onlinegigs got his start as a booking agent putting together national and regional tours for independent bands. Those years running a boutique agency inspired the creation of Onlinegigs, an incredibly powerful booking and promotional tool for independent bands and agents. www.onlinegigs.com

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS THE KEY TO NEW ARTIST SUCCESS TODAY

by Les Vogt, Entertainment Consultant

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The dictionary defines an entrepreneur as a "risk-taker who has the skills and initiative to create a business." Associated synonyms are... administrator, backer, businessperson, contractor, executive, impresario, industrialist, manager, organizer, producer and promoter...

Most of the above definitions pretty much outline the job description required for an entertainer to succeed in today's music business environment. Many booking agents and promoters are becoming extinct animals because of their inability to conquer the internet. Much of the talent and their buyers are beginning to contact each other directly through websites and various internet technologies. The middlemen (mostly agents) who do not exclusively control their talent, own a specific niche market or cannot adjust to the new climate... are slowly fading away into oblivion.

Entertainers and agents must wear many different hats in order to survive in the ever changing new marketplace. The performer must often act as his/her own agent, manager and publicist, mostly because if they don't do it - who will? The business of "getting noticed" isn't easy and it certainly won't happen by itself. A lot of agents are busy learning to become producers and event planners to help them earn a living today. The most experienced agents are not particularly interested in taking the time to develop a new artist... even when an artist's potential is blatantly obvious. They understand the time and effort required to get the artist to a point of recognition and acceptance. Performers will often blindly believe they are ready when they are not. Therefore, an agent or representative can put in a great deal of time and money with an act and, at the end of the day, be fired for not bringing the performer the immediate success they were expecting.

Entertainers in specialty areas are having an especially difficult time attracting agent interest because of the thankless work required to search out buyers from those specific market groups. All told, we have a good many artists booking themselves in order to survive. At this point, it is not much of a stretch for the successful artist to become an agent for other talent. It's a natural progression for the self-managed artist. If you are a strong act with a nose for business, how hard is it to suggest another performer to a satisfied client? When a great act comes along, most buyers think the sun shines out of their back side and they're likely targets for the would-be artist/agent. Entertainers are becoming agents and it's happening more and more... we need to get used to it.

Many artists, especially in the beginning, offer their services to as many agents as possible... and they'll be only too happy to accept bookings directly from the end user (buyers and venues) as well. This is definitely the right thing to do... artists starting out, and/or those in specialty areas or with borderline abilities, will find it difficult getting gigs without pushing hard on their own. When an artist becomes successful at booking his/her own dates, it is usually because nobody else will do it. Many of these acts will eventually be good, get "noticed" and become successful through determination and persistence. But, because they have learned how to book themselves out of necessity, they will very rarely work through an agency except when the agent controls a venue or a gig they want... in which case they'll gladly pay the appropriate booking agent commission. You can hardly blame them... where were all the agents when the talent really needed them?

It is easy to understand, then, that the days of an artist passing on leads (even leads obtained from an agent booked gig) back to the agent are becoming a thing of the past. Basically, it boils down to survival... whoever gets the gig, gets the commission. Many artists believe that when they book a gig on their own, there shouldn't be any agent commission to pay. Sounds like a fair deal doesn't it? Or is it? Let's look at the other side of the picture...

Every worthwhile agent is (or should be) continually preparing promotional material, searching out and pounding new prospects as well as servicing their existing contacts with all forms of artist publicity... and making follow-up telephone calls on a daily basis. The artist is also (or should be) working hard at finding new contacts... plus, all the other agents working with the artist are likely offering the act's promo as well. Sooner or later buyers will begin receiving the same promo materials from several different agents and likely won't buy from any of them... especially if the price varies which is often the case. Buyers get nervous when prices vary and many will try to locate the acts directly (if possible) in order to get the best possible deal. The internet allows anyone the opportunity to connect to almost anyone in a matter of minutes.

Entertainers must always be alert and able to recognize what is happening in their businesses. They need to know when an agent is responsible for getting the gig (especially a re-booking) even if it comes to them directly by phone or website... and the agents have to know they will always be compensated with an appropriate booking commission. It will be this trust and confidence that will set one performer apart from the others and help build a strong, long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationship with booking agents.

It is easy to build a network of positive team players when you remain honest and forthright rather than cutting corners through false entitlement and non-payment of agent commissions.

Maintaining a positive attitude and a cooperative work ethic with all agents, producers and buyers will guarantee their continued support throughout your entire career. Failure to honor and maintain these relationships will eventually eliminate your support system ... and one day you'll wonder why you aren't working much anymore.

Les Vogt was the lead singer in Vancouver's very first rock 'n' roll recording band... "The Prowlers" who gained local popularity by playing "live" on the "Owl Prowl" radio program. He shared the stage with Bill Haley... Gene Vincent... Buddy Knox... Eddie Cochran... Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis. Les is now an independent producer, promoter and entertainment consultant. Contact www.members.shaw.ca/lesvogt lesvogt@shaw.ca

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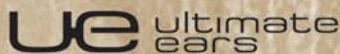


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9. USING RADIO TO BUILD YOUR FAN BASE

HOW TOURING AND RADIO WORK TOGETHER

by Bryan Farrish, Bryan Farrish Radio Promotion

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The first area we like to see artists use radio for is gigs/touring. This is because the majority of money made by an indie artist (even if they have real distro) is going to be at live gigs via CD and merch sales. It is also because the number one thing a station would like to see is the artist playing in their market. So here is how to help one, using the other...

Whether you are on tour yet or not, you should start with small market commercial regular rotation (or mix/specialty or college) and see what areas you are getting support from and using that to book additional gigs. You do NOT want to do it the other way around... trying to work radio only in areas that you are gigging... because you will not get enough mass support by working just those areas (even though you are playing there). This point seems to be difficult for many artists to understand, so I'll repeat: It's great that you are playing in a certain town, but that alone is not enough reason to only work the stations in that town, leaving out the rest of the stations around the country in that format. It is true that gigging a market is the single best thing you can do to help your radio there, just like gas is the best thing you can get to make your car run. But you first have to have a car and likewise, you first have to get your radio marketing lined up. This means working radio the way radio works: Getting spins on many stations of the same format/type at the same time, across the country, so as to build a "hit".

After you have starting working the stations, you do two things: Go to the clubs in the markets where you are getting radio support and ask all the stations (or have your promoter ask) what clubs/venues or other places the stations might recommend for you to be booked at. If it's a commercial station, they might recommend a client club (a club that advertises on the station). This is very useful because the station wants the club to advertise more; by recommending that you gig there and by giving you some spins, the station is providing what the club needs... an artist that the community will know about. Combine this with the ads that the club will hopefully run and you have what is needed for a nice turnout. If the station is a college station, the referral-to-clubs is still of use because a club is going to respect the fact that someone at the station respects the artist and felt that the artist would suitable for the club. And the spins on the college station won't hurt, either.

Some other things you can offer clubs... You or a pre-arranged intern in the club's market can arrive a day early and flyer appropriate retail locations. Also offer (or have an inter offer) to find and post club info on pertinent websites local to the market. You can even just offer to find interns who will work for the club. Keep in mind you have to do these things while you are on the road, so portable web access is important.

Bryan Farrish is an independent radio airplay promoter. He can be reached at 818-905-8038 or airplay@radio-media.com. Contact: and other articles found at www.radio-media.com.

TOUR DISTRIBUTION USING RADIO

by Bryan Farrish, Bryan Farrish Radio Promotion

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A lot of folks immediately want to try to get their product into stores using standard distribution. If you are a label, however and the project you are marketing is not a priority (maybe you are just testing it) or if you are an artist funding things yourself, then you might just consider foregoing standard distribution altogether in favor of tour distribution using radio.

Tour distribution is when you rely solely on your gigs to move your product (ie: your product is only for sale at live gigs,) and you do not bother trying to get retail placement at all. Since you are saving the time and money of trying to get distro, you get to put your energies towards increasing your radio, which will drive more people to the gigs so you can sell more product. Basically, you are just tightening a loose circle.

The traditional forms of distro (from the top down) are major, indie, self and consignment. They all require the permission or partnership of others in order to get your product onto retail shelves. Getting these approvals is very difficult for a new label and major and indie deals are basically impossible for solo artists. Even self-distro and consignment deals require tons of time and energy and money to set up for the few copies that they move... and certainly with no guarantee of profit.

However, by purposely deciding to avoid that circle entirely and putting your focus on radio instead, you can do quite well just selling your product at your gigs (and you'll get full sale price too), since for new indie labels this is where most product is sold anyway. The only exception to this might be hip hop, where distro does well even if gigs are few.

Yes, it's true that by not even trying to get into stores, you'll be catching flack from a lot of people. But invariably, these people tend to be folks who have never gotten any type of distro at all for themselves. Either they are major label people who get all their company's stuff into stores easily (not their personal stuff, of course) or someone at a music magazine/ paper... which you are not focusing on since you are concerned about radio or friends/family who just want to brag by telling people that your CD is in stores.

That leaves clubs and venues. The booking people at these places might also want to give you reasons why you need to be in-stores, until they learn of your radio. Since clubs try very hard to get on radio themselves (most just can't afford it), they really value an act that is already getting exposure. The exposure can of course be spins, but it might also be morning show gibberish, ads or even community event announcements.

So not only are you going to have more people at your gigs, you'll be booking larger clubs where the booker normally would not take your call. An act that normally sells two to ten CDs and a couple of shirts will now be able to move 20 to 50 CDs and ten shirts. And this is in just one night and is of course in addition to what the club might be paying you (outside of Los Angeles, of course). And don't forget to use the sales tactic of having someone walk through the crowd and ask every single person if they'd like to buy; don't just put your stuff on a table.

One last area which sort of crosses the boundary of gig-only sales would be in-store performances. When you are able to perform in a retail music store, many times the store will stock (sometimes even pay for) your product for several weeks after you leave. But you still have to physically go and play at their stores in the first place, so it still requires touring and thus still makes my point.

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HOW TO USE RADIO PROMOTION TO BOOST AIRPLAY AND BUILD NEW AUDIENCES

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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I often get calls from artists who want to know more about using a radio promotion company to help boost airplay and build new audiences. Most artists believe they ought to launch into a full-blown campaign as soon as they have their hot-off-the-press CD. Some artists should do just that, others should not, depending on your career goals, of course.

Use radio promotions to identify hot markets for touring. Be prepared to tour in the markets where airplay is greatest. The best use of a radio campaign is to track the cities and radio stations that have added the recording. Plan support tour dates in those cities no later than four to six weeks after the campaign has been completed. Once you have the radio stations become familiar with your music, those stations become key points of contact to help promote a tour date. When you notify the station of the upcoming tour, they are likely to extend airplay, promote the date, do phone or live interviews and possibly even work with the promoter or venue as a co-sponsor. The radio station may even be able to recommend specific venues and promoters in the area at the start of your booking process.

Use the radio promotion's campaign to leverage better dates. As you contact the various venues in the markets of greatest airplay, mention the radio campaign, the station playing the recording and what degree of airplay the recording is receiving. Knowing that radio is supporting the act can often be the persuasive factor necessary to land a date.

There are two methods of radio promotions to consider - hiring a radio promotion company or doing radio promotion on your own. Here is a set of criteria to help you decide which works best for you.

Hiring a Radio Promotions Company

Acts with intentions to expand their touring beyond their own region or to tour nationally would benefit from working with a professional radio promotions company.

Costs range from \$400-\$600 per week for an eight to twelve week campaign. Be prepared to spend at least \$2400 for an eight-week campaign and if all is going well, you might want to add an additional two to four-weeks. These costs are just for the company. Some companies charge additionally for expenses like shipping and phone. You need to have enough promo copies of the CD available as well. Each promotions company will tell you how many stations they service.

Select a company that is well established in promoting to your genre of music and radio format. Some of the main formats are: A3, Americana, NAC/Smooth Jazz, Rock, Adult Contemporary, Country, Adult Alternative, Gospel, R&B, New Age, World Music, Latin, Rap, Urban, College depending on which radio chart is used.

Know which format your recording fits

If you intend to use radio promotions as a tool to push the act to the next level, you should research formats and listen to the stations playing those formats prior to making the recording. When interviewing companies to work with, they will review the recording before taking on the project. They are just as anxious to have a successful campaign as you are. They have a reputation to maintain with the various radio stations. Their credibility is at stake with every project they pitch.

Ensure that the recording will be available in the markets where the campaign is concentrating.

This can include signing with a distributor who will stock the local stores or it can mean the recording is available through any of the online retailers. If the recording begins to receive airplay, radio stations want to make purchase information available to callers.

Self-Managed Radio Promotion

Consider the range of your touring

If you tour within a specific region or remain close to your home base, it may prove more cost effective for you to manage your own radio promotion. Although some regions of the country do have radio promotions companies that concentrate solely on a single region, most conduct national promotions campaigns. If you have no intention of touring outside your region or plan to move more slowly, region by region, the expense for a national campaign may be prohibitive and unnecessary at this time. The money spent on the regions you do not intend to tour will be wasted. When touring is restricted to one area, it is easier to select tour cities and research the appropriate radio stations on your own, city by city, as you need them. Your costs are then spread out over an extended period, as are the necessary promo CDs. You are able to concentrate on each city you intend to tour. The main concern for you is scheduling time to send the promo CDs, make initial calls to the station to check on the CD arrival and then at least once a week, make a follow-up call to check on the airplay the CD is receiving. This is no small task and it is time consuming.

Hire a friend or fan part time or assign someone from the band.

The solution to the time consuming nature of this project might be to hire someone for a few weeks at an hourly rate, the total being much lower than the professional company. If they are organized and have a pleasant phone manner, they can accomplish much the same result as a professional company. The difference will be that the professional company has an established reputation and music directors at the various stations will take their calls. Your employee will have to spend some time establishing a relationship first. Then again, your campaign doesn't necessarily have to be completed within a specific time frame. You are able to target the cities of greatest importance as you decide to set tour dates in those markets.

When making the recording budget, include money for promoting the recording

Set aside dollars for shipping costs, phone calls, promotional CDs and packaging materials. Research the number of stations you are likely to target and make sure you have included that number in your initial count for manufacturing. Most artists' recording budgets omit any additional money for promotion. Make booking gigs and building an audience easier for yourself by designating money to market the new CD. This in turn will help leverage your bookings at targeted venues in desired markets.

The goal of any radio promotion campaign, large or small, is to create audience awareness of your group and the new recording. National promotions companies use charts to mark progress. If you choose to do your own regional campaign, your benchmark will be the number of stations that begin playing the CD. If those stations report to a specific chart, it is not unheard of for an independently, self-promoted artist's CD to achieve chart notoriety. I've worked with a number of artists who conducted their own campaigns with great success and charted. They spent many hours of each day calling and then recalling. Their efforts were rewarded. Yours can be as well.

Ultimately, your goal is to use the radio airplay to boost bookings and build your fan base. Radio recognition helps both causes. Include some aspects of radio campaigning in your marketing program.

*Jeri Goldstein is the author of, **How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED.***

She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program

Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

COMPARING STATIONS TO TOURING

by Bryan Farrish, Bryan Farrish Radio Promotion
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Invariably, when people first go to a promoter, they want to start with lots of regular-rotation spins on the biggest stations in the country. While you can't blame them (especially if they are brand new to the business), we have to quickly try to steer them towards something they can realistically make happen.

Interestingly, these same people already understand touring and the difficulties involved there. They know that they can't start their very first tour by booking the Hollywood Bowl or Shea Stadium. But why not? After all, if they live in LA, why couldn't they just perform at the Hollywood Bowl on a night that it's not already booked? Doesn't the Bowl want to support local talent? Then, after the Bowl, why wouldn't Shea stadium call you for a booking since you are now on a major stadium tour? Further, since you live in LA, why would the Hollywood Bowl make the MISTAKE of booking some other artist who does NOT live in LA?

The reason of course is that large stadiums have a lot of seats to fill and it's a waste of the time for the stadium staff to deal with any artist that does have enough awareness to make use of the stadium's size.

Fortunately, most new artists understand they have to start in small clubs or even smaller coffee shops. And they also understand that in order to start their first tour, they need to string together a series of these small gigs from city to city, giving no attention or energy at all to trying to book stadiums, since this would be a complete waste of time.

The same situation applies to radio, except instead of caring about how many people are sitting in seats (and about how many NEW people are sitting in seats because they heard that YOU would be playing,) stations care about how many people are tuning in and more importantly, how many NEW people will be tuning in when they learn that YOUR song/album will be played.

Just because the station that you (and all your friends) listen to is a large commercial station in your hometown, it does not mean that this station has any reason to play your song/album. Large commercial stations have a certain size (awareness) requirement of the artists that they play. This is one of the reasons that they will play new songs from established artists (and brand new artists from major labels,) because these artists (via TV, stadium and magazine exposure) will bring new listeners to the station. A new artist on his/her own label, however, will not.

So, what is the radio equivalent of a small-club tour? Answer: A small-market regular-rotation campaign or a commercial specialty/mixshow campaign or college radio campaign. These stations/shows do not live and die by the number of new listeners that they bring in every day, the way large-market regular-rotation stations do.

A small-market regular-rotation campaign is so useful that it even has its own set of airplay charts (commercial specialty/mixshow and college campaigns do too). Matter of fact, you can make an entire career out of just these small airplay campaigns and small-club performances, just the way you can make a career out of running a restaurant in your local neighborhood without ever trying to compete with McDonalds. It's not a huge success, but it is a living.

Yes you can eventually start a marketing campaign to move up to medium-market stations, once the small-market stations are doing good. The difficulty and cost is roughly equivalent to booking and filling 1000-seat venues around the country. And even larger stations can follow next; the difficulty and cost at this level is probably similar to booking and filling 5000-seat venues around the country and thus is beyond what new artists/labels can do on their first time out; several releases (and years of experience) are required.

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RADIO STATION VISITS

by Bryan Farrish, Bryan Farrish Radio Promotion
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There is one radio marketing tool that sparks a lot of interest in the new artists/labels that can manage it: Station visits. While majors usually reserve station visits for their priority artists (because of the expense), a lot of well-financed indies... even if they have never done radio before... like the idea also and they will many times put their dollars into visits before putting them into other areas of radio marketing. This is probably due to the familiarity that these folks have with the concept of traveling itself (more so than with the other radio techniques,) not to mention the nice thought of being able to get out-and-about. This is good, since station visits are one of the most powerful (yet expensive) ways of marketing to small and small-medium market stations. See our market-size list here... www.radio-media.com/markets

What makes station visits so useful? To start with, stations can see for themselves that the artist is for real and loves his/her music and that the artist believes this enough to make the trip. It's very rare for a non-local artist to be able to come by a station for a visit, because of the costs and time involved in doing so. And it's of no use just visiting one or two stations... you have to do the whole country (in your format) in just a few months... or else it's just not effective. Small market visits are also rare, because when indie labels try visiting, they usually try the top markets where they don't have a chance, instead of the small and small-medium markets where they are more welcomed. Thus, the smaller stations really remember visits when they happen.

Before attempting visits, it must be decided whether or not the artist has the people skills that are needed to make the connections; the music is not important at this point. When an unknown artist visits a station, he/she will be judged on personality alone; only then will the station care to hear any music performed by the artist.

And speaking of live station performances, they are something that are always wanted by the artist and indeed, if the artist gets along with the station and if there is no rush, a live studio performance might just happen (the station will ask you). Just don't have the artist march in with instrument in tow. Try to be more subtle.

While in town, the artist can do some incredibly important marketing, such as shaking hands with the local store music buyers/managers, music writers, TV hosts and club promoters. It will be probably be the only chance the artist will ever have to meet them in person, unless you are very successful and the artist gets to come back in a year or so.

The visits will probably need to be set up by your radio promoter... especially if the station is planning any promotions around the visit. But a PR person can do it too. Target all stations in your format in markets 150 and smaller. The airfare and motel costs will be \$30k to \$50k for a few months of visits, not including, of course, money for the artist. And the schedule will probably have the artist zig-zagging around the country; but it's more important to hit all the stations during the life of a single, than to try to save time/money by grouping close cities together and thus ending up with a week or two of dead time between visits. If done properly, the artist will be in a new market every day. And lastly, save the major and medium markets (1-100) for your second year... you don't want to be spinning your wheels now.

Bryan Farrish is an independent radio airplay promoter. He can be reached at 818-905-8038 or airplay@radio-media.com. Contact: and other articles found at www.radio-media.com.



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10. SPONSORSHIP

FINDING A SPONSOR

by Bronson Herrmuth, author of "100 Miles To A Record Deal"
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Success in the music business is about separating yourself from the pack. One of the quickest and most effective ways to do this as an artist is to find sponsors.

Unless you live in some unpopulated remote region of the world, then you are probably surrounded by plenty of potential sponsors for your music. Basically any individual, company or corporation doing business in your area is a possible sponsor. All it really takes is them wanting to sponsor you and then you feeling good about promoting whatever the product is that they make, sell or distribute.

In a nutshell that's how a sponsorship works. Your sponsor "supports" you and in return you promote their product.

How does a sponsor support?

A sponsor can support you in many different ways depending on their product and how active they are in promoting it. To give you a real-life example, my band once had a sponsorship deal with Budweiser through a regional distributor who we met through a club owner friend after we played his club. We were invited to this distributor's warehouse where we were given T-shirts, ball caps, fancy mugs, stickers - all kinds of Budweiser merchandise ... including several cases of their beer.

They paid to have a big banner made with our logo on it, done very professionally and to our satisfaction. We were asked to hang it up behind us whenever we performed.

In one corner of the banner it said "Budweiser presents" with their logo along with our logo, which was much bigger and more prominent. None of this cost us a dime. Being sponsored by Budweiser definitely gave us an edge up on our competition when it came time to get gigs in the clubs.

How do you find a sponsor for your music?

1. Target the businesses that actively promote their product on your local radio or TV stations - the ones that are already showing their desire and ability to promote their product effectively in your area, city or town.
2. Before you visit, do your homework. Find out who is in charge, then make an appointment and go meet them. Chances are you may already know them if you live in a small town or city. Maybe someone you know already has a relationship with him or her. Use any and all connections you have to get started.
3. If they run radio spots and you have original music already professionally recorded, see if they are open to using your music for the background music "bed" in their radio promotions.
4. If you are a songwriter, write them a song. This can be tremendously effective as a starting point to approaching a potential sponsor. Walk in and play them a song you wrote about them and their product.
5. Car dealerships are great places to start looking. Many bands are riding down the road right now in a vehicle that was provided by their sponsor. Good chance that their name or logo is professionally painted on that vehicle along with their sponsor's. Car dealerships also do lots of promotions and events where they have live music for their customers. Even if you approach them for a sponsorship and they decline, making them aware of you and your music may turn into some great paying gigs somewhere down the road.

6. Radio stations can be awesome sponsors. Many radio stations produce and promote concerts and in most cases use local or area talent to open these concerts. That's a lot of free radio exposure if they sponsor you (or even if they just like you). If you have a record out, having a radio station for a sponsor can really help you get exposed in your immediate area quickly. Approach the ones that play your style of music.

Bronson Herrmuth is author of the book "100 Miles To A Record Deal". He also runs SongRepair.com whose mission is to actively assist its songwriter clients by providing them with the information, advice and direction they are looking for. www.songrepair.com

HOW TO GET TOUR SUPPORT FOR YOUR MUSICAL ACT

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Touring is expensive, especially when you tour with more than two people. There are so many costs associated with launching a tour and many of those costs are incurred before playing the first date. As an independent artist managing your own career and possibly running your own record label, you are responsible for fronting all the money for marketing, recording and eventually touring. There are ways, however, to get some financial support for some of the touring costs. It takes a little work, some research and some creative thinking and can result in having someone else pay for some of the touring expenses.

The key to this process is to first carefully consider your act, the members of the group and what connections each may have that might provide a lead to a potential support source. The other main factor to consider is what are the benefits your group can offer any potential supporter. To accomplish this process, consider having a brainstorming session with group members and make a series of lists to guide you toward finding tour support.

Identify some of your touring expenses

The following list will get you started. Add to this list with your own specific touring items that will be appropriate for tour support.

- promotional materials for a specific tour- posters, flyers, photographs
- merchandise items - t-shirts, hats, concert programs etc.
- hotel accommodations
- touring vehicle - band owned or rental
- public transportation- airfare, train, bus
- concert venue rental fees for self-promoted concerts
- advertising
- office expenses- shipping and mailing costs, phone
- gas expense
- equipment purchase or rental
- special promotional events
- guest artist touring with act

List the connections each of you may have

This might include friends or associates who own a business, work for banks or utilities, advertising or travel agencies, printers, hotels, instrument manufacturers etc. This is where your mailing list can also be an invaluable resource. Most artists collect names, addresses, e-mail addresses and possibly phone numbers. Very few, however, ask those that sign the mailing list for their occupation. As you complete these exercises, it will become evident that having this piece of information may benefit future projects. Your mailing list is a marketing tool listing people that have attended a performance and have indicated their interest in continuing to receive information about your group. They volunteered their contact information. Now use that list to its greatest advantage.

Consider the following:

- What instrument does each band member play?
- What instrument stores or equipment companies do you frequent?
- What hotel chains do you frequent?
- What specialty stores do you shop for clothes, food, office supplies?
- What car rental company do you use most often?
- Where do you have your vehicle serviced?
- Where did you purchase your vehicle?
- Where do you have your printing done?
- Where do you do your banking?
- Do you have any specific sports or organizational ties?

You may come up with many other sources for potential tour support relationships as you continue to brainstorm and make your lists.

Identify the benefits you offer

What can your group offer any of the potential support sources that will be of some benefit to their business or organization. By identifying the needs or concerns of the business or organization, you will be helping them in return and this must be emphasized in any proposal made to the business.

The most common return benefit is advertising. By placing the business' logo or "Tour support provided by XYZ" on all of the promotional materials or mention the business name in any media interviews, the business gains access to a new audience. Advertising and opening new markets, finding new customers is a high priority for every business and organization. Your band can offer potential tour supporters a creative, way to reach new customers by supporting your tour. It needs to be an attractive package. You need to demonstrate how broad your outreach will be, tell them what kinds of marketing you plan to do. It is especially attractive if the

audience you plan to target is a good match for the potential supporter. For example, if you perform shows for families or children, a good match may be a baby-clothing store.

There are other kinds of benefits that may be attractive to businesses or organizations. Perhaps a specific tour is to benefit a charity in some way. By linking businesses interested in supporting that charity with your tour, they achieve name recognition as being a community minded organization. Certain funds can be funneled through the charity thereby offering supporters possible tax deductible benefits. (Check with the charitable organization regarding qualifying tax deductions).

Individuals that are interested in helping your band progress, may also be a good match to fund certain expenses. They may not require advertising benefits but may have other ideas of how they can be recognized for their involvement. You might consider offering to play for an event the individual is planning in return for their support. Some people working for a company may get their company to offer you tour support in return for the band playing a company event.

As you identify each potential supporter, link them with a specific portion of your expenses i.e., a local printer with printing costs or a hotel chain with complimentary hotel rooms for all tours during the coming year. You get the idea.

The key to winning supporters is having an attractive tour package with well-planned marketing coupled with finding businesses, organizations and individuals that

have an interest in your band's success. As you research some of these potential supporters, find out what your band can offer each supporter to maximize the benefits to them for their generous support.

Start with one item on your list of expenses as you begin to incorporate this tour support idea into your touring plans. Poster printing is a good starting option since it is visible and tangible. It is easier to get one sponsor for a tangible item, than to attempt finding many sponsors all at once to cover all your expenses. Once you've been successful with one sponsor and their name has been seen on your posters, other potential supporters may be more easily won as you show them examples of other supporter's contributions. A number of my clients have incorporated this sponsorship tour support program into their touring routinely and have successfully reduced specific tour expenses during this last year. I wish you similar success.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

HOW TO GET BIG SPONSORSHIP MONEY FOR YOUR BAND, TOUR, EVENT OR PRODUCTION

by Thom King, Multimediary Entertainment Marketing
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Touring is a band's greatest opportunity for success. But touring can be very expensive. Getting your tour, band or event sponsored is critical to your success.

Sponsorship can offset production, travel and promotion costs and virtually any other expenses. The right sponsor can also significantly augment your advertising, publicity and promotions expenses. However, getting sponsorship participation can take a lot of effort and commitment on your part. You will need to prove to potential sponsors that your opportunity will deliver a good return on their investment.

The following is a step by step procedure we have used at Multimediary Entertainment Marketing to secure hundreds of thousands of sponsorship dollars for numerous tours, events, artists, television programs and feature films. We have done this for several major record labels and both signed and unsigned artists. Now we want to share our knowledge and experience so you can do this on your own.

Create an introduction letter

The first step in securing sponsorship dollars is to craft a professional introduction letter highlighting the features and benefits of the opportunity you are offering.

Some of these features and benefits might include inclusion in advertising, product sampling, banner display and more. After you have given a brief overview of the opportunity, close the letter by asking their permission to send them a more detailed presentation. The introduction letter is the most critical part of the sponsorship success equation. If well crafted, it will get your foot in the door.

Demographic analysis

Understanding your audience is critical. Potential sponsors will want to know who you are reaching. The best way of gathering this information is right at your finger tips. Call radio stations you think should be playing your music. Ask for an account executive and ask this person to fax you their Tapscan, Scarborough or Prism demographic and qualitative information. In all likelihood you will now be armed with a detailed overview of what your audience looks like and can match this up with potential sponsors. You will also have a great hit list of companies to start hitting.

Creating your sponsorship presentation

Now that you have your introduction letter and demographic profiles, you are ready to begin creating your presentation. The presentation will seal the deal with sponsors only if it contains all the information they will need to make an educated decision on your opportunity. The presentation must contain the following elements:

1. A two to three paragraph overview of your opportunity.
2. A detailed overview of tour routing, markets and venues.
3. An overview of what type of public relations and media support you expect to have and how the sponsor will be included.
4. Your audience and demographic profile.
5. Tour partnership deliverables or what the sponsor will receive for their investment.
6. The total investment you are looking for from your sponsor and the return a sponsor can expect.

Now that you have all of the pieces of the puzzle you are ready to go out and shake the trees for sponsorship dollars. With effort and consistency you will land a sponsor. Always deliver on what you promise to retain your sponsors year after year. Under deliver and they will promptly kick you to the curb. Our philosophy is to always under promise and over deliver. With this philosophy you will be assured ongoing solid sponsorship participation for years to come.

Multimediaary was founded by Thom King in late 2001. Multimediaary has worked with Virgin Records, Capital Records and Universal, Warner Brothers, Lions Gate Films and several other major and independent record labels and entertainment production companies. Multimediaary has also worked with several consumer brands including: Lifestyles Condoms, Miller Beer, Red Bull, Monster Energy Drink, Dr. Martins, Snapple, Honda Motor Company, British Petroleum, Adidas and more. Multimediaary Entertainment Marketing can get your tour, band or event on the right track to sponsorship. For details and pricing please visit our website at: www.multimediaary.com/sponsorship.html

THE PERFECT MARRIAGE OF ARTIST AND CORPORATE PARTNER

by Thom King, Multimediaary Entertainment Marketing

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The synergistic partnership between the artist and the corporate sponsor is the impetus for a new business model in the music industry.

Everyone in the industry is aware of what a struggle it can be for an artist to ever see a penny for their efforts after getting a record label deal and secondly how increasingly difficult it has been for the record labels to stay competitive as well as profitable. These ongoing problems have, however, created amazing opportunities.

Artist and partner working in concert

The first component in creating a "strategic marketing partnership" is finding a corporate partner who is ready, willing and able to sponsor an artist. For over a decade, Multimedary has been working with a variety of companies in numerous categories ranging from the beverage industry to the auto after market. We have established nearly 2000 contacts with VPs of marketing and brand managers.

Moving advertising and entertainment marketing budgets towards artist partnerships is logical for several reasons. First, consumers rarely make buying decisions based entirely on a print ad, radio, billboard or TV commercial. Buying decisions are emotional and often are influenced by word of mouth or the endorsement of a taste maker and influencer of peer groups. These taste makers and influencers are usually performing artistes, sports figures and other celebrities. For example, in his hay day, Michael Jackson was able to move many to join the "Pepsi Generation." Remember the one glove thing? How about shaved heads, baggies, men's eyeliner, leg warmers, tribal tattoos, belly rings, low rise pants and midriff tops - the popularity of all of these fads was started by and perpetuated by a taste maker. This is the value proposition that generates buy-in from corporate partners.

The second component of the strategic marketing partnership is the artist. Above all, the primary concern of the artist is the integrity of their art. Their greatest fear is that aligning with a corporate partner will cause their audience to perceive them as selling-out. As a result, they risk losing their credibility as an artist. Corporate partners also face risks. Mega stars, once they align themselves with a super brand and an "in your face" overt endorsement campaign, may lose their credibility as a taste maker. In this case, everyone loses.

The million dollar question is, "How can a partnership be built without jeopardizing the integrity, art and 'street cred' of the artist?" The solution is obvious, get to know the artist. Know the artist on a personal level. Find out their likes and dislikes, what companies they admire, what they eat, what they drink, what they wear, what do they do in their spare time, their hobbies and political views. You can then create a list of interests that you can work from. Compare this list to a list of potential corporate partners that fall into the artist's interests, tastes and sensibilities. Now that you have a "hit" list, you are ready to create a partnership.

He who wins, wins through win-win

You have all of the pieces, now comes the "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine" part of the equation. This is where the symbiotic rubber meets the road. It is important that both partners establish a set of defined and measurable goals.

The artist and or the label is going to be interested in off-setting recoupables such as production costs, promotion and advertising, as well as tour support - all of this in addition to increasing unit sales.

The corporate partner will be expecting to build brand equity through alignment with the "taste maker" artist. They will also be looking for sell-in and pull-through opportunities as well as experiential branding and product sampling options directed toward the target market. Corporate partners need to get a specific SKU or product sold into a retailer or on-premise account (bar/nightclub/restaurant).

Here are a few ideas that could get everybody heading down the right path. Let's say, for example, you have a hair care product as your corporate partner and an artist that targets women 14-24. The artist loves the product and has embraced the partnership. The partner loves the demographic that the artist targets. Here are a few potential scenarios that this situation may create:

1. A gift with purchase program. A special co-branded CD with a unique mix of 3 or 4 tracks is attached to the partner's packaging. This provides an incentive to consumers to purchase the product. It also gets the artist and their music in front of their target audience. This is referred to a GWP Program or On-Pack Program.

Manufacturers find these very appealing because it is a gift the consumer can get nowhere else other than by purchasing their product. It is also attractive to the artist because they just moved thousands of CDs through a unique distribution channel.

2. A purchase with purchase program. This is very similar to the GWP program except the artist's special co-branded CD is available at a discount when the consumer purchases the corporate partner's product. Often times this comes with a point of purchase display featuring the artists' likeness all over it. For instance, a free standing Coca Cola display which states that when you purchase a twelve pack of Coke you can get the specially mixed, available nowhere else, CD Sample for just \$4.95.
3. Touring creates even more opportunities. An artist or label can expect substantial tour support in the form of money and in kind gifts from the corporate partner.

When I refer to "in kind" I mean that they will include the artist in the advertising campaign they currently have in place or they will augment what they already have placed with additional dollars to support the tour. What they are looking for in exchange is in-store appearances from the artist. They will also want the label or artist's street teams to do product sampling during the in-stores and in and around the concert venue. Sometimes they want to do a wrap of a tour bus with their brand. If this is the case, expect to create a VIP section in the arena and plan on an after show meet and greet session at each venue.

You will want to give the corporate partner exposure at the venue as well as long as it is permitted. This is something that should go in the rider of a performance contract with the venue or promoter. This is a very reasonable request considering the support that the corporate tour partner is bringing to the table. Having an artist do in-stores moves much more product for both the artist and partner.

Now that you have all of the pieces you are ready to capitalize on the very lucrative world of strategic marketing partnerships. But remember; be very careful who you get in bed with. Both artist and corporate partners must have the same goals as well as a commitment to each other. These types of partnerships really are like marriages. Stay within that which we call the circle of trust - and may the circle go unbroken.

Case studies

Zero 7 lifestyles condoms tour integration

LifeStyles Condoms joined in partnership with the band Zero 7. Zero 7 was voted Spin Magazine's "Baby Makin' CD of The Year." Since LifeStyles is in the business of keeping that from happening... it only made sense that Zero 7 go on the road and tout the benefits of safe sex and recommend the use of LifeStyles condoms.

LifeStyles was included on all advertising and promotion and the Zero 7 street teams handed out "Zero 7" LifeStyles Co-branded Condoms. LifeStyles made a generous financial commitment to the tour which off-set an otherwise recoupable expense and the band moved more scans due to touring. LifeStyles obviously got the endorsement of the taste maker and their product in the hands of a well-targeted audience.

Bonnie Raitt's tour

When we were asked to work on 9 time Grammy Award winning artist Bonnie Raitt's Tour it was an extreme privilege. We were given the opportunity to bring partners into Bonnie Raitt's tour. This partnership came with somewhat unique circumstances since Bonnie had never endorsed a product or company before, nor did she intend to now.

The integrity of her art was paramount. But, it was her management's intention to do a "green" tour, which embodied Bonnie Raitt's environmental stance. Each potential partner was screened by her advisors for "greenness." What culminated was a tour where transportation is run on Bio 100 non-polluting bio diesel fuel, green power for the entire tour was supplied by a partner and the integration of other tour partners who were able to display their products within the venue. Each partner was included in a program which was printed on recycled paper.

The PR for each participant is significant considering that tours like this don't happen every day.

Multimediaary was founded by Thom King in late 2001. Multimediaary has worked with Virgin Records, Capital Records and Universal, Warner Brothers, Lions Gate Films and several other major and independent record labels and entertainment production companies. Multimediaary has also worked with several consumer brands including: Lifestyles Condoms, Miller Beer, Red Bull, Monster Energy Drink, Dr. Martins, Snapple, Honda Motor Company, British Petroleum, Adidas and more. Multimediaary Entertainment Marketing can get your tour, band or event on the right track to sponsorship. For details and pricing please visit our website at: www.multimediaary.com/sponsorship.html

WHY YOU SHOULD SELL OUT: HOW RICH HARDESTY GOT FREE CDs AND A TRIP TO JAMAICA

by Scott McCormick, Disc Makers

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Business professors would do well to make Rich Hardesty a case study for Niche Marketing 101. By targeting the college fraternity crowd, he's been able to parlay his singer/songwriter talents into a full-time eight-year career. He's sold 15,000 CDs, opened for Kid Rock and Cypress Hill, gotten a major liquor company to pay for his last two albums and another company to pay for his Spring Break gigs in Jamaica. Perhaps it's not surprising he majored in business marketing in college.

Hardesty left his job at Federal Express in 1991 to take a stab at performing full time. He quickly became a college favorite, playing bars and singing songs like, "Never Wanna F*kin See You Again," and "The Doobie Song." His first album, Jones'n, became one of the best-selling CDs in his local Indiana music scene and its single, "Never Wanna Fuckin See You Again," has remained the most popular jukebox selection at Kilroy's Sports Bar in Bloomington, IL since it was first put in there in 1994.

It was at one of his college bar gigs that Hardesty learned that Jagermeister was looking for a new band to sponsor. "I sent them a video that I made of my shows so they could see how I worked the crowd," recalls Hardesty. "They monitored the bars I played at and noticed I sold a bunch of Jager when I played. One of my bars ended up selling more Jager than any other bar in the world. (38 bottles during one set!) They ended up giving me full sponsorship and paying for my last two CDs."

The Jager-sponsored promotion hasn't stopped there, however. Last year they released 250,000 copies of a CD that included one of Hardesty's songs, worldwide.

"It has my website and e-mail on it, so now I get e-mails from people all over asking how to get my CD," he says. "I have maintained a great relationship with the Jager band manager and we e-mail weekly and talk about ways to keep me rolling strong. He is currently helping me with my Jamaica Giveaway next week where two of my fans will get free round trip tickets to travel and stay with my band in March."

This year will mark Hardesty's fourth spring break tour in Negril, Jamaica. Each year Hardesty takes between 500 and 1,000 students to Negril for spring break and even gives away tickets to lucky fans. This promotion not only helps bring people to his Indiana gigs (he regularly draws 1,500 people) but it gets him to a hot spot for his target audience of college spring-breakers. And since college students from all over the U.S. visit Negril, Hardesty has been able to get exposure to students on a national level.

The first Jamaica trip was set up when I asked Sun Splash Tours in New York to pay for my band's trip to Negril provided I brought a bunch of fans from IU and Purdue. This was in 1997 and I wanted to show my fans a great cultural escape. I also wanted to do something different that would separate me from the other bands. At first the president was leery but he agreed. So, we brought a bunch of students with us and put on a great show at The Risky Business Bar and Grill. We were the only American band so we sparked a lot of attention. This Negril tour has since become so popular that some of our fans couldn't go this year, it sold out so fast.

Scott McCormick works for Disc Makers. Disc Makers offers the best-looking product, the hottest-sounding audio and the most valuable (and free) promotional tools, including free distribution, a free UPC bar code and much, much more.
www.discmakers.com

11. PLAYING NON TRADITIONAL VENUES

BOOKING NON-TRADITIONAL SHOWS AND EVENTS

Greg Johnson, StarPolish.com

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From my earliest days as a music fan, then as a record retailer, journalist, publicist and now venue owner and radio show host, I have always heard some of the greatest music that unfortunately never found an audience. For every Beatles or Rolling Stones or any number of your current favorites, there are many more of equal brilliance that remain great lost classics. No need to name names - we all have our lists and favorites and we all wonder or speculate why these favorites never made it bigger. Well, to paraphrase Bruce Springsteen, "Are You Tougher Than The Rest?" Because although art matters most, no matter how you marry that art to commerce, it is a reality that there is intense competition to find and keep an audience. While StarPolish encourages collaboration over competition among developing artists, you still need to be tougher than the rest to best build your career and fan base.

If you are having trouble booking yourself at local clubs and finding an audience in other conventional performance venues - or if you're simply looking for creative ways to expand an already successful touring schedule - then perhaps it's time to think outside the box and consider more unusual, non-traditional outlets for your live performance. Especially in today's world with many clubs that don't pay (and some that may even try to make you pay to play!) it is more important than ever to find non-traditional ways of touring and getting your songs heard. And not just to help you make a living, but to minimize the cost of finding an audience and promoting your act.

Types of Alternative Venues and Performances

Living room or house concerts

These are springing up everywhere now. I prefer to call my venue, The Blue Door in Oklahoma City, a "house concert," even though it looks like a roadhouse with an apartment and I mostly book singer/songwriters who play clubs. The Blue Door certainly has the intimacy of a house concert. But most of the time, house concerts are more intimate gatherings in a "real" living room in some suburb somewhere. These gigs are primarily acoustic or at least just low-level electric guitar and amp. Usually 50 to 70 people come and make a donation for the music and enjoy wine and whatever food is on the menu. House concerts almost always have financial guarantees to the artist because the hosts ask for reservations and usually these are great gigs for everyone. Sometimes artists will play with no P.A., sometimes the music might be out in the back yard. It is as intimate a gig as you can get and can sometimes be very significant in launching an artist's career.

Ellis Paul has been coming to the Blue Door for six years and he still plays house concerts like Suzanna's Kitchen in Wimberley, Texas. The first time Ellis was at the Blue Door we had six people in the audience and two of them were from Boston where Ellis lived. Then he had 11 and then 27 and then 47 and then he sold out with 115 at a \$15 ticket, taking 70% of the door. Now he has a very loyal Oklahoma following, as well as a rising national appreciation, which might increase when audiences see the Jim Carrey film "Me, Myself & Irene" and hear Ellis's "The World Ain't Slowing Down" on the soundtrack album. Ellis Paul has worked the trenches and now it's paying off. He has played numerous house concerts all across the country. If you are in a noisy bar, playing to just a few can be a real drag, but in a listening room it is almost always successful, no matter the turnout.

In folk music circles, house concerts have been a tradition for many years, but really only in select places - mainly Texas, California and parts of the East Coast. Now many artists not normally associated with the folk world are taking to playing house concerts. Pat Dinizio of the Smithereens recently put together a house concert tour from his fan base across the country and Cindy Bullens, whose history is really in rock & roll, is planning a similar tour this fall. For a listing of house concerts and opportunities around the country visit, www.houseconcerts.com. Also reach out to your mailing list and fan base for help in identifying and contacting folks who may want to book you in their living room.

Coffeehouses/bookstores

I put these two together since almost all bookstore gigs are in the store's cafe and it's really the same as a coffeehouse gig. If you want to book a gig at a Barnes & Noble or Borders, on a store-by-store basis, you have to go through the community relations coordinator. If you want to try to book a tour throughout the entire chain, you need to go through the corporate offices. It goes without saying that you can't get loud in these settings, but any musician worth his or her salt knows how to tone it down when necessary. Don't forget the local coffeehouses, as they might want a local solo artist or band who can play every week and bring in folks. Or they might want to find some new and interesting artist who is driving through. Sometimes in Borders and Barnes & Noble you can coordinate a CD release and have your disc on display in the music department. I have witnessed some of the most exciting shows ever in Borders, like when Bill Kirchen rocked the place without being too loud to bother book readers across the store.

Small restaurants

I know that in Oklahoma City, Galileo's restaurant (a small bistro, if you will) books performances during the week with touring musicians who are not quite ready to play the 100-seat Blue Door. I am sure this happens everywhere, at least if the owners are hip to good music and songwriters. Usually these gigs have a small guarantee because often there is no cover at the door. Probably \$50 to \$100, plus dinner, depending on your setup. Small restaurants are good alternatives when the local club or listening room won't book you yet and can translate into a good buzz around your act that will eventually give you the story and leverage you need to get into the bigger venues

Record stores

The bigger stores and independents are really not an option unless you are well known enough to warrant a CD release show. But smaller rock-oriented stores will sometimes let you set up and play and while there is usually little or no money, you are at least playing your music in a town you've never played. Because these stores are so knowledgeable about their core audience, sometimes they will initiate these concerts; other times the artists come to them and do all the legwork. Every town has at least one underground record store that promotes the most alternative or new music that is out there, so don't be shy. Get in touch with these guys. They can be your best friends.

Fraternity and sorority parties/smaller college gigs

Artists who want to play original music often overlook these gigs, but I think it never hurts to try to take some of these on. You might have to do a few covers, but that doesn't mean you can't play your own songs as well. If you're on a tour and have to get from one place to another anyway, then you might as well play music at a frat party in between more conventional shows. I have heard some of the greatest road stories from these parties, which as you would suspect, can sometimes get out of hand. In the sixties, such bands as Paul Revere & The Raiders, Commander Cody, Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels and others had a healthy frat-party circuit. For many bands the college party-circuit is still a great place to play if you don't mind rowdy parties and being asked to play a lot of cover songs.

High Schools

High Schools are very overlooked places to play. If you are just starting out, high schools can be a great place to both hone your skills and make young, possibly lifelong fans while you are preparing to go to the next level. The right contact person for booking high school performances will vary by school - try contacting teachers, administrators and student leaders about setting up and playing either in an assembly or outside just after school. Start in your own hometown before trying to do this around the country.

Sharing gigs

This is where you hook up with a local artist or band and open shows for them and then return the favor when they want so break into your part of the country. Here in Oklahoma City, Austin band The Gourds have opened for local band Red Dirt Rangers and in turn had the Rangers open their shows in Austin. This is not only a great way to build an appropriate audience, it's also important to develop connections with other like-minded musicians. Remember that collaboration between artists is more fruitful than competition. But just work out the money situation among yourselves in advance of the shows.

Busking

Being a time-honored tradition of itinerant musicians, playing on street corners is nothing to be ashamed of and can in fact be a decent source of helpful pocket money. Before she was known at all, Lucinda Williams used to play on the street in an area around the University of Texas called "the drag," and other artists such as Peter Case, Ani DiFranco and more all have stories of playing music with the guitar case open for tips. Find the busiest place in whatever town you are in and play. Sometimes you might need a permit from the city, but they are not hard to get and usually are no more than \$20 bucks or so and in fact, most city leaders feel that busking is a wonderful tradition that makes a city more alive, like New Orleans. Go to the entertainment district and set up outside a club - that is the best place to busk, since people are already listening to music nearby.

Talking to alternative venue presenters

My venue, The Blue Door in Oklahoma City, is kind of a cross between a club and a "house concert" venue, so it's very non-traditional, although we do much of the same things a small club does. It's important to remember that talking to alternative venue presenters is really no different than dealing with other presenters and promoters. Booking your act is really a sales job and one of the hardest in the business. You are supposed to call and convince someone who has never heard your music to take a chance on you. And even if they love your music, it can be a tough sell. Well, here are a few things to remember when making that initial call to prospective non-traditional presenters.

Be very relaxed and cordial. Ask what kind of music is booked and simply ask to send a demo or your current disc. Remember that these people are humans, too and try to develop a friendship with the presenters where possible. But make it short, as these folks get lots of calls; get the address and say thanks and ask when to call back. No matter what the venue, it's easier if you if you don't waste your time or the presenter's.

At this stage, don't waste your expensive bio, press kit, photos etc. I can't tell you how many photos I have discarded from bands and artists who send me stuff but won't ever play here. Just send a brief bio, your music and that's all. It's a waste to spend a lot of money on elaborate press kits, unless you have a particular visual element that is absolutely critical to your presentation. Make them look nice and readable, but that's all you need. I once got an elaborate video press kit that was useless to me. Don't make the promoter work too hard to get to know you. When I'm interested in someone's music I only want to hear the music and in fact, while the bio might interest me, I don't even need it to book someone. If I like the music, I just need a contact so I can talk about future gigs. Less is really more these days.

Call back two weeks after you know the CD or demo has arrived. Be patient. We all get tons of calls and CDs to listen to and sometimes a week isn't enough. If you call several times and are not getting anywhere, assume they are not interested. I have to be honest. Sometimes I don't call back instead of telling someone I don't like their music. That is the hardest thing for me and I suspect many presenters feel the same. But if you persist to know why you aren't getting the gig, be prepared to take your medicine. They might be right and you might not be ready or they may just be full of it.

Contracts/Riders & Industry Standards

Guarantees

In the 10 years I have been putting shows on I still only pay guarantees to the most established artists. This is something that beginning touring artists must be prepared for, even at non-traditional venues. In general, don't expect a guarantee unless you are playing a place that does not rely on a cover charge at the door to make money. Most of the time you are likely to get at least 70% of the door and more if the venue has liquor sales. If you are offered one, be very happy with a \$100 guarantee until you can develop a bigger following.

House concerts are an exception. As noted before, these are usually great gigs for everyone and almost always have financial guarantees to the artist because the hosts ask for reservations. House concerts can pay from anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000 and more, if you are someone like Guy Clark doing a living room show.

I am not saying don't ask for a guarantee, but remember that in your developing stages it's not as important as getting your music out there. And whatever you do, if you do get a guarantee and the presenter takes a big hit, you might want to consider backing off your fee so as not to make them suffer for trying to do you a favor by taking a risk and booking you in an alternative venue. This is a tricky situation, but if the vibe is good you probably want to maintain good relationships with presenters no matter how many folks turn out. This understanding should work both ways - I think presenters should always be ready to pay the full guarantee and artists should always be ready to give them some slack as well. Most artists who sell out my 100-seat room never have a guarantee or it's so small it doesn't even matter. And yet, they can leave with around \$1,200 or so. Your guarantee is only as good as your draw in most situations.

Riders

I think riders - the sheets attached (or "riding") onto a standard contract that outline the artists' special requirements - have gotten out of hand in today's touring industry, with artists making ridiculous requests for beer, certain kinds of food, M&M's of only a certain color etc. Keep your riders to relevant production requirements (sound, lights etc.). Many places will have their own sound, but if you can afford it, it's wise to invest in at least a six-channel P.A. with mains and monitors to take on the road until you get to a higher level of touring the small national clubs. I refuse to accept ridiculous riders at all and everyone who plays at my venue understands that. More times than not a small non-traditional presenter will bust their tails to get a good deli tray and take care of an artist, only to see it go to waste. What I do and what you should expect, is bottled water, some beer and pop and that is it. Where food is involved, don't bust their chops with unusual requests. Requesting this rock star treatment is silly in general, but at a beginning level it's ludicrous and counterproductive, making you look like a brat and lessening your chances of future support. Be nice to your presenters. Those presenters who are cordial and in music for the right reasons will take care of you again.

Getting help: some final notes

So you want to find non-traditional places to play. Where do you start? Getting a booking agent at this early stage is going to be hard unless you have a friend who wants to help. Until you at least are starting to get national reviews of your music, a big booking agent such as the folks at Mongrel Music, Fleming & Tamulevich, Keith Case etc., are not going to be interested at all. Nevertheless, starting thinking about an agent and do the relevant networking required to find one.

If I were starting out with my trusty ol' acoustic guitar in tow, I would make sure to go to the annual Folk Alliance conference, even if you don't think of yourself as a folk artist. This is where the most grass-roots work in music is going on. Visit their website at www.folkalliance.com to find out more about this great association.

If you are lucky enough to already have help at the early stages of your career, remind everyone that you call the shots. Never ever give your soul or your music away to anyone who claims to be "connected." Make them prove that they can be trusted and expect them to work hard. If you want to have integrity and play your music and make a living, be ready for the slow build and always remember Ani DiFranco. She did just that and is now captain of her own ship, with no one telling her what to do with her music.

With non-traditional venues, although the numbers are not great the rewards are there if you realize them. Even if you only play for 20 people, sometimes that 20 will share your music with their friends and so on and on. At last year's South By Southwest music conference, Chuck D might have said the most important thing all week: "It's not about gold or platinum, it's about one record to one person at a time."

If you are nice and not a jerk when the numbers aren't what you want, the small non-traditional presenters will always work with you again and again until it is profitable for you both. These presenters are usually not about selling booze, so they will be more willing to help you develop your audience. I made no money on Ellis Paul for years and now we both do well when he is here.

So good luck in this crazy booking business and remember what the great songwriter Jimmy Webb said, "A great song is a great song because it was written, not because it was sold."

As a twenty-five year veteran of the music business in several areas including retail records, journalism, publicity, concert promotion and consulting, Greg Johnson's passion has always been with the performing songwriter. From his many years in retail in Central Oklahoma to his decade in Austin as a leading supporter of the singer/songwriter scene, Johnson has been involved in the careers of many of today's best singer/songwriters including Lucinda Williams, Kevin Welch, Jimmy LaFave, Micheel Fracasso, Ellis Paul, the Red Dirt Rangers and many others. These experiences enabled Greg to open the Blue Door venue in Oklahoma City, one of the country's leading venues for performing songwriters, which he continues to run. Greg is also a free-lance journalist, with work appearing in the Austin Chronicle, Austin American Statesman, No Depression, Oklahoma Gazette and Oklahoma Today magazine. BDMus123@aol.com Phone: (405) 524-0738

BOOKING FESTIVALS, FAIRS AND EVENTS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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You don't have to rely on the major festivals to fill up your gig calendar. There are many town, city, county and state-wide events that take place throughout the year. These events book local and regional talent along with some of the big name acts. Research your city's website, your county government's website, your state's tourist department website and the US Chamber of Commerce website.

Sure it would be fantastic to play the big festivals and perhaps one summer or even this summer you will. But unless you are on the list for at least 10 festivals, one festival does not a tour make. So you need to find some other gigs that will not only fill the summer dates, but build your audience and your market value.

To do that, start by getting out a map of the regions where you want to tour if you are planning to explore outside of your own home base. I would first pick a few states and Google the state website looking for their Department of Tourism and the state's arts council. Under tourism, I would search for fairs, festivals and special events. If you have specific cities in mind that you want to play, check for the city website which is often .org rather than .com. Check the city's Chamber of Commerce site for special city events sponsored by local businesses. Another great site for finding small festival events and crafts fairs Festival Network Online. Also for lots of different festival events check on Festivals.com. You can also check through your copy of The Indie Venue Bible to find festivals and fairs in your area.

Many cities have a foundation that is often part of the city government and is responsible for organizing entertainment events. Here in Charlottesville, VA, for example, we have the Downtown Foundation that is responsible for presenting "Friday's After Five" in our downtown pavilion. This free to the public event gets the whole town out for a concert every Friday evening from April through October. Performing groups are paid through a city fund. It is an event such as this, that give local, regional and national touring acts a chance to play for an audience sometimes numbering over 5,000. This kind of gig definitely develops future fans and opens opportunities for return gigs in other venues around the city.

Think beyond the major festivals in your genre that you already know about and begin thinking about finding outdoor events that the general public will flock to during the warmer months. Then you open a wide range of possibilities such as: wineries with concert series or festivals, corporate sponsored community events, city festivals and concert series, parks and recreation events, national park sponsored concert series, civic center major events and corporate organization conference events.

While familiarizing yourself with regional events, don't forget to check the area arts magazines, weekly arts newspapers with local arts councils. These resources are often the recipient of listings of upcoming events calendars from a variety of community presenting organizations. Many of these listings need to be submitted many months in advance in order to be included in special upcoming events calendars. If your research for this coming summer gets you to the presenting organizations too late for this season, you'll at least have the information well in advance for the next presenting season.

This advance research has the potential to net you contacts and info about many more publicly attended festivals, fairs and events within your local region and beyond and help build a very strong fan base. Here's to some great summer gigs!

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED.

She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program

Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book,

CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

TIPS ON GETTING MORE FAIR DATES AND CORPORATE GIGS

by Les Vogt, Entertainment Consultant

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Most Corporate Party and Fair gigs come from referrals... a respected associate passing along positive information from a job well done. Here are some tips on getting your share of them.

The first step is to find out who books these events. In most cases they are exclusive Fair Buyers, Party Planners, Event Managers or Destination Management Consultants. Like everything else in the music business, getting gigs is often about establishing and maintaining relationships. There are specific organizations that cater to this industry. Hospitality and Fair Associations, Tourism offices and many other similar entities that will often offer memberships to anyone related to the field. While a membership fee can range from about \$100 to \$1000 per year (and sometimes there are additional fees to attend networking events), it is a small amount to pay compared to the income you can make if you land a contract. You need to find creative ways to make all of these people aware of what you do and why they will benefit from hiring you.

How much do fair dates and corporate events pay? This depends greatly on you, them, the location, the number of people attending the event and ultimately your negotiation skills. However, you can count on making two to five times (sometimes even more) as much as a local club date would pay. I know several no-name bands that make up to ten thousand for a two hour performance. Make your fee structure flexible, but don't make it too low. Once you quote a price, it will be hard to raise it for future bookings. Your first contract could set the precedent... so, don't sell yourself short.

Confirm that all backline and sound equipment is provided for... either by you, the client or the venue. If a third party sound company is bringing the equipment, handle all your requirements directly. If the venue already has a sound system, get the specs and perhaps make a trip in advance to check out the equipment. Your ability to execute a flawless performance is ultimately your responsibility... and the likelihood of getting re-booked with your client or securing potential new clients in attendance, will depend on it. EXCUSES NEVER ERASE MEMORIES!

Look professional by executing a thorough contract, covering all event specifics including fees, hospitality... your obligations... their obligations... parking arrangements... load in/load out times and locations and a time to sound check (make a special effort to sound good so your first impression is the best that it can be). It is also wise to request a 50% deposit (all the better performers do it) to be paid upon signing the contract to secure the engagement. Include a clause regarding insurance. When corporations hire consultants, who hire bands and rent venues, liability can sometimes be difficult to determine. The contract should indemnify you from all liability and you should have your or the band's legal business name added to the event's insurance policy as "additionally insured." Finally, do not assume that it is appropriate for you to bring any guests to the event. If it is necessary to bring your girlfriend or boyfriend, ask ahead of time and provide for a guest list in the contract so there are no surprises.

For corporate gigs, you should always have an understanding of who your audience members will be and the type of event you are playing. Determine how the band should be dressed. Is it Black Tie or a Beach Party theme? Will you be playing for dancing... a featured stage show... background music or all of the above? How big is the stage? Find out who the big wigs are and inject some proven participation humor in their direction if the appropriate occasion arises. This information will be helpful in constructing a suitable set list and overall execution plan for the gig.

The music is important, but professionalism will set you apart from the rest. Arrive on time, start on time, have fun, smile a lot... and be accommodating should the client (either the one who hired you or the one who hired the one who hired you) have a special request. Be friendly and easy to deal with and do not show any internal disagreements in public. Keep your hospitality and rider requirements reasonable (often meals and drinks are provided). Do not ask for more than what you need... a demanding rider or requirement list can often turn-off a potential buyer and lose the gig. Be aware of your purpose at the event. Do not mingle with the guests/audience unless approved directly by the person who hired you. Resist selling merchandise or soliciting additional gigs from party attendees and should someone solicit you, keep the agent (if applicable) who hired you in the loop. Cutting them out of their commission will most often cut you out of any future gigs with them (and possibly others) no matter how well you perform.

Send the person who hired you a personal (handwritten is always nice) thank you note following the engagement and if all went well, request a letter of recommendation. You can then include it in your promo kit when soliciting other gigs. Periodically call the client and remind them that you are still interested and available for any functions for which they need music. Christmas cards and/or post cards from impressive gig locations are wonderful reminders... as are birthday cards if you can creatively find out the correct birth dates for your clients!

Working fairs and corporate events will test your professionalism and require you to be the best that you can be. Live up to the expectations... and you'll smile all the way to the bank.

Les Vogt was the lead singer in Vancouver's very first rock 'n' roll recording band... "The Prowlers" who gained local popularity by playing "live" on the "Owl Prowl" radio program. He shared the stage with Bill Haley... Gene Vincent... Buddy Knox... Eddie Cochran... Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis. Les is now an independent producer, promoter and entertainment consultant. Contact: www.members.shaw.ca/lesvogt lesvogt@shaw.ca

THE SOLO RESTAURANT GIG - GUITAR A LA CARTE

by Dan Lambert, Guitar Nine Records

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Here are a few qualifications and considerations for playing solo gigs at restaurants.

Style

Style is probably more important than repertoire - how you play it more than what you play. Jazz standards, Folk tunes, Classical pieces, Pop-Rock songs, Brazilian and South American stuff, I play mostly my own tunes - they'll all work if you play them in a style that works with the venue. Throttle back a bit and create an ambience conducive to dining and talking. Like it or not, basically you are musical wallpaper.

There are the basic mundane requisites like dressing the part and not creating a disturbance when you're setting up or tearing down (people are probably eating).

Keep the equipment to a minimum

I don't bring my extension speaker cabinet that I use for bigger gigs. Most of these owners have put a lot of thought into the look and feel of their establishment and they don't want a bunch of electronic gear cluttering up the joint. Also, I want my amp right next to me so I can tell exactly how loud I am. The volume is critical. Get a few steady customers to complain about you being too loud and you'll need to have one of those uncomfortable discussions with the owner (like being called to the principal's office). A restaurant owner has never asked me to turn it up. A club owner, yes, a restaurant owner, no.

Be prepared

If I'm hired for the lunch rush from noon to 1:30, I need to be set up by 10 minutes to 12 (at least) and need to get in and out of there with the minimum of jostling around.

Should I stay or should I go?

I have a deal worked out with the owner of one venue. We see how large a crowd there is at my scheduled quitting time and if there are enough customers to warrant me staying longer, we do it. Everyone wins. I make more dough, the restaurant gets more music when they need it and the diners get an extension on the ambience.

Be inconspicuous

When I finish, I inform the owner that I'm done, I tell him "Thanks" and I go back and tear down. I do it very quietly in a couple minutes. Poof, like a ghost, I'm gone.

Availability

No, I didn't start playing guitar because I thought it would be groovy to play restaurants. But hey, I've had enough crappy jobs to know that any job with a guitar in my hand is better than the graveyard shift in an aluminum extrusion plant. Restaurant gigs fit in perfectly with my schedule. I teach guitar during the day, but not till later in the afternoon, so lunchtime jobs work great. I'm playing other gigs on the weekends (and during the week), but I seem to be able to work in these kinds of jobs just fine. One reason being that they tend to be earlier than your average nighttime club gig.

Now for the music

I play tunes with catchy melodies. I vary the rhythms, keys and textures of these pieces. I try to keep things interesting. Some gigs I stretch out a lot, others it's just tune after tune. I tend to blend one song into another, providing a nice backdrop of sound. I can literally try any kind of tune I like and I usually sneak the new stuff in between a couple of familiar ones.

It's a great way to debut new material

You won't get a lot of crowd reaction during the gig (actually you do, you just don't notice it). The feedback isn't yelling, screaming, yahooping concert stuff, but if you play well, people do let you know. They love to come up to me after they're done eating and say how much they liked the music. Also, while I'm playing I watch people's feet. If they're tapping along to what I'm doing, I've done my job. Oh yeah, ask the owner about selling CDs at the front counter. Offer them a cut (\$3 to \$5 on a \$15 CD - some don't want one) and tell customers about them when they compliment you. Instead of accepting a tip, I put on the gentle hard sell about my recordings.

How to dress?

Don't forget to ask the owner how you should dress for your show. Be flexible with this courtesy.

Restaurant gigs can be a wonderful way to generate extra income. They can also create more exposure for your talent and your music - as long as you are willing to adjust your music to suit the venue.

Dan Lambert is a committed and highly regarded six-stringer currently based in El Paso, Texas (U.S.A.) who reveals his playing style as Folk-Jazz, as a listener can readily experience on his most recent album, "The Blue Hand". His most utilized guitars include a '52 Martin 000-28 with custom wide neck and a Tony Revell custom acoustic. Lambert has been playing guitar since 1972 and with no holds barred declares his career aspiration, "To continue making my living at music - performing, recording and teaching."

DEFINITION OF GUERRILLA GIG

from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Guerrilla gigging is a type of concert performed in a non-traditional setting or arranged in an unusual fashion. It became associated with punk rock, indie rock and noise rock bands in Britain and the United States during the early to mid 2000s. Bands who perform at such events are sometimes referred to as "guerrilla rockers".

There are two major elements that characterize a guerrilla gig. The first is similar in concept to a flash mob and involves a band or artist performing in an unexpected, sometimes unannounced, setting not designed to accommodate live music, such as on a bus or subway train, parking lot or building lobby.

The second characteristic involves their being arranged very quickly and without the typical processes of publicity or advance ticket sales. They are usually announced through various internet message boards as well as by text messages and sometimes last-minute flyers.

It is often viewed as an example of Punk Rock's idealistic "do it yourself" philosophy (which aimed to achieve underground artistic success without commercialization by avoiding mainstream corporate record labels) being applied via modern communications technology, in a way which would not have been possible before the advent of the internet. The popularity of online forums and social-networking sites has made it possible for bands to immediately disseminate news of a gig to thousands of people only hours before a performance, at minimal cost and bypassing the traditional print and radio-based methods of publicizing concerts.

The earliest example of a guerrilla gig was on January 30, 1969, when The Beatles played a gig entirely unannounced on the roof of Apple Studios at Savile Row, London. They performed several takes of their newest songs (which would appear on the Let It Be album) as the passers-by on the street looked up in confusion. After the third take of Get Back, they were kicked off by the police due to noise complaints.

Development in Britain

A few British bands became known for "guerrilla gigging" in the early 2000s. The technique first developed there because the concentrated social and geographical nature of the London music scene made it possible to generate a favorable "buzz" and ensure attendance at the events. The Libertines were among the first to use internet technology to accomplish this, often announcing a gig a few hours before the show by providing cryptic instructions for fans to meet at a given place to await an escort to a flat, where the admission price would be collected and the concert would take place in a living room or basement. The Others provide another example, having performed brief shows in tube trains (subways) on the London Underground for mixed groups of fans and startled passengers. In another famous instance, singer Badly Drawn Boy earned £4.60 from passersby while busking outside London's Waterloo Station for a day in 2003, going largely unrecognized by the public.

The United States

The Colorado group "Friends Forever" and Rhode Island's "Lightning Bolt" are examples of American bands that have embraced this new extreme DIY culture.

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DEFINITION OF A BASEMENT SHOW

from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
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A basement show is a show, often of the Punk Rock or Hardcore variety, that is held in the basement of a residential home, rather than at a traditional venue.

Basement shows are normally held for a variety of reasons, chief of which are:

- lack of a suitable venue in the area;
- convenience and relative ease;
- host can give much back to his local scene and community;
- shows hold important symbolic value to the DIY ethic and punk/hardcore culture;
- shows completely avoid any sort of corporate sponsorship, thereby keeping the event more "pure"; it is therefore considered the antithesis of selling out
- basements are more suitable for smaller bands, with an audience of fewer than 50 people.

Some bands have even written songs about this, such as "It Sounds Better In The Basement" by The Devil Is Electric. Basement shows can also be much more fun, as they often double up as parties. Many people continue to hang out after the show and thus, they are great social events and meet-ups and in some cases, places to drink.

Yet, despite its symbolic value, basement shows have been declining steadily since the '80s. There are several reasons for this:

- cities have become stricter with enforcing noise regulations and fire codes, making basement shows increasingly more difficult;
- people are becoming less willing to hold them, as often, theft and vandalism do occur in the house where the show is being held;
- availability of venues are increasing; and
- basement shows cannot hold enough people, as bands get larger.

Nevertheless, basement shows still occur, often to stage local shows as get-together for the local kids and for touring bands that cannot find suitable venues to play.

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ARE HOUSE CONCERTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU?

by Fran Snyder, concertsinyourhome.com

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House concerts are one of the most important trends in independent music today. Musicians across the country are discovering a great way to connect with new audiences - performing in people's homes.

There's just something about house concerts. The intimacy really allows a deeper connection to the audience and that connection often leads to strong merchandise sales and lifelong fans.

Can you perform as a solo, duo or small trio playing 60-90 minutes of mostly original material? With little or no amplification? For donations (\$8-15/person) from those who attend?

The house concert community is currently made up of hundreds of very loosely affiliated folk and acoustic music fans. They are generally interested in:

- Folk and Contemporary Folk
- Singer/Songwriter
- Bluegrass
- Country/Americana
- Celtic

If you perform Rap, Hard Rock, cover tunes or Electronic music, you won't find much interest from house concert presenters at this time.

Also, many of the current house concert hosts prefer to book acts they've seen before. They often go to music festivals, but some will check out acts when they play nearby clubs. Since most presenters only book 2 to 10 shows per year (it's a hobby, not a job), many stay booked pretty far in advance.

Some positive trends

1. More people discover house concerts every day. House concerts are becoming a popular way to see live music and a great source of new fans for artists.
2. Through the internet, it is now easier than ever before for artists and concert hosts to find each other.
3. Artists are actively growing the market. Every time they play a house concert, they have a good chance to turn an interested fan into a house concert host. This new host might then enjoy the experience so much that he starts booking other artists.
4. The growing house concert community will open up to different kinds of artists. Why not poets, children's performers, instrumental or flamenco guitar? Any act that can fit into a living room might eventually find a fan here.

So if you are looking for an alternative to bars, noisy cafes and other venues which provide too many distractions (TVs over the artists heads!), house concerts might be a great new source of gigs to pursue.

How to get started

1. Learn all you can about house concerts - how to put them on, what's expected, what's optional and how many opportunities currently exist in your region.
2. Start with your fans - these are the best opportunity an artist has to get bookings quickly and have them well attended so you can make a nice profit. Remind them every time you send out e-mails that you are now doing "house concerts" and include a link to an article/site where they can get more information.
3. Host one yourself! If your living quarters aren't adequate, find a friend, family member or neighbor to put one on. If you aren't ready to do a full 60-90 minute show, consider booking an artist you really admire and book yourself as the opening act!

If you are a talented performer who is comfortable being close to the crowd, telling stories between songs and hanging out with new fans, you owe it to yourself to explore these opportunities.

Fran Snyder is a singer-songwriter based in Lawrence, KS, who is in love with doing house concerts. Fran created www.concertsinyourhome.com, a site dedicated to creating more opportunities for artists to perform "gigs where people listen." The site is free to use, but artists may join (\$25/year) to promote their act. The site also funds a national press campaign to increase the popularity of house concerts. Fran Snyder's music can be heard at www.fransnyder.com

HOUSE CONCERTS: A NEW WAY TO REACH OUT TO NEW FANS

by Bruce Haring, author of "How NOT to Destroy Your Career in Music"

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Besides the usual nightclubs, concert halls, bars and gazebos, there is a growing movement toward house concerts.

The beauty of the house concert is that it's entertainment in its purest form. Unlike a nightclub, the rules are pretty much whatever you wish them to be. You can request no smoking, no drinking, you don't need a lot of equipment or a huge sound system, you can start at whatever time you wish and end whenever.

But the biggest reason for doing them is that the audience is there for you, not to chat up members of the opposite sex, drink or do the many hundreds of annoying things people do in bars when you're performing.

A house concert does not necessarily take place in a living room, although that's usually the first choice. Barns, basements, pastures and backyards are popular forums for the event. Suitability is the key consideration – a four-piece rock band works a lot better in a barn than in a living room. Similarly, a wispy acoustic performer is better off in front of a living room audience than a pasture.

But in urban environments, the apartment center or hall have become the performing venue of choice.

The process for house concerts is pretty well understood by the participants. Typically, a fan of the music decides that they want to turn other people they know on to the artist. They decide to contact the artist and set up a house concert. The deal works like this: the artist is typically guaranteed a certain amount of money. A door charge is instituted. Food or drink may or may not be a part of the deal.

The artist comes, performs, gets a chance to sell the new CD and merchandise, mingles with newly won fans and gets a cut of the door (typically more than half, although generous patrons, particularly those who have been hitting the wine during the show, have been known to fork over the entire bankroll).

Always ask for an intermission at your house concert. Not only is it tough to sustain attention for long periods in such an intimate venue, but it also provides the opportunity to up-sell the audience on your new CD and merchandise. Most house concert patrons will be only too glad to take advantage of the opportunity to support an artist that they've built a strong connection with over the last 45 minutes. In the chaos of a gig ending, many of them may slip out the door before buying. At half time, they're focused and motivated.

Naturally, performing in a non-traditional venue has its drawbacks. You may have to lug your equipment up several flights of stairs. In an apartment building, you can't crank up the volume to coliseum levels. The room you perform in may not be acoustically perfect and you may find yourself seated on a stool that's great for holding a plant, but certainly uncomfortable for a performer.

You may also, given that most houses do not come equipped with a stage, find yourself in uncomfortably close proximity to the guests. While this creates a certain sense of intimacy, it also breaks down some barriers that you may or may not be willing to see fall. This is particularly true of those who have been hitting the wine during the show. Remember, they won't be carrying on in the way that people do in a public venue. You'll have to entertain them for two hours in close proximity.

You'll get to know them in ways other venues simply can't provide.

Despite those caveats, the shows can be a great way to spend an evening entertaining anywhere from 25-50 or more people in a setting where the artist is usually treated with reverence. Unlike a birthday party or other gig, they're there to hear you, not to tune you out as background noise.

There are any number of organizations across the country that cater to house concerts. Usually, putting the word out to your fan base can generate some attention.

Most house concerts are generated by word of mouth connections and attract an audience of friends and family.

The house concert is usually performed away from your typical performance areas. Thus, you may see "venue" for the first time when you walk in the door. Like any performing situation, it's wise to set up the ground rules up front. Plan out who will introduce you, the break, what is available in the facility and what is expected.

Get it in writing. Like any club date, the settlement can go smoothly or can be a time for finger pointing and debate. Door takes should be managed by someone in your entourage if at all possible.

1. House concerts are more intimate than arenas. Develop your ability to talk to your audience.
2. You are a guest in someone's home. Nothing will make them happier than doing a little homework and throwing in some references to the house and the people in the audience.

*Bruce Haring is the managing director of the DIY Convention which teaches artists and entrepreneurs how to create, promote, protect and distribute independent film, music and books. The show features prominent artists and executives talking about the paths to success and has appeared in New York, Los Angeles, Nashville and many other cities. www.diyconvention.com Haring is the author of several music industry books, including *How Not to Destroy Your Career in Music: Avoiding the Common Mistakes Most Musicians Make* (Lone Eagle Publishing), To order a copy visit the Lone Eagle Publishing/Hollywood Creative Directory website www.hcdonline.com*

HOUSE CONCERT BOOKING TIPS FOR ARTISTS

by Fran Snyder, concertsinyourhome.com

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Do

1. Attend a house concert if at all possible - there's no better education.
2. Become excellent at what you do. It's amazing how many people delude themselves. (want proof? American Idol)
3. Be personal. Show that you've done your research and that you regard the host as a valuable human being who is doing a wonderful thing for the arts - even if they won't book you.
4. Be humble. Understand that no matter how good you are, there will always be people who aren't turned on by your music.
5. Be reasonable. Understand that hosts have limited schedules - and will never be able to book every act they like.
6. Be consistent. People are busy and sometimes messages don't get returned. If that hurts your feelings, you are doomed. Every host is different, but it is wise to follow up (no more than once or twice a month) until you get at least a "we received your package." After that, back off.

An occasional polite reminder ("I'm touring in your area in November...") no more than once a quarter should keep you from wearing out your welcome. If you get a "no, thank you" or no response for a year - be respectful and move on.

7. Be generous. Consider hosting a house concert for an artist you admire. Think of it as a Karma deposit.
8. Be pro-active. There's no quicker way to get house concert bookings than to educate your fans - consistently. e-mails, website links and Announcements from the stage!
9. Be accommodating. Each house concert host has different needs and concerns. Learn them. Honor them. And make sure they understand your needs.
10. Be professional without being corporate.

Don't

- a. Ignore 1-10 above. Especially #2.
- b. Lose heart if things don't happen quickly. Hardly anything good ever does.
- c. Underestimate travel costs and travel time.
- d. Forget to build your mailing list. It's more important than selling CDs.
- e. Ignore the musical tastes of the host. If they want Bluegrass – you better be Bluegrass before you call.
- f. Expect guarantees. If you must ask, be gentle and be prepared for a “no”.
- g. Expect to fill 2 hours with one album of material."
- h. Forget to ask about pets/smoking if you are allergic or dependent on either."
- i. Be desperate. It shows. It always shows.
- j. Forget that people want to have fun. If your music is depressing, your stage persona better not be.
- k. Underestimate the intimacy of house concerts. Some artists are uncomfortable being that close to the audience.
- l. Assume that the host can fill the room without your help. Be ready to help promote if their house concert series is open to the public.
- m. Assume room and board are included or anything else for that matter. Remember to ask.

If a host's website (or CIYH profile) says they are not looking for artists at this time...

do I have to say it?

Fran Snyder is a singer-songwriter based in Lawrence, KS, who is in love with doing house concerts. Fran created www.concertsinyourhome.com, a site dedicated to creating more opportunities for artists to perform "gigs where people listen." The site is free to use, but artists may join (\$25/year) to promote their act. The site also funds a national press campaign to increase the popularity of house concerts. Fran Snyder's music can be heard at www.fransnyder.com

SETTING UP A HOUSE CONCERT

by TR Ritchie, Singer/Songwriter
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House Concert (hows KAWN sert) n.

1. *A live performance before an assemblage of music enthusiasts by a musical artist or artists in a private residence or equivalent setting, sometimes held in conjunction with other festivities, ie: potluck supper, song circle or jam session.*
2. *A unique opportunity to experience a favorite performer, up close and personal, without musical amplification or other artificial barriers between the performer and listener.*
3. *A superior alternative to those noisome, crowded, hard-to-get-to venues downtown.*
4. *In rural and/or suburban communities, sometimes the only option for hearing live music locally at all.*

5. *An interesting addition to the itinerary of the touring musician.*
6. *A lively, economical antidote for NEHAH's (Nothing Ever Happens Around Here) Syndrome.*

...the obvious choice

What could be more natural? You love hearing music in a live setting. I make my living playing music. Next time I come through your town, why don't we do a house concert?

If you've ever hosted a New Year's Eve party for friends, organized a garage sale or thrown together a neighborhood potluck, you have all the necessary skills required. This little booklet is designed to cover all the bases and outline the details step-by-step to take you from: "Where do I begin?!" to "Let's do it again!!"

It's not rocket science. You can do this. Trust me.

On the fingers of one hand

Everything you'll need to do can be enumerated on the fingers of one hand... assuming you have at least four fingers.

1. Find a place for the concert.
2. Spread the word.
3. Set up the room
4. Host the show.

Finding a place

Well, it doesn't get much simpler than this - we'll do the show in your living room. That's why they're called house concerts, right? Attendance usually runs between 25 and 50 at most house concerts, so if you have a good sized living room, say 12'x15' or larger (about 650 sq. ft.), we're in business. Move the furniture around and you can get a lot of bodies in a space that size. It might be snug, but one of the charms of house concerts are their inherent coziness.

Still, what if your place is just too small? Not to worry. There are all sorts of non-house possibilities. I've done these non-amplified shows in book stores, music shops, in public-library rooms, art galleries, school rooms, community halls, grange halls, church basements, barns, back patios - the informal character of house concerts make them adaptable to any number of environments.

For our purposes, though, let's assume you do have a room of sufficient size. I'm coming through on tour in a few months and we've set a date for the show.

NOW WHAT?

Spread the word

Start talking it up. House concerts are still fairly rare in many areas of the country, so the idea of turning your home into a temporary concert hall will be a novel concept to a lot of people. But once people experience a concert in a home setting they usually become enthusiastic converts. In fact, this might be the time for a cautionary disclaimer: You may find your one-time foray into producing house concerts so enjoyable that it evolves into a regular or semi-regular series. Worse things could happen.

Once you begin letting people know about the concert you'll discover why house concerts are so well suited for smaller, more closely connected communities - most of your promotion will simply be word of mouth.

Your audience - and typically upwards of 90% of it - will be people you know or friends of theirs, so just start talking it up. Friends, relatives, people at work. Invite the neighbors on your block. Tell your children's teachers, the family doctor, the check-out clerk at the market, the mechanic who works on your car, the tellers at the bank - anyone you come into contact with on a day-to-day basis whom you think might enjoy live music. Let them know someone's going to come perform a concert right in your living room. Maybe you'll want to have a potluck supper beforehand. If your circle of friends include musicians, maybe you'll want to have a jam session after the concert. Let people know. Remind them that TV hasn't completely usurped the culture. Yet.

Make up some postcards containing the relevant concert information: A description of the music. Date and time. How much the suggested donation will be. Whether you're planning a potluck, jam session etc. Include your phone number for reservations (more on this later) and directions. Carry a few of these in your car and bag or purse and hand them out. You can also mail them out as invitations.

If you're internet proficient, put together a mailing list and send out an e-mail notice. The beauty of e-mail is that you can send several reminders regarding the show, reservations etc.

Another thing that works well - this if you're hosting the show in some more neutral, out-of-house setting - is to print up some flyers and post them around town: in the bookstore window, on market bulletin boards, at the library, laundromat, local music store - wherever there's foot traffic. As a simple courtesy, always ask for permission to post things. Usually people don't mind. And in the week following the show, make the rounds and remove them. People will appreciate your efforts.

Something else - tape a couple of these flyers inside the rear side windows of your car. A lot of people will look at them out of curiosity as you go about your daily errands. And keep one of your postcard near your phone at home as a reminder to mention the concert in your everyday phone calls.

If the concert is being held in a more neutral setting you can do this broader job of advertising, but you probably won't need to concern yourself with these last suggestions - the flyers around town and in your car's windows - if the concert is going to take place in your home. If you're like most people, you're probably hesitant to throw open your home to just anyone. In an alternative space you can comfortably go for a larger, more diverse audience.

Stay calm

Some timely words of advice: Breathe in. Breathe out. Relax. Take it easy. The whole idea is to make a good thing happen and enjoy yourself while you're doing it.

All this publicity stuff doesn't have to happen overnight or occupy your every waking moment. If you have a wide circle of friends it probably won't take much advertising to fill the house.

As far as timelines go, here's a general plan for moving things along

A month before the show

Make up your postcards and start letting people know about the concert - the word of mouth thing and hand-outs. Do an initial e-mail announcement.

Two weeks out

Do a postcard mailing if you like. Put up flyers if it's appropriate for the event. If you want to get really ambitious, especially if house concerts aren't the norm in your community, maybe we can get in touch with the local newspaper and do an article timed to appear the week of the show. Most performers are pretty well versed in the promotion of concerts and can help you with everything you'll need along those lines: postcard and flyer blanks, press releases, photos etc. Post an updated e-mail announcement and reminder.

The week of the show

Make a last round of phone calls to remind everyone to come out, one more e-mail reminder, then give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done.

NOTE: Keep a running account of whatever expenses you accrue, plus receipts: you'll reimburse yourself after the concert and the performer may want the receipts for business expense tax purposes.

THE BIG DAY ARRIVES

TIP: You can avoid a lot of that hectic last-minute-details feeling by doing a little prep work a few days beforehand. Remember, you want to be able to enjoy the concert too, so don't run yourself ragged.

You might set up the room for the concert this way

Stage

Create a "stage" area for the performer in your concert room - in front of the fireplace or French doors, in an open corner of the room. Arrange the seating to face the stage.

Lighting

Place a floor lamp or small table with a reading light near where the performer will sit or stand. This will usually suffice, but to do an even better job of lighting, lay hands on one or two utility clamp lights, available for \$6-\$8 each from almost any hardware store. Fit them with 60 watt bulbs and devise a way to mount them, maybe on a camera tripod or the ceiling light fixture or clamped to convenient curtain rods. Make sure to direct them toward the performer.

Seating

Let's think about that a minute. Do you have enough chairs of your own? If not, consider places you might obtain loaners: school, church, the library etc.

You can even tell people to bring their own. Or forget the chairs and arrange for people to lounge on the floor. Or do some combination of all these. Of course, you can always rent folding chairs as a last resort, but the idea is to keep production costs to a minimum.

Hosting the show

House concerts typically consist of two sets of music of about 40-45 minutes each with a short break between - about 20 minutes - so that people can stretch their legs, chat, have refreshments, visit the facilities, purchase the artist's CDs etc.

After people have assembled and settled in, you'll welcome everyone and introduce the performer with something simple like:

"Good evening, everyone. Thanks for coming out. Tonight we're fortunate to have with us a wonderful musician and performer, so let's get started. Please welcome..."

BREAK TIME

At the break you might want to have light refreshments on hand - things like coffee, tea, sodas, chips and dip etc. You can also ask a few friends to bring home baked goodies as well. In fact, it's a good idea to enlist a volunteer to oversee some or all this chore (remember - you don't have to do it all).

Volunteers

It's a usual perk to grant free admission to the people who help out the night of the show, such as your refreshment coordinator and a person to collect money at the door and handle CD sales for the artist.

Break refreshments

Have a couple of coffeemakers in service to keep up with demand. Make sure to have the usual condiments on hand: cream, sugar, honey and **plenty** of cups.

If you want to eliminate a lot of dishwashing, use paper cups, napkins and plates. You might as well set a good example.

Also, set out a basket with a sign that reads: "Donations For Treats" to help offset some of your expenses.

After the break, make a short reintroduction of the artist, then sit back and enjoy the rest of the show.

The money thing

I averaged about \$350-\$400 per house concert in 2002, which breaks down to a paid attendance of 35-40 people at \$10 per registrant (or 23-27 @ \$15 per). As I say, this is an average, but a good place to start when trying to formulate financial expectations.

There are a number of ways to compensate me for my performance. If you're in a financial position to do so, you could simply pay me out of pocket. A variation of this is to pool resources with a few friends toward this same end.

The most common way to reimburse me, though, comes from those who attend the concert, by way of a "suggested donation" or "registration fee". Don't let these terms confuse you. It's just semantics. Since house concerts can be defined as private performances in private residences, they fall outside the boundaries of commercial statutes which apply to public clubs or concert halls regarding licenses and entertainment taxes and such. You call it a registration fee or suggested donation, but for all intents and purposes it's the same as a ticket price, cover charge or admission fee. Different name, same animal. A rose by any other name...

The simplest way to deal with the money thing is to simply collect it at the door the night of the concert, but this can be risky, both financially and aesthetically, due to no-shows.

If you're not paying the performer directly, by far the best way is via pre-paid advance reservations. This way you'll know exactly how many people to expect and it helps answers several questions and eliminate a couple of problems. One, it provides keys to seating and refreshment needs. Two, if people pre-pay they are less likely to cancel at the last minute and even if they do, I still get compensated.

No-shows

No-shows are an all-too-common fact of life and can be the bane of house concerts. Attrition rates of between 30%-60% are not at all unusual, even if people have solemnly promised you under oath to assorted Deities that they'll be there. Things come up. They have to work late. Kids get sick. They're just too tired. Whatever. It happens. And nothing is more disappointing than to be expecting a full house and then have half or more of the chairs go empty. It's doubly worse when you've had to refuse people who wanted to come because you thought you had a full house.

At the minimum it takes an audience of at least 25 people to generate the good energy for a really successful house concert, so unless you've sold it out via pre-sales, ALWAYS continue to accept reservations, paid or unpaid, until you have the money-in- hand as proof of a sold-out show. If people are reluctant to commit to pre-sales registration, explain that it's a first-come, first-admitted, situation and that the only way they'll be guaranteed a seat is with pre-sale registration before the show.

One thing that can make it easier is to offer an incentive of, say, a \$2 discount for pre-sales admission versus full price at the door. Another way to encourage pre-sales is to set up an account with PayPal so that you can take credit cards.

PayPal

PayPal is a very convenient way for anyone to accept credit cards. Credit cards give you a convenient means of making pre-paid reservations. I know of several house concert producers who use PayPal for just this purpose. Check out their website at www.PayPal.com.

In any event, at the end of the evening you'll have taken in **X** amount. In most instances you'll extract your expenses and send me on my way with the remainder.

Additional considerations

Here's a few other things to consider during the course of getting ready for the show:

Co-producers

There's no law that says you have to do it all by yourself. Enlist a friend or two and divvy up the work - it makes for a lot more fun.

What time do we start?

For Friday or Saturday shows, things get under way about 8 or 8:30. If you do a weeknight or Sunday show, start things a half-hour to an hour earlier - or perhaps consider a late afternoon show on Sundays, especially if it's in conjunction with a potluck or picking session...more about this later.

Smoking or non-smoking?

Early on, discuss preferences with the performer regarding smoking - both theirs and yours. Usually house concerts are non-smoking affairs, with accommodations - most typically out on the porch or on the back stoop or patio - for those who feel the craving before the show, during the break or afterwards.

The kid situation

Since the shows happen in such close quarters, children can cause considerable disturbance if they don't have the capacity to sit attentively through the two hour concert. As a general rule it's a good idea to encourage people to arrange for sitters for children below the age of about twelve.

Parking

Is there adequate parking in your neighborhood to accommodate the extra cars? A secondary benefit of inviting your neighbors is that they usually won't take issue with the parking situation if they feel like they've been included in the loop. Just make sure your guests don't block driveways or fire hydrants or otherwise complicate life for themselves or others.

Performer accommodation

The performer will need a place to stay while in town, whether with you or by arrangement with someone else. Think of the performer as a distant relative or old college acquaintance. Make up a place in a spare room or on the couch in the den. Show the performer where the coffee is in the morning. Lay out a towel and washcloth.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some performers are extremely allergic to pets. Others have adverse reactions to tobacco smoke. So, when you're talking to the performer about accommodations, remember to ask if they're susceptible to these or other irritants. Also, if you'll be providing meals, make sure you know their carnivore/omnivore/vegetarian affiliations early on.

The expandable concert

You might feel like going all out with this and turn the concert into an all day/night affair with a potluck, jam session, cookout etc. If you know musicians who are coming to the concert, invite them to bring their instruments. Another charm of house concerts is that they can easily evolve into a loose and communal music exchange after the show.

How about a workshop

I frequently do songwriting workshops in conjunction with my concerts. They're informal sessions, usually about two hours in length, for groups between 10-15 participants, at around \$30 per person. The format is a round-robin discussion. We'll critique works-in-progress, talk about finding the songwriter's authentic voice, explore ways of developing melodies, discuss how to develop arrangements for effective performance and answer other music and music business related questions. Anytime people are interested in holding workshops I'm happy to come to town a little early or stay on a little longer to hold a session.

Surprise ending

Guess what? We're done. That's all there is to it. Now that you've seen how easy it is, spread the word: House concerts are a coming thing. And I'm convinced they're going to become more and more popular as time goes by. We live in an increasingly isolated culture and people are hungry for an authentic experience of community. They want to be part of something real and house concerts - however humble a gesture they may be - can be a little part of that reality. They illustrate that people can make things happen, right there where they are, without the necessity of a lot of hype or expense and that music, art and some kind of magic are still afoot in the world.

Let's toast to it then - to making things happen. Let's bring it on home. Because it's ours.

Songwriter TR Ritchie was a two-time finalist at the Kerrville Folk Festival's New Folk showcases and a headline performer there. He won top honors from the Napa Valley (CA), Sisters (OR) and Jubilee (CO) Folk Festival songwriting competitions. In both 2001 and 2005 he was the only double-showcase songwriter featured at the Walnut Valley Festival's New Artist Showcase in Kansas. Also in 2005 he was one of only a dozen finalists chosen from among more than twelve hundred applicants to showcase his music at the Mountain Stage Newsong Festival in West Virginia. For more information visit www.trritchie.com

FOLK CLUB AUDIENCE GUIDE

by Jeremiah McCaw, Ezeduzit

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What's it all about, Alfie? For those who are new to the Folk Club experience, here's a general guide to how it all works.

Folk music has never gone away; it's always been a very strong presence. However, since the great folk "boom" of the 60's, it has not had a very high profile. But we're still here, still making the music that filled our hearts and souls. There's been a bit of a re-awakening for the general public in recent times. I suppose some of it is a reaction to the "empty calorie" musical content of the disco years (and dark times they were, too). The joyful discovery of the charms and vitality of Celtic music has also fueled the revival.

As an audience, you will be exposed to a wide variety of music. There will be performers devoted to the oldest traditional song forms, such as the Childe ballads, as well as those whose choices run to the more recent music of Tom Paxton and Phil Ochs and even more contemporary singer songwriters like Jewel, Bill Morrissey and John Gorka.

So what is Folk music, you say? Sorry, but there's no one definition that will satisfy everyone.

As an audience, we ask only that you be respectful of the performers. Some will be of professional caliber; some will be first timers who are scared out of their wits; all are there because they love the music and want to share it with you. Please listen.

One of the most satisfying aspects of the Folk Clubs is the opportunity to see new performers trying out their wings for the first time. That may be our greatest value; that there is a venue for musicians ready to bring their instruments and their songs out of their basements and in front of the public. Playing in bars may pay (although usually poorly), but the audience is generally far more intent on their conversations and rowdiness. Here, performers are listened to. We think that's one of the greatest attractions.

Jeremiah McCaw lives in Brantford, Ontario, Canada. His Folkpage was created site is to give some shape to Folk & Folk-oriented activity in the South Central Ontario area and to share his love of Folk music. www.jeremiah.ca Jeremiah is also a member of "Ezeduzit" - an acoustic-based trio. Although focused primarily on "Old Timey" material, their repertoire ranges through traditional, contemporary and even original instrumental and vocal music www3.sympatico.ca/jim.hodgef

CREATING YOUR OWN LOCAL GIGS

by Mark W. Curran author of "Getting Gigs: The Musician's and Singer's Survival Guide"

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Many of the traditional venues and methods for getting gigs are jammed with competition that it's often very difficult to make any headway, particularly in a crowded market.

The solution to this is to create gigs where none existed before, thus being the only act that will do the gig. Here are some ways I have found useful. Feel free to invent some of your own.

Four Walling/Two Walling - Your Act In Concert

A fairly new business model has emerged from the new economy. "Four-walling" and "Two-walling" venues. This involves renting or co-renting a club, space or theater and doing the advertising and promoting yourself, as well as ticket sales. You take all or part of the ticket money, depending on your arrangement with the venue.

One extreme example of this is In Las Vegas. Almost all showroom performers rent the casino showroom, either with their own production companies or in partnership with a producing entity. Sometimes they are partners with the casino, sometimes not.

But for our purposes here, we are talking about your going to a venue on your own in your community and renting out the facility with your own money.

This can be great for an act with a great draw, but disastrous if people don't show up. The public is fickle and one can never predict in what numbers they may turn out to see an event. Many is a concert promoter who has gone into bankruptcy this way.

I have had some successes "Four-walling" my act and other tribute acts into small theaters. It's a high risk gamble and if you can't afford to roll the dice, don't do it. I have friends who have made money producing tribute shows and even name acts into theaters, but even they will tell you that sometimes they lose as much as they win.

As a Producer/Promoter, you are responsible for everything. You would be amazed how many details go into producing even the smallest show. There are contracts to sign, insurance policies, printing and advertising and promotion tasks. There are an endless number of jobs that must be performed to an exact timetable. Screw up on any of them, you could lose your shirt.

But when it goes well, it can go very well. Let's say you rent a 1000-seat venue for \$3000, plus \$1000 for the house sound and lights and stage personnel. Add in another \$1000 for box office services and miscellaneous things like insurance and catering, you are in for \$5000. Add to this your advertising costs of say, \$2000 and another \$2000 for your band and opening act.

So now you are in for about \$10,000, as an example. If you sell your tickets for even \$20, that's a 10,000 profit!

But you must factor in the many weeks of prep it takes to produce and promote the show and that you must sell every seat to make that kind of profit. At half capacity, you've only broken even.

Believe me, it's no fun putting months of work and \$10,000 of your own money into a show and have a bad turnout. If you are performing on top of that you are in the unfortunate position of having to work your ass off, perform and still lose money!

Remember, this can go the other way. It's a great feeling selling out a show and walking away with decent profit and in the process be able to play on a large stage to an appreciative concert audience.

There are so many factors and variables that can affect the turnout greatly: Is it a weeknight (less than ideal) or a Saturday (ideal)? Is it a holiday weekend (avoid it)? Is it raining/snowing that night?

Is the economy in a downward cycle? Are we in a war with yet another foreign country? Are you under pricing or overpricing your tickets? Is the theater well-trafficked and have they had your flyers in the lobby for sufficient enough time as to attract patrons attending their other shows? Have they included you in their season mailer, even if they aren't presenting your show as part of their season?

The public is so sensitive to these issues it can prevent them from venturing out of their cocoons for any kind of event. Add to this that there are many choices for people to spend their time off and their entertainment dollars.

Even staying at home can be far preferable to going out and enduring traffic, crowds and a potentially bad show. With home theater and gaming systems in almost every home, plus internet and other distractions, you can see that getting people to go out to your show can become a difficult task at best.

But, let's say you are a single acoustic performer with a large following. Since you have no costs for a band, you can take the ticket money for yourself. If you book a smaller venue of 500 seats and still charge \$20, you could walk away with a tidy profit, since the cost of the theater rental is less for a smaller venue and you wouldn't be paying a backup band.

To offset your risk, you might consider "two walling" with the venue, meaning you split the profit/loss equally with the venue. If it's a theater, you simply split rent and ticket money. If it's a club, you might consider taking the door ticket money while the club gets the drinks and food.

This way you can see what your turnout will be and then maybe take your act to a nearby town and try four-walling another venue yourself.

You will find smaller theaters are more willing to help you than larger ones. In fact, in Los Angeles, many of the larger theaters have a strict policy to NOT help you promote.

They are committed to promoting their own season shows and often feel that to help fledgling promoters pulls their focus away from their own projects. But also be aware that many smaller theaters have little staff and can rarely afford someone to help you market your show.

If your act has a major following or some pre-sold elements (as in a tribute act) and you think you can fill those seats, you just might have the perfect situation for a successful four-wall. But proceed with caution, this is an area where you can lose money in a hurry!

If you do decide to four-wall a small theater, make sure

- To start early; six-twelve months is a nice window
- That the theater is well attended by patrons throughout the year, so they will see your flyers in the lobby
- The theater is at least somewhat open to helping you market your show
- That you get a Saturday night for your show, not a weeknight
- To hold a prize drawing in order to get your audience to join your mailing list
- To have the theater include you in their season mailing
- To have the theater include you in their newspaper advertising
- To promote your show using flyers, e-mail and posters
- That you start promoting at least 3 months in advance of the show date
- To find local businesses to sponsor your show to offset costs

Finding sponsors to contribute to your show in exchange for an ad in your program can often make the difference between loss and profit. But finding sponsors is a tough, time consuming job and can become a very difficult pursuit on top of your other duties.

You may be able to find someone within your sphere of influence to make phone calls to local business on your behalf to solicit donations in exchange for a percentage.

Four walling can be a very satisfying way to build your audience and make a profit. It offers a great way to get your name out to the local community and allows you to sell your merchandise after the show.

Make sure you have some money put aside so you can four wall a number of theaters in different regions, within driving distance or one overnight stay. As these shows become more successful, you can schedule them as an annual concert, while expanding your circle around your home base radius.

This article was excerpted from the book "Getting Gigs: The Musician's and Singer's Survival Guide" By Mark W. Curran, available through www.nmdbooks.com Mark W. Curran is Los Angeles-based professional musician and singer as well as a well-known expert in the field of music marketing. He is the author of "Sell Your Music: How To Profitably Sell Your Own Recordings Online," and "Getting Gigs With Or Without An Agent," both available from NMD Books.Com.

CAN'T FIND A GIG? GET OUT ON THE STREET!

by Kevin Minihan, Eastwood Band

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Rule number one for aspiring musicians is **practice makes perfect**.

Well... yes, but what kind of practice?

I'll spell it out for you. You need to... no....you **MUST** practice playing live, in front of an audience!

I can hear the frustrated moans of many of you saying, "I can't get a gig to use as practice!"

Well my friends, this is simply not true. If this is your excuse, then I want to take this opportunity to crush it once and for all. There is a way you can get a gig any day of the week. It is the underutilized practice of performing on the "streets."

No more excuses!

Any person or band can play on the street. True, it is easier if you are a solo acoustic performer, but with the advancement of battery powered amplifiers (and even PA's) the old excuses of, "But I play electric guitar" or "What about our bass player?" just don't hold any weight anymore. I would suggest that your band play an acoustic set (just for the ease of set up) but, if you must play electric, get yourself battery powered equipment immediately.

Small gas powered electric generators are very quiet and inexpensive these days.

Where should I play?

The options here are endless. Anywhere there are a large number of people. The best are areas where people are seeking entertainment. If your town has a cool entertainment district or just an area where the popular clubs and restaurants are located, by all means pick a corner there. If there is a part of town that has outdoor cafes, try to set up within ear shot of them.

In my town, for example, there is a commercial development that has a movie theater right next to row of bars, restaurants and shops. People in these types of areas will be more open to listening to your music, plus they will have money in their pockets which, hopefully, they will use to tip you or to purchase your CD (which you WILL have prominently displayed next to you).

You can even set up on a corner next to an arena where a national band (that fits your genre of music) is playing and leverage some of their fans.

There are hundreds of possibilities. Use your head and come up with some new ideas. Where do you hang out? Where do your potential fans hang out?

What to watch out for

Two things you need to be wary of; cops and criminals. Call your local police department or city hall to check on the city's laws for street performances. For example, some cities do not allow performers on certain types of city owned property. Although they would probably just ask you to leave, you don't want to risk getting a ticket.

You also need to be careful and avoid the 'shadier' parts of town. Don't tempt some crook into taking your hard earned tip money. Stay in well lit areas. Play only in high traffic locations. Use your common sense here. You don't want to be standing by yourself, late at night, on a dark street with \$100 in small bills lying at your feet. Don't make yourself an easy target for a robbery.

Get out there and enjoy the secret benefit

Beside the obvious benefits of earning tip money, making CD sales and getting valuable 'live' practice, there is another benefit that will surprise you. That is the incredible boost in self confidence you get after your first street performance.

Let's face it; playing out in an 'unknown' environment may seem a little frightening at first. But once you sing that first note and get that first tip you will be on cloud nine! Once you've mastered playing on the street, you will be able to play anywhere with complete confidence.

Now, get out there and play!

Kevin Minihan is a musician, writer, jack of all trades (master of none!) residing in the questionable outskirts of Dallas, TX. He plays in 3 bands and never gets enough sleep. When he is not playing music, he is writing about it. He enjoys sharing his experience and knowledge with other musicians. Along with writing articles for this and other websites, Kevin plans to write a series of books in order to help others achieve their dreams of success in the music business.

THE ART OF SHOWCASING

by Rick Goetz, Elektra Records

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Working in A&R, I have seen literally thousands of bands in the last several years (I actually tried counting the bands I had seen at one point to try and talk my boss into giving me a raise. No, it didn't work, but thanks for asking).

Let me make an early disclaimer by saying that there is very little scientific about the showcasing process. This article is not meant to be a foolproof plan for how to get signed when you showcase; it is really just a collection of my experiences with what has worked or not worked for people in the past. The more I see what gets signed or what becomes a hit, the less I think I understand the record industry - so believe me, even on the other side of the fence there is confusion and frustration with this crazy business that we've chosen for ourselves.

That being said...these are the things I hope you'll be able to get out of this article:

- What it is A&R people are looking for during a performance or a label showcase;
- A checklist of things to accomplish that will have labels chasing you and not the other way around (If done right you can showcase on your own terms);
- How to troubleshoot and make sure the showcases run smoothly
- And awareness of other factors that can influence the decision making process for A&R representative or other music business executives.

Getting ready to showcase/getting label attention (or your mom really likes the new demo, so is it time to call the record company?)

Ideally there are three things that I would strongly recommend you do before getting to the whole shopping and showcasing process.

1. Have your team (management and lawyer) in place
2. Have professional and radio-friendly sounding demos
3. Demonstrate that you are not waiting on major label funding (or anything else) to start your career. If you can, you should be pressing and selling your own records, getting airplay, marketing yourself on the Internet and touring the country etc.

Having been a musician myself for the last 10 years, I realize that the aforementioned tasks are easier said than done - but I promise you that these three things will be your guardian angels as you endure the showcasing process. If done incorrectly, this process can be as challenging and humiliating as going through puberty.

Your team

"OK - on paper that sounds easy. But back to step one: How am I supposed to find a decent team?"

Well, once again there is no science to this, no set of rules I can give you that will bring you from point A to point B. I will say this: as you are playing clubs and developing your following, meet and talk to every band, manager and promoter you encounter. Your strength as a developing act will be the people that you know and the people you are able to trade favors with. Ask the big local act in your home town what they are doing for management or if they've encountered a lawyer that they like. Managers and lawyers do seem to find new clients from existing ones, so this is a very viable way of encountering potential team members. Also, research what managers, lawyers and agents are successful and would understand your genre.

Take meetings with everyone who will give you the time of day. Even if nothing comes of these meetings, you should keep in friendly contact with these people - you never know when you might need one another for something. One more thing to keep in mind is that great bands make great managers and lawyers. If you are really having that much trouble building a team, perhaps you should spend more time focusing on perfecting your craft (writing better songs, playing more and better shows and building your following). In other words, if you build it, they will come.

Demos

OK, I'll work on putting my team together or at least doing the right things to attract the right team members - but why is this guy babbling about good demos when he's writing about showcasing

I've found that good demos are usually the most important factor in finding a major label record deal and the most efficient way of generating enough label interest to get to the showcasing stage of your career. My advice on this front is beg, borrow or steal – in other words, do whatever it takes - to come up with the cash to make good demos before you start to showcase.

You should try to find a local studio / engineer / producer whose work sounds radio-ready (and that maybe did another band's demo that you like) and try to work with them. Research everything before spending your money on recording. Remember that most major labels are radio driven and for the most part not in the business of selling your live show. I've seen bands that could barely play live get record deals because their demos sounded ready for radio. In these cases, the showcase was really just a formality - the record company's mentality being that even if you suck live, you can't tell that over the radio. I've even heard of bands with great demos being signed without ever being seen by a label rep at all. On the other hand, I've seen amazing live bands that just couldn't come up with decent recordings of their material and which to this day remain without a deal.

Starting your career

"How the hell am I supposed to just start my career? I'm lacking funding, time and contacts to get the ball rolling. Aren't you being a bit unrealistic?"

What can I say about that, except what you already know - the record business is hell. In recent years, the burden of artist development has shifted from record companies to management and the artists themselves. I don't like it and I don't agree with it, but that is really the way it is. Yes, it is unfair. Yes, it is hard as hell to get things going on for your career without major label resources. But yes, if you are able to start your career without help from a major, you will be that much more of a sellable commodity come showcase time.

Look at it this way: As an A&R person, I am an investor for my company. You as an artist or band are a corporation. Your team is your senior management staff pitching your corporation to people like me. I am in position of acquiring corporations that I think will be successful. If your corporation is already beyond the blueprint or demo phases and is already demonstrating its viability in the marketplace, I am much more likely to want to invest in your future. In my experience, the only thing that can predict future sales in this business are existing sales.

It is hard as hell to do on your own, but it can be done.

Think about this: Kid Rock had sold well over 100,000 records on his own label before he signed to Lava/ Atlantic. He already had over 50 street-team members and had received a decent amount of coverage by national periodicals. My company did a great job with this record, but nothing we did would have replaced his 10 years of legwork. In addition, that kind of legwork may put you in a stronger bargaining position when negotiating your deal. Dave Mathews and MC Hammer both got better than average royalty rates to lure them away from their already profitable independent careers.

Label interest

"Anyway, you were about to stop this long-winded preamble and tell me what to do when I'm about to rock out in front of record execs, right?"

I will in a minute, I promise... But first, I just want to say a word about gauging a label's interest in your project. It's important to know where people stand when they show up at your showcase and it is very hard to tell. Musicians often misunderstand my intentions and interest level, so I guess I'd better explain what it means when I say or do something.

Wow, I'm gonna be honest here...I know I'm going to regret this later but, here goes...

When I say, "Please send me your demo," it means, I want to hear this, someone told me it's good or I noticed the band doing something right. It doesn't mean anything until we speak after I've listened to it - at which point you'll know what's up.

When I say "Well, let me know next time you play New York" - it means "Well, your demo was good, not great." Maybe if the live show is earth shattering we might talk about doing some demos or something. It kind of means keep in touch; let me know as things progress. It also indicates that I am not excited enough to get on a plane to go check you out just yet. It doesn't mean that you should call your travel agent and book a tour ASAP - the interest level isn't quite at that point yet.

When I say: "OK, I'll come see your next show - even if it is out of town - it means, I'm pretty excited here. Either I loved the demos or the fact that you've demonstrated that your project is making money in some way or someone else in the business that I trust has convinced me that your project needs my immediate attention. It doesn't mean I am the only person you need to impress. Like most A&R reps, I need approval from the upper tier to get anything signed

When I say: "You guys were great, I'd like to get my boss to come see you now," more often than not that statement means my decision is over. If it were my label, I'd sign you - but since it is not, I will see what the response is from the man upstairs. Depending on his reaction, I will decide on how to proceed. It doesn't guarantee that the man upstairs will like you. If you thought convincing Cynical Bastard, Jr. was a task, just wait until you meet Cynical Bastard, Sr. That said, most reps wouldn't proceed unless they think their boss will understand your project.

Major label interest is like venereal disease (or so they tell me): when you've got it, there won't be any doubt in your mind.

Setting up a showcase

"OK - major label interest is a requirement for a showcase and understanding the level of label interest is helpful. But will you tell me about showcasing now, please?"

You've been patient, so... have your lawyer and manager take copies of your demos or album and send them to their closest industry contacts looking for feedback. You can do this yourself if need be, but it is likely that your material will get listened to more quickly if it is sent by a lawyer or a manager - and one or both should follow up on it to see if it was received and/or reviewed. I'd stress that your materials should be sent to your closest contacts first; that way, you get someone who is more likely to listen carefully and provide you with honest and detailed feedback and criticism. If your closest contacts are letting you know that they wouldn't even travel across the street to check out your project, you might want to consider going back to the drawing board and working on your demo material some more. If the feedback is decent, however, by all means invite them to the show. Now is the time to sit down with your team and figure out which label(s) would be your ideal home. You've already sent your material to the people you and your team know the best - now I would recommend making sure that packages are sent to the labels you perceive to be the best fit for your project. If luck, timing and talent are with you, maybe you will get some people down to check you out.

Rules for the big rock show

“So say I get a couple of labels interested - where do things go from there? Should I perform in their hometown or mine? Is it better to showcase in a rehearsal studio or in a venue? Should I bring out all of my drunken friends to the show? What about the guest list?”

If a label gives you the option of “your place or mine?” do not default to your one-night-stand logic - your response should always be “my place.” Ideally it should be in your hometown, at the venue in which you are most comfortable and in front of as many fans as you can find. A showcase will likely be stressful for you no matter where it is, but in your home town and in a familiar venue you will be better able to predict all of the little pitfalls of playing live. Will you get a sound check? Is the soundman any good? Will the promoter/club owner move your set time? What is the back line like at the venue and what equipment will you need to bring? Do everything you can to get a sound check and make sure you know (and tip!) the soundman.

If you have to be out of town, try to bring your own soundman or at least find one who comes highly recommended wherever you wind up showcasing. Another good reason to avoid coming to label territory is that the crowds in New York and Los Angeles (where most record labels are located) suck. People rarely go out to check out new acts and tend to be too cool to move or show any real appreciation. Also, no matter what night you choose to play in New York or L.A, there will always be a national act or another buzz band you’ll be competing with. Another thing to consider is that an A&R representative tends to feel less at work when seeing a band in a venue that’s not one of his or her usual haunts in downtown Manhattan or Los Angeles - and believe me, that can help.

You may not be given the decision to play under ideal circumstances. A very common story for showcasing bands is that they will be seen first by a representative or scout in their hometown and then flown in to New York or Los Angeles to play for the senior officers at the company or sometimes most of the record label staff. This can be a brutal experience and I really don’t know how to tell you to prepare for it.

Picture this - you’re in a room filled mostly with strangers who you know nothing about except that they work for a record label. There’s no alcohol, usually no smoking and no one looking to pick someone up like they would at an ordinary show of yours in a bar somewhere. You are the sole focus of attention for a mob of jaded record executives. A friend of mine had his band showcase for an entire label staff last year and had one of the most horrifying experiences I’d ever heard about. In a sterile rehearsal room like the one I just described, the band waited for the label president (a living legend) to arrive. After a half-hour of being uncomfortably stared at by several dozen New York hipsters, the band was finally greeted by the label head, who had a couch placed under his ass and was then carried to within spitting distance of the stage. The label head sat expressionless with arms folded during the band’s entire set. What could you do to prepare for this? Well, I guess the only thing I can think of is to practice until you know your set forwards and backwards so you can stand and deliver under any circumstances.

Another option worth considering is performing in a studio if you know you can put on a good show there – not exactly easy or natural. The advantages are that you’ll have time to sound check, you can have everything set up the way you want and you’ll have far more control if that appeals to you.

The importance of fans...

If you have a legion of loyal fans, don’t be afraid to bring every last one of them down to your showcase. It’s a very difficult thing to pack a venue (even if there is no cover) unless you’re doing something right. When I go out of town to check out band, I’m watching the crowd as much as I am watching the performance. The funny thing about doing A&R is that with every passing day in your job you become less like an ordinary consumer. For example, I haven’t purchased a CD or paid to see a performance in months. So honestly, I’m almost more interested in what your average 16-year-old kid thinks than what I think.

The president of the label I work for once told me a story about seeing a band several years ago that went on to be a multi-platinum act. He didn't get it; in fact, he hated it. Being rather bored in the middle of this packed show, he wandered around and talked to people in the crowd about the band. Every person he talked to swore that the band was the next coming of Christ. He allowed the A&R representative that brought the band to his attention to sign it and they went on to sell millions and millions of records. Obviously there were other factors involved, but the rabid fans at their show that night played a huge part in their signing.

Don't fake it

More often than not, you will find yourself showcasing in less-than-ideal circumstances, so do your best to improvise and make do with what you have. If you are forced into a sterile rehearsal room, bring candles or some elements of your stage show to the room to liven it up a bit. If you have the means, have someone who knows your set operate the lights - lighting can really help out a show. Remember, you will likely be playing to a room of zombie-faced record execs who tend not to move a lot, so even a simple strobe light can do wonders to make it feel like something in the room is moving. You can talk to the label about bringing a case of beer and some friends down to the rehearsal room; I can't imagine most of them would mind. If nothing else, it might make you feel more comfortable - which, as you can imagine, helps a great deal. Do be careful when playing the drunken-friends-in-a-rehearsal-hall card, however, because I've seen it do more harm than good. When it works right it'll just be a bunch of people enjoying your music and having a beer. I've seen it appear very forced, where it seems like the band instructed every member of the audience to freak out and overreact to every song (which might just be them trying to be helpful). Be careful about audience coaching in general. When I go to see a show on the band's territory, I'm expecting to see a well-promoted and packed show - the best example of a show they can do there. If I see one hint of something that looks staged (I once saw a band thanking a group of young girls and handing out \$5 bills not too long after they loudly demanded band autographs in the middle of our conversation), it can be a total buzz kill.

Set lists and spontaneity

Obviously you are the one who has to live this out, but I would recommend writing out your set list several weeks before the showcase and practicing it over and over the exact same way you intend to play. Make sure you are so comfortable with your showcase set that you could play it while having hand grenades lobbed at you. Also, short sets tend to work better than long ones. I would say play only your strongest and/or most commercially viable material during a showcase, particularly if it is in a rehearsal hall. If you can, find out which songs the record company is focusing on. If it is an ordinary show you have a bit more flexibility, but even then you should leave the crowd wanting more and pray that you get an encore (always a good sign). Put the song you are getting the best feedback on in the middle or maybe in the latter half of the set because A&R people are notoriously late. I would even go as far with your rehearsals to script out the in-between song banter. At a venue or real show always announce your project's name once or twice during the set (this way there's no mistaken identity) and don't be afraid to call out mailing list and CD info. I always like to know that a band isn't shy about selling their records and is organized enough to keep a mailing list. This does not mean you should go overboard with stage banter. Song titles are cool to mention, crowd interaction is always a plus, but no one really wants to hear your life story. Besides, if you do your job right on stage, people will ask you for your life story when the set is over.

Guest lists

Guest lists for industry people shouldn't be a big deal, but for some reason or another it can cause problems. The one plus about showcasing in a rehearsal hall is that you won't have deal with all of the fragile egos and bullshit whining that comes with putting together a guest list. Make arrangements with the venue you are playing at beforehand so you don't discover too late that your guest list is over crowded and you have to come out of pocket for the extra people on your list. If you know up front that you won't be getting a large list, don't worry about it - A&R people have expense accounts that can be used for paying a cover charge. If the show will be sold out, then and only then should it really cause a problem. If you're selling out a club, they shouldn't be giving you shit about the size of the guest list anyway, so make sure that your industry guests are on the guest list and getting in. You should know that younger scouts and A&R people are far from wealthy, so if you've got an A&R assistant or scout helping you out, throw them a bone if you can.

If you've got the space to put people on, it's a nice courtesy. If you don't, just make sure you communicate with the people you invite about the list - anyone who would let a nominal cover charge deter them probably isn't worth your time anyway.

Labels and leverage

"Say things are going very well and I have several people interested - do I invite them all to the same show? Should I play labels off of one another to get a better deal? Would it be advisable to get my project in the middle of a bidding war?"

There are cases where there can be too much of a good thing. On numerous occasions I have seen bands that have managed to get the majority of the A&R community in New York down to one of their shows and then blown it. That being the case - and being that anyone can have an off day - I would say try bringing people to your shows in smaller groups or maybe even one by one. You will not always have that luxury if there are multiple labels interested in seeing you and you showcase in New York or Los Angeles. But if you can do more than one showcase for different groups of people without making it any less impressive, do so. I've found that if too many people show up at a certain show, I will be more critical of the performance and will find myself asking if the band is really worth all the hype. I know it's childish, but a packed showcase for a buzz band is kind of like going to see one of those blockbuster movies that spends millions on advertising and gets dozens of huge corporate sponsors. The movie might be good but it rarely meets your expectations because of all the hype and will never quite be as good as a great movie you just kind of stumble upon.

Major A&R turnout at your show doesn't always lead to disaster, though. Sometimes only a few of the attendees step up with a deal and the band goes with whomever they feel most comfortable with - or whomever offers them the most generous deal. Other times, however, when there are many labels interested in a band, the band can find they are in the middle of a bidding war. While this is obviously an enviable position to be in, it is a double-edged sword. On the one hand the band will have many different options to choose from; on the other, they will also be up against their own inflated perception.

This is once again the obstacle of surviving the hype you generate for yourself. Some of the biggest bidding wars of the last several years have been over bands such as Radish, Rubyhorse, Hayden, Flick and Furslide. If these names sound familiar, then trust me when I say you are quite up on your obscure music. Like a majority of bidding war acts these bands did not go on to perform like the collective A&R community thought they would. I believe the heightened expectation placed on these bands has something to do with their failure. When a band that cost a label a great deal of money is released, the unconscious perception of the label staff is that it should perform better than the average new release. Since this is not always the case, it seems that people are quicker to dismiss a bidding war record even if it is selling moderately well. Once again, beware the hype.

The best-case scenario is to get an offer in from one label and see if you can leverage that offer into a better offer from other labels. With luck you will get a modest amount of competitive deal offers on the table. Having just reread the last two sentences aloud I thought now would be a good time to mention this:

ALL OF THE IDEAS STATED IN THIS ARTICLE ARE JUST THE OPINIONS OF RICK GOETZ AND NOT THOSE OF ELEKTRA RECORDS OR ANYONE ELSE!

Anyway, it can be a very touchy subject and you must be careful to treat any deal memo you get with respect. Deal memos do get pulled off the table all the time, so don't think you can take your time and flaunt the fact that you are continuing to shop even though label X has put its money where it's mouth was. If you get an offer from a dream label and it seems to you and your team like a reasonable deal, then maybe you should just sign and get on with your career. If it is an offer from a label that is at the bottom of your list then maybe you should delicately put a spin on this in your pitch to other labels.

When I say delicately I mean don't call everyone in the A&R community and try to stir things up. Just call those labels that have expressed the most interest to date (other than the label who has made an offer) and let them know that just for their information, there is now a deal on the table and that the band will not be available forever. Be warned - if you take too long looking for other options, you might lose the deal memo on the table. So be careful.

If you do get a second label to make an offer, you can look to improve the stakes from both interested parties. As long as there are not too many offers and too much hype, you don't risk the pitfalls of being a bidding-war band. I never said that a little friendly competition was wrong. But be warned that when you're the middle of these negotiations you don't exaggerate what one label is offering to the other one. The music business is a twisted little social group that is not unlike high school - people talk and gossip frequently and we all seem to be at least one or two degrees of separation from one another - so there is a good chance that if you tell one label that the other is offering you the moon and it isn't true, that little lie will be uncovered and screw up your rapport with one or both labels.

One last comment

Rapport with an A&R person or label is crucial. You should try to understand his/her position within the label (ie: level of seniority) and determine whether or not you can communicate and understand each other. You should also ask what their vision for you is and hope that it somewhat lines up with your own. If there is a competitive bid situation, the person or label you communicate better with is very important and could decide not only where you land, but also how happy you'll be once you're there.

Buck up, little campers...

If you've made it this far, you are a real trooper. I think I've run out of silly anecdotes and half-baked witticisms for you. Your job in showcasing is to find the right label for your project (and in the process, get as many free fancy dinners as you can). I hope you continue making good music and not let the many obstacles before you deter you from your dreams and goals. Please bear in mind that this process is more like a marathon than a sprint - so don't lose hope!

Rick Goetz is Senior Director of A&R at Elektra Records, part of Atlantic Records Group www.atlanticrecords.com

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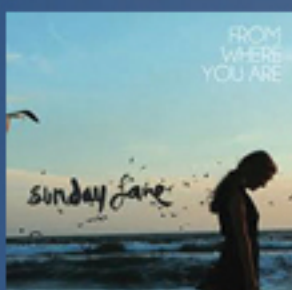
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12. ATTENDING OPEN MICS AND JAMS

OPEN MIC PERFORMER'S GUIDE

by Jeremiah McCaw, Ezeduzit
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The stage can be a scary place, even in as supportive and friendly an environment as the folk clubs of "the circuit". One of the first things you should realize when you get up to perform, is that you are not alone up there. The person working the sound board is as integral a part of your performance as the guitar you're holding. In other words, there's no such thing as a solo - you're involved in a co-operative effort with the sound person.

A good sound person can bring out the best in your performance, enhancing your strengths and down-playing your weaknesses and in general make you sound better than you thought possible. There are three people in your life you should NOT aggravate: your barber/hairdresser, your bartender and your sound person!

If possible, talk to him/her beforehand about any questions you may have. They're friendly, approachable and susceptible to flattery. Hey, if all else fails, try sincerity!

Material

We recommend that you have three songs ready, just in case someone before you does one of the ones that you've prepared (playing your own songs can be a real advantage).

It does happen from time to time and it's generally considered poor etiquette to repeat a song that's been done already that evening. Not that it doesn't happen, but it should be avoided wherever possible. Other than that, just remember: you're among friends! Particularly if it's your first outing, you should not pick songs that are overly difficult and for goodness' sake (literally) stay within your comfortable vocal range. The first time can be scary enough without having to deal with a tricky vocal or instrumental part. There will be lots of time and opportunity for the bravura stuff later.

Set up

When you get on stage, take a position that is comfortable for you. Hopefully, you'll have practiced in the same position as you're intending to play, whether standing or sitting. And yes, that really does make a difference. Let the MC or sound tech arrange the mics for you. You should work fairly close to the microphone. It can be a bit daunting when you hear your voice being amplified for the first time and the natural tendency is to back off. Resist it. As Bill Crawford says, "Eat the mic!" The best working distance for the microphone is about 6 inches or less (2 inches is better), a hand's width. Also, the closer you are to the mic, the better the bass response will be. And try to keep your working distance consistent. If you end up 2 feet away from the mic, the sound man is going to assume you're going to stay there. In any case, he will adjust the gain for the mic for that distance and if you should suddenly lean forward, the sound levels will go right through the roof. You didn't REALLY want to perforate your audience's eardrums, did you? Another advantage to not having to 'up the gain' (ie: you're working close to the mic) is that there's a much lower likelihood that feedback will occur, which of course will be a MAJOR disruption of your performance. And honest, they're nice people out there. You didn't REALLY want to be responsible for turning their brains to pudding, did you?

If your guitar doesn't have an on-board pick-up, it'll have to be miked. Again, let the person doing the set-up arrange it for you. From that point on, you should try to maintain a consistent position relative to the microphone. You may notice that the mic won't be set in a direct line to the sound-hole of the guitar, so don't aim the sound-hole squarely at it when you're performing. This will tend to promote overly "boomy" bass and even feedback.

Go for it!!

Hearing yourself amplified can make you back off psychologically as well as physically. Resist this as well. Let your voice go. I'm not saying you must sing loudly, but I am saying you should sing fully. You can crash and burn in one of 2 ways: first, by being hesitant and tentative or second, by going for it and missing. The first guarantees failure: you got NO chance at all. The second way gives you a shot at success and even if you're not on target, well, at least you tried and that counts for a lot with the people for whom you'll be performing. Get the fullest tone you can and let the sound person (your partner, remember?) take care of the volume levels. That's his job. Yours is to give the best you can to your audience. They deserve it and so do you.

Okay, so there you are, up on stage. You're nervous as all get-out, but you've determined that you're going to go for it. You're as prepared as you can possibly be. Your guitar is tuned as well as you know how. (You DID tune it just before you went on stage, didn't you? I did encounter one fella who tuned his guitar

SO carefully at his home, packed it carefully in its case, put it in the trunk of his car; wintertime, don'cha know, where it got very cold and then took it out at the Folk Club and went on stage without re-tuning. Oy! what a sound! Wouldja believe an oriental 12-tone scale or reasonable facsimile thereof? He obviously didn't realize just how susceptible guitars can be to changes in temperature and humidity. And I swear, instruments de-tune if you even look at them crossways, as well!)

Just one other thing: just before you start to perform, take a couple of seconds to gather yourself and remind yourself to breathe. Really, you can start out without a full breath and never get caught up. It's happened to me more than once (and I'm not confessing how much more!). It's your audience that should be left breathless by your performance, not you.

And that about does it. To repeat an earlier phrase,

GO FOR IT!

Jeremiah McCaw lives in Brantford, Ontario, Canada. His Folkpage was created site is to give some shape to Folk & Folk-oriented activity in the South Central Ontario area and to share his love of Folk music. www.jeremiah.ca Jeremiah is also a member of "Ezeduzit" - an acoustic-based trio. Although focused primarily on "old Timey" material, their repertoire ranges through traditional, contemporary and even original instrumental and vocal music www3.sympatico.ca/jim.hodge

LIVE PERFORMANCE: YOUR FIRST OPEN MIC (interview with Open Mic Host, Spook Handy)

by Anne Freeman, The Aspiring Songwriter
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AF: "What usually happens at an open mic? I'm a new songwriter. I'm making my first visit to an open mic. What happens next?"

The first thing that someone who wants to play an open mic should know is what an "open mic" means. The definition has changed in the last 5-10 years. People call distinctly different things open mics. The traditional open mic is synonymous with "open stage," and the key word is "open." That means that anyone who wants to can go up and do what ever they want. That is a true open mic. Usually, if the show starts at 8 PM, people who want to perform need to sign up by 7:30 PM. The MC will either pull names out of a hat or will call people up to perform first come, first serve. In most cases, that is the way things still work.

The way that I run my show and a lot of people in New Jersey run their shows, is you sign up in advance. I usually have shows booked a week in advance. For instance, today is Wednesday - I already have next Tuesday's show booked. I usually let people book one show at a time in advance. So, they can book for one, two or three weeks ahead, for one show. It would be important for the performer to get in touch with the venue to find out how to sign up. It's important that the venue owner know what the policy is for signing up for the open mic, too. Sometimes the venue operator tells people the wrong thing about signing up and that's not good for anybody.

AF: "How many songs does a person typically perform at an open mic?"

That's a good question. It's another thing that you want to find out before you arrive at the venue. In the more prestigious venues, such as Godfry

Daniels or venues in New York City and other major cities, usually you can do one or two songs, depending on how many people show up. For some, it might be three songs, but you might also have to wait four or five hours to perform. For the open mics requiring that you sign up in advance, you might get a 15-minute spot.

In my show, it's a 20-minute spot, which is the most generous one that I've found. That's why I think about The Spook Handy Show as a talent showcase, because I want to give people a chance to have time to get into the experience. It's a good question to ask about, how many songs do you get to play? It's usually one or two, but check it out.

AF: "What technical issues are there? For example, there might be a room full of 20 people with 20 guitars when you arrive. How do you prepare?"

One thing is, respect the stage area. Don't come in and put your instruments on the stage, unless that's the policy. Usually, you're going to put your instrument somewhere that doesn't prevent people from sitting down. You also want to tune your guitar up after you get to the venue, because it might go out of tune while you're traveling to the venue. You also want to tune it up before you go up on stage. That's a good thing to remember. You probably want to tune your guitar up in another room, so that you're not making noise while other people are playing.

AF: "Is that something that the MC or host would be able to tell you? Could you go up to the host and ask if there is a place where you can tune up and put your guitar?"

Yes. If you're going to a place that you've never been before and you have any questions like that, definitely ask the MC so that you'll know what to do. One thing that I've seen - and I've talked to other open mic operators - what MC's don't like is someone coming in and making assumptions about how to do things. Things like walking up on stage and adjusting the sound system, plugging their guitar into your board. No - let the people who run the show and own the equipment do that. Ask them what the policy is.

AF: "For the person who is performing at an open mic for the first time, what can they expect to experience when they're standing up there on that stage? Do they introduce themselves to the audience? Should they talk about their song before singing it or should they just start playing? In summary, is there an "etiquette" for open mics that songwriters should be aware of?"

Well, if it's the first time you've played, then you can expect to be pretty nervous (laughs). A friend of mine, when he first played an open mic, he had to go out and run around the block. He kept running around the block until we grabbed him to go on stage. It was the only way that he could deal with the nervousness. So, ask the MC if he or she is going to introduce you and if there is anything he wants to know about you to announce to the crowd.

Q: Will an MC typically announce the performers?

Yes, they typically will announce the next performer. They might say that this is your first time out performing or not, if you don't want them to. I had someone ask me not to mention that he was a lawyer and I forgot that about four or five weeks later and he hasn't come back since! :->

AF: "That's too bad - I'm sure it's sometimes hard to remember all of the details that people request. A story like that shows how important it is to remind the MC if you have specific requests."

The most important thing for a beginner to remember is don't rush. You can spend 30 seconds to get yourself adjusted. Make sure that your sound levels are OK. You don't want to monopolize time, but you do want to get yourself balanced and focused before you start your performance. I've made the mistake in the past of just going up without a sound check and just started playing. Halfway through the second line of the first song I realize that this sounds horrible. Take the time and make sure that you're comfortable with the physical environment and the sound environment.

Anne Freeman, Founder and President of The Aspiring Songwriter™, started this venture when aspiring to learn about songwriting and consequently the songwriting and music business. She founded The Aspiring Songwriter™ first as a vehicle to discover and share resources with songwriters. Her company represents her journalistic work under The Aspiring Songwriter™ and in this capacity she serves as Editor in Chief of the music business e-journal MusicDish www.theaspiringsongwriter.com

Spook Handy has performed over 3000 concerts in his 23 years of performances, has written hundreds of songs, recorded 3 CDs with a 4th due out in the coming months and now some of his own compositions are being performed by over a dozen other musicians. Pete Seeger says, "There's a songwriter from New Jersey who really understands how to write a good song that says something important. His name is Spook Handy and his song 'Vote' is both funny and to the point". www.spookhandy.com

TIPS TO HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL OPEN STAGE

by Kristen Schuldt, Hydraulic Woman

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1. Offer a prize to the weekly "winner." This always brings people in, so it should be tempting for the venue to sponsor a \$50 or \$100 cash prize or to at least try it for a couple months. The other way to raise money would be to charge \$5 per entry and give the winner the pot at the end. Go further with this idea if you want - line up 3 friends or regulars for judges - like American Idol or the Gong Show. Get some interesting judges and it keeps the crowd involved.
2. Set up a cozy stage, do something different. Lighting is **SO** important. Lately we've been setting up a couple of couches and lamps.... feels really homey.
3. Will the venue chip in half (or more) to run an ad every 3 or 6 months? Musicians are always scouring those local papers for opportunities, so you don't need to run it every week.
4. This was fun for a while - every performer gets to fish for a prize when they are done. Someone behind a divider or wall puts a prize on the end of the fishing line - something awful like old cassettes you don't want, dollar-store-crap, once in a while something good like a free drink or another performer's donated CD etc....

5. Turn the whole night or the last hour, into a jam. If there are regulars, you start to learn each others' songs without trying too hard.... or have a list of easy to learn 3 or 4-chord songs for jammers to pick from. Three friends and I actually formed a band after jamming together for a couple months. This may get too karaoke-like for some, but you could encourage singers to show up even if they don't play an instrument. Give them a list to pick from or ask them what songs you might know or learn easily. Consider hiring a house band - if you play rhythm guitar, all you really need is drums and bass. I've been pleasantly surprised at the talented musicians who will commit their time for very little money.
6. Keep advertising the free way: post on internet message boards, bulletin boards at music stores, the local musicians -wanted ads..... tell your city newspaper and any local arts paper to run it in their events section. And make sure there's posters up at the venue itself!

The music of Kristen Schuldt and Hydraulic Woman crosses all the lines between Rock, Blues, Acoustic and Electric. Hydraulic Woman currently performs at a number of live venues in the Minneapolis / St. Paul and surrounding area. www.hydraulicwoman.com

JAM ETIQUETTE

by The Victoria Bluegrass Association
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Before joining an existing jam, listen to a tune or two in the background. Join in if you think you can keep up. If not, play quietly in the background.

Ensure that your instrument is in tune. If you're new to digital tuners, be aware that they should be calibrated to A 440.

The purpose of jamming is to make bluegrass music and have fun. It is not to play as loud as you can, as fast as you can or to show off how good a player you are.

Listen to others in the jam and make sure you blend into the music and/or singing.

Don't practice your break (solo) in the jam circle. If you're playing the melody when it's someone else's turn to take a break or when someone's singing, you're stepping on toes. (Note that this is a major difference between bluegrass and Celtic or Old-Timey jams).

Don't hog the jam. Give everyone a chance to play.

Be supportive.

When it's your turn to pick a tune, let everyone know the name of the tune, the key, the form (if it's an instrumental) and if there are any odd or unusual chord progressions, timing or rhythm issues. It's best and most rewarding to do tunes in generally accepted keys. Songs, however, are usually done in the key selected by the singer. But, this being said, it's best to pick a key and tempo that suits the tune and the abilities of the other jam participants.

If capos are being put on or taken off between tunes, wait a few seconds for people to recheck their tuning.

If you don't want to take a break on a particular tune, make it obvious, such as by stepping back out of the circle and letting the person on your left know. No one wants to start their break half way through.

If you can't hear a break or the words of a song, you are playing too loudly. Tone is every bit as important as volume. If the volume is getting "up there" on a particular tune, don't play. Work on your harmony singing or listening skills.

Listen for the rhythm of the tune or song, get in the groove AND STICK WITH IT. If you find you're not in good time, stop playing for a beat or two until you feel the rhythm again. It is next to impossible to pick up the rhythm again, without stopping first.

Don't have your eyes glued to your instrument. Look around, communicate with your eyes and body. A lot of communication in a jam is very subtle and you need to be alert to catch the signals.

Listen, listen, listen. Listen to the bass and the room as a whole. Don't just listen to your neighbors because they may be leading you astray.

Familiarize yourself with the Nashville Numbering System & Common Bluegrass Chords to communicate chord changes to other players.

The preceding article was created by The Victoria Bluegrass Association Victoria Bluegrass Association (VBA) www.victoriabluegrass.ca The VBA is based in Victoria, British Columbia and organizes and supports a Tuesday night Bluegrass jam, open stage/feature nights, instructional workshops, special concerts, young musician's bursary, local bluegrass radio programming and a newsletter.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF JAMMING

by Jeremiah McCaw, Ezeduzit

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I

Thou shalt not ever forsake the beat.

II

Thou shalt arrange thyself in a small circle so that thou mayest hear and see the other musicians. Thou shalt listen with thine ears to the songs and attempt to play in accord with the group; also, open thine eyes betimes to look about thee, lest there be some visual sign someone is endeavoring to send thee. Thou shalt play softly when someone lifteth his voice in song, when playing harmony and when thou knowest not what thou art doing.

III

Thou shalt play in tune. Tune thine instrument well and tune it often, with thine electronic tuner, lest the sounds emanating from thine instrument be unclean.

IV

Thou shalt commence and cease playing each tune together as one, so that the noise ye make be a joyful noise and not a heinous tinkling that goeth in fits and starts, for that is unclean and is an abomination. Whensoever a musician sticketh forth his foot, as though he were afflicted with a cramp in the fatted calf, thou must complete the rest of that verse and then cease.

V

Thou shalt stick out thine own foot or else lift up thy voice crying, This is it! or "Last time!", if thou hast been the one to begin the song and it has been played sufficient times over. If the one who began a tune endeth it not by one of these signs, then the tune will just go on and on, like the Old Testament, until the listeners say, "Hark! It all soundeth the same."

VI

Thou shalt concentrate and thou shalt not confound the music by mixing up the "A" part and the "B" part. Most songs, but not all, proceedeth according to the ancient law, "AABB", but if thou sinneth in this regard or make any mistake that is unclean, thou mayest atone - not by ceasing to play - but by reentering the tune in the proper place and playing on.

VII

Thou shalt be ever mindful of the key the banjo is tuned in and play many tunes in that key, for the banjo is but a lowly instrument which must needs be retuned each time there is a key change.

VIII

Thou shalt not speed up or slow down accidentally when playing a tune, for it is an abomination (see commandment I).

IX

Thou shalt not, by thine own self, commence noodling off on a tune the other musicians know not, unless asked or unless thou art teaching that tune, for it is an abomination and the other musicians will not hold thee guiltless and shall take thee off their computer lists, yea, even unto the third and the fourth generation.

X

Thou shalt have fun and play well.

Jeremiah McCaw lives in Brantford, Ontario, Canada. His Folkpage was created site is to give some shape to Folk & Folk-oriented activity in the South Central Ontario area and to share his love of Folk music. www.jeremiah.ca Jeremiah is also a member of "Ezeduzit" - an acoustic-based trio. Although focused primarily on "old Timey" material, their repertoire ranges through traditional, contemporary and even original instrumental and vocal music. www3.sympatico.ca/jim.hodgef



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13. PERFORMING

GIG MANNERS: HOW TO BOOST YOUR APPEARANCES AT VENUES

by Annette Warner, CoffeeHouseTour.com

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If you are one of those musicians that just doesn't think about 'manners' when it comes to venues, it's about time you started.

Here are 10 easy-to-manage tips on how to mind your manners when gigging in a new venue or returning to an old one.

1. Always make sure to confirm your gig prior to leaving town (if you're travelling). Mistakes happen and schedule changes occur. Even at the last minute, venues have and will toss a new performer aside when given the opportunity to book a returning favorite that is guaranteeing a crowd. They may have dropped the ball on calling to cancel or even double billed the gig without letting you know.

So protect yourself and make sure you are still scheduled. If a cancellation does happen, ask for a new date right away -maybe two dates while you have the venue in a potentially generous state.

Never appear rude or inconvenienced in an attempt to make the venue feel bad. It will haunt you later and you'll just irritate them and make it hard for them to want to work with you again. Be pleasant and kind even when you may be gritting your teeth because it's screwed up your entire weekend. If nothing else, you've shown you are a professional and a tactful business person.

Most of the venues and musicians I asked admitted to getting caught in the awkward trap because they failed to confirm. Avoid it altogether when you can. Just call. Don't even depend on e-mail. Call.

2. Ask when the load-in time frame is and follow it. If you find out that you are going to be late for load-in, especially for a show at a restaurant, you'll want to call the venue as soon as you can in order to find out if it's okay to load-in late. I have witnessed musicians being turned away for their gig because they arrived late at a restaurant that specifically required that load-in and setup be completed two hours prior to peak dinner hour. Even though the musician would have been able to start the gig on time, the lateness was inconvenient for the restaurant.

Ask the venue booking manager what the preferred times are - and stick to them.

3. Ask the venue if there are any particular drink specials or event announcements they would like announced on the PA between sets. It shows you care about their business and want to help increase the register for the evening. You can also ask who the artists are that are playing the next few nights after you and announce the dates they are appearing to your audience.

It will come back around in a good way And the better you do it, the better it will come back around. If you have the time, research the next few performers prior to playing so you'll have something personal to add and write them telling them you intend to promote them and ask if there is something special they'd like for you to announce. That's just good, friendly networking and taking care of each other.

Next thing you know, they'll call you and want some details to announce on stage at a gig with 3000 people :) Just cuz you rocked!

4. Do not forget to announce reminders for tipping for the wait staff and bartenders. They really do appreciate acts that do that. At the end of the evening, tip the wait staff yourself. Even if they didn't bring you anything to the stage. Nothing says you shouldn't just because you are playing there. Waiters talk amongst themselves. Impressing them is a big part of the game. They will ask venue owners when you are coming back and they will tell their friends when you play.

5. Clean your stage area of bottles. Put the chairs back that you used. Leave things as you found them, or better. When you exit the venue, you'll stand out - believe me.

6. Assuming you liked the venue, add the venue to your holiday card list - and send them a Thank You card after your first gig. Let them know you appreciated being there and look forward to coming back. Do so even if you don't want to gig there again. It's easy enough to 'not be available', but it's not easy to recover from being unappreciative. Again...you'll stand out.

7. Give the venue a CD for their overhead player. Many venues will play them. Especially for the ones that have made the best impression. On return visits, introduce one new artist you think would fit in the venue, by giving them a CD of the artist. The venue will think you are wonderful and thoughtful. In a profession where most people are only looking out for themselves, it's rewarding personally to be supportive of your colleagues. But make sure your recommendations are good ones. You need to develop the venue's respect.

8. Offer their customers some raffle prizes through the night. Play some games like "First one to buy the newest drink on the menu, gets a free T-shirt." Always come prepared to give away things at your gigs. It really does make a difference and it's easy to do.

Remember to promote safe driving and designated drivers as often as you feel necessary - at least once per show. It's a community responsibility we all have - reminding intoxicated music lovers they shouldn't drive. Simple.

9. Make an effort to remember names of the staff so you can name them on stage. "Billy behind the bar makes a fabulous Margarita guys - go grab one!" or "Lisa is a fabulous waitress - everyone, remember to tip her well." It makes the evening more personal for the staff. You can't help but like someone who calls your name from the stage.

10. Be on time when starting and stopping your gig. If the end of your night has come and the crowd is still going strong, ask the manager if they want you to play longer. Don't stop cold and empty the place without showing you care enough to ask what they would like for you to do. They will appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Don't hesitate to barter. If you've done a fabulous job at maintaining the crowd, offer to stay another hour for a certain sum of money (whatever applies, but be fair). Most would be happy to let you play all night as long as they are making money, but don't assume that they do want you to continue.

And whatever you do ...avoid taking breaks when it's starting to pick up. And when you do take breaks - keep them short. You are being paid to play, not drink and sit around.

In addition to Founding CoffeeHouseTour.com Annette is a freelance Sales Copy Writer and Web Resource Developer with her own business; Awesome Webs. She also enjoys duties as a part time event planner and booking and music entertainment manager for several local festivals. She organizes and promotes the Wilmington, NC based and successful AWEsome 'Live Performance' Songwriting Competition now in it's 9th year. She is the owner of A. Warner Entertainment, a Live Entertainment Publicity Planning Agency. www.awarnerentertainment.com

THE ART OF PERFORMING

by Daylle Deanna Schwartz author of "Start & Run Your Own Record Label"

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Musicians often wonder why people love their music yet there's low attendance at gigs. It's unfortunate that the talent for creating great music in the studio doesn't always cut it on stage in front of a live audience. Being a good performer is a very separate skill that needs to be honed as much as you work on your songwriting, singing or playing an instrument. What does it take to be a good live performer?

Personality

If you stiffly sing your song perfectly, people may get bored. When you put yourself into what you're singing, smile and let your personality show through, people will enjoy you more.

Connect with your audience

Look at them!! I've seen performer glance around the stage and look everywhere but at the people watching them. Make eye contact with people in the front. Talk to your audience between songs. Sing to them, not your feet.

Energy and movement

Let your passion for your music move you around on the stage. Give out energy that your audience feels. Performance isn't just about singing well. People are watching you. Give them something to watch that they'll enjoy!

Have fun!

If you get stage fright, practicing is a good way to get over it. Or work with a professional to learn how to handle yourself. If you seem to be enjoying singing and playing, your audience enjoys watching you more. And if you make mistakes, just keep going and they won't care.

Be aware that playing a small room is a different dynamic than playing a large one.

The bigger the room, the more you need to emote your performance. Ask for honest feedback at every gig you do - not from friends! Try the bartender, who sees all the acts, the club promoter or give out feedback sheets that people can fill out anonymously. You need to get input from people who don't know you to be your best.

Gig contracts

Written agreements are the best proof of what was agreed to when you book a gig. A simple one-page contract clarifying what both the promoter and you agree to provides a better shot that the gig will go smoothly. e-mail confirmations offer some protection but a real agreement must be signed with a pen, not by hitting a send button. Even faxed signatures don't hold up as well. Some artists fax the agreement immediately and then send a signed copy by snail mail. Create your own agreement. You can find them online and tailor it to each gig. Colleges tend to have their own but many venues don't. Avoid getting caught short if the venue asks you to send yours by having one.

A non-refundable deposit (preferably 30 days before the gig) protects you and provides up front money for expenses. Try to include as many amenities (food, drinks, lodging etc.) as you can in the agreement. Some venues won't agree. Many will. It can't hurt to ask! Also include any specifications you may need for sound and what the venue agrees to provide. It's awful to arrive at a gig and learn that there's no mic or the drum kit they promised isn't there. When you have it in writing, you have a better chance of getting the venue to accommodate your needs.

Remember, ask and ye shall receive! Ask for everything you can and then negotiate for a fair agreement.

*Daylle Deanna Schwartz is a music industry coach/consultant, speaker and author of the best-selling **Start & Run Your Own Record Label**, **I Don't Need a Record Deal! Your Survival Guide for the Indie Music Revolution** and **The Real Deal: How to Get Signed to a Record Label (Billboard Books)**. Daylle also publishes **Daylle's News & Resources**, a free music industry newsletter and **Self-Empowerment Quarterly**, also free. daylle@daylle.com www.daylle.com www.idontneedarecorddeal.com has resources for advancing in the music industry.*

HOW TO REALLY GRAB YOUR AUDIENCE

by Marc Platt, Singer/Songwriter

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How many times have you gone to see a performer who talks and talks about songwriting? Some of these so-called "professionals" have been boring audiences this way for years with tales of their songwriting prowess. While I've been one of those jaded guys standing in the back of a club making wisecracks, I have also been on the receiving end of people's criticisms. Fact is, most of us at one time or other fall into the trap of boring the hell out of our listeners. What can you do as artist and entertainer to develop your craft as a communicator?

Don't blab on and on about songwriting

So many would-be singer/songwriters fall into the same bad habits time and again when it comes to live performance.

They really have nothing to talk about between songs, so they tell us how they wrote the damn thing. When I have to endure this, I want to go to the ticket seller and get my money back. If we want to know if you wrote the song, we will come up and ask you after the show. Then you can say something like, "Yes, I wrote that one and it is available on this CD you can purchase for 10 bucks."

Talk about your LIFE

Your personal experiences are a hell of a lot more interesting than, "I hope you like this one..." or "This is my first single from 10 years ago..." blah blah blah... The thing that makes you interesting is your history, your quirks - things that people can relate to.

Don't tell them — SHOW them

You don't have to tell people how talented you are. Don't recite your resume. You can show them how good you are and intrigue them with your ability to express and communicate your songs. Think of your songs as mini commercials for your talent. People will ask you about them and purchase your CDs - if the music is intriguing enough.

Be honest

People will be intrigued by you and your music, if they feel you are being honest with them. By being genuine with the audience about what is going on in your life - and how your material is a reflection of it - they will experience your performance more deeply and they will trust you.

Reveal yourself

Performers sometimes have a hard time talking about themselves, their problems and even their triumphs. But I'm here to tell you that audiences are dying to hear what you really think and how you really feel about things. Why do you think people love reality television and read People magazine. They like to hear gossip and insight. They want a way to relate to you.

While onstage, you have a unique opportunity to let people in and share things that will make them want to know you as a person through your art. For example, I recently had a record release party and during the gig my wife came up and sang a song with me. She held up a CD and said, "Buy a lot of these CDs, because in seven months we're gonna need a crib." That one line says a lot; it humanizes the artist and everyone can relate to having a baby and needing to pay for things.

Make your point and move on

Talk about yourself, yes, but be aware it is sometimes easy to go too far in this regard. Get to the point. Learn to edit big concepts into one or two lines. You don't have to tell a whole story. The song will take on a life of its own if you give the audience just enough insight into what you are all about. In other words, we don't need to know everything all at once.

Don't lecture your audience

Sharing your thoughts about life is one thing, but be careful about spouting political opinions. I remember going to a gig by a good friend who lectured the audience about the evils of a certain political candidate. Not a good idea. When you get into politics and religion, you will likely turn off people you are trying to reach. You don't know the backgrounds of each audience member and if you alienate them you won't get them back. Trust me on this one.

Don't trash yourself

Being honest doesn't mean belittling yourself or your performance. I can't tell you how many times I have walked up to a friend after his/her set and asked them how they felt about it and they replied with, "I hated the sound. I couldn't hear myself. I messed up the second verse on the third song..." I don't want to hear that crap. I do not want you to discount the previous 45 minutes and make me feel like I just wasted my precious evening because of your negativity.

Show gratitude

Instead of being critical or self-deprecating, you could say, "Thanks for coming down. I had a great time and was really glad to see you out there. It meant a lot to me." People have pried themselves off their beloved couches, burned valuable gasoline, spent hard-earned cash on admission and a couple over-priced cocktails - all because they came to see you play. If you express your gratitude to them after the gig, there is a good chance they will want to come back to see you perform again.

Marc Platt has been a Los Angeles-based Singer/Songwriter since 1980. He has taught a Performance Workshop in North Hollywood at Kulak's Woodshed since 2003. Platt's music has appeared on TV shows such as Queer Eye for the Straight Guy and E-News True Hollywood Stories. His album, I'm So Awesome, is available online. For more information, visit his page at www.myspace.com/marcplattmusic.

14 Ways Musicians Can Increase their Tips

by Bard Marc Gunn, The Bard's Crier
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I was listening to NPR the other day when they did a report on tipping in the restaurant industry. One they had a list of tips on how wait staff can increase their tips.

That got me brainstorming and surfing the net for other ideas to boost tips. That combined with lots of performances at Renaissance Festivals helped me to develop my own list of ways musicians can improve their tips.

Introduce yourself by name

Too often musicians forget to introduce themselves on stage. Make sure you tell the audience your band name, but to really boost your tips, you should also introduce yourselves individually. Let people know who you are as an individual and you'll see greater tips.

Go out into the audience with a tip jar

You really can't be passive when it comes to getting tips. You have to walk out into the audience with some visual reference that says "Tip Me!" and they will tip you.

Meet your audience at their level

Take the time to talk to your audience members at their level. Holding a discussion from a stage puts a wall between you and them. So instead, go out into the audience and talk to them face to face. Kneel if they're at a table, so you're at eye level. And if you have your tip jar with you, you will you will not only gain a fan, but you will also improve your tips.

Make your appearance personal

We wear kilts to most of our gigs. A kilt adds a very personal touch It links us to a certain culture and makes people take notice. Course you don't have to go that route, instead find some piece of clothing that reflects your personality and you will boost your tips.

Recommend your favorite CD

If you have multiple CDs, your audience will always ask for your favorite. Tell them what it is. If you only have one, you can do the same by recommending other artists that you like. That adds a two-fold advantage of helping your audience find music they like and helping your fellow musicians.

Smile

A bright, confident smile will bring fans back again and again with lots of big tips.

Involve your audience in the music with a joke or game

Next time you're up on stage, see what happens when you joke around with the audience. Your personality will glow all the more and so will your tips.

Chat with fans by name

Music fans love nothing more than to be recognized by the bands they love. So do your best to remember their names. They will feel that much more attached to your music and feel like your friend. And these friends will tip you better for the courtesy.

Touch your audience

When you're out socializing with your audience, touch them (in a non-sexual way). Whether you shake their hand, pat them on the shoulder or back or just brush against them, wait staff find that that even that will boost their tips 50%. And it will yours too.

Use tip jars with the VISA/MasterCard Logo

According to studies done in restaurants, just seeing those logos is enough to encourage customers to tip more. I know it sounds crazy, but give it a try. You may be pleasantly surprised with the results.

Give your audience something in return for their tip

People love feeling like they're getting their money's worth. And many people don't realize you should tip bands. So give something in return. It could be something as big as a sticker or magnet or as simple as a business card that might include a \$1 off your CDs. Or hey what about feeding their sweet tooth with a piece of candy. Whatever the case, that little gift will mean big tipping results.

Draw a picture

On a similar note, if you give them a business card, draw or make a comment on it. That piece will be more valuable to them and will result in bigger tips.

Make tipping a part of the show

Why wait until the end of the set to ask for tips. Sing a song about tipping or get your audience involved in the tipping process by shouting something. Or offer a prize to the first tipper. But integrate it into your show and it won't seem like you're just begging for money, rather you're making it fun to tip.

Thank your audience

No gig would be complete without an audience. So thank them for taking the time to watch you perform. They will feel the personal touch and respond when you ask for money.

Bonus Tipping Suggestion:

If the change is five dollars, never return a five dollar bill. Always give back five ones. This allows the customer to tip you with some of the dollar bills you returned. You will rarely get a \$5 tip and returning a \$5 bill will turn off tippers. In general, it's good to return all ones if the change is less than \$8. You want the customer to have at least two ones so they can give it back as the tip.

Bard Marc Gunn of the Brobdingnagian Bards has helped thousands of musicians make money with their musical groups through the Bards Crier Music Marketing and Promotion E-zine and the Texas Musicians' Texas Music Biz Tips. Now you can get personal advice by visiting www.bardscrier.com for FREE "how-to" music marketing assistance.

FINDING TRUTH THROUGH STAGE PERSONAS

by Gilli Moon, Warrior Girl Music

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Some of the best bands on record (meaning album) are not great live. Some bands get signed because of a great demo, but haven't had enough experience nor begun to explore the dynamics between the musicians. Developing an "act" is more than just putting a good CD together. It's about the way the musicians play (live), the clothes they wear on stage, the way they relate to the audience, how they stand on stage, the patter in between songs,.. the whole "live stage persona".

For most of my performing life I have felt that if you can be a little "over the top" with your performance, then you can grab people's attention quickly. I learned that early, playing in smoky pubs in Australia with people who really didn't care at all about the performer. They just wanted to drink beer and if there was a song they liked, they sung along. But to get any attention, you had to be an over the top entertainer. The stage persona became the most important thing for me.

It took me along time to not take myself so seriously as an artist. I remember the early days in Sydney when I would go into a deep sweat preparing for a show. I had to get the right clothes, have the right makeup, have the right hair do or color. I have had every hair color imaginable! Brown, blonde, red, white, mahogany, purple, even blue and so many styles, from short punky to long and frizzy. In the early nineties I thought I needed to be a little bohemian, a little hippy, a little punk and a lot of attitude. I always wanted to show off my midriff, wear big loop earrings and fancy shoes. Black was in.

I was still learning the art of performance though. When I first started out performing my original songs live, I was very shy. It's funny because I was also, at the same time, performing in cover bands and I was very dynamic, on the contrary. In cover bands I could play a part and imagine what the original artist, like Donna Summer, did on stage. I could imitate the original artist.

But with my original material I was shy and very uncomfortable playing the piano and singing at the same time. I found it a really difficult thing, to think about my lyrics, play the chords, sing in tune and remember there was an audience in front of me that needed attention. I closed my eyes a lot.

When I got to the States, I learned to let go. For starters, I was able to be whoever I wanted to be, from scratch; reinvent myself, so to speak. So I decided to be brave and be a little "out there". It worked. I wore spandex dresses, four inch wedge heels, silver and glitter somewhere on my body (and especially as glitter cream on my cheeks and shoulders) and even wore wings throughout the temperamental angel album tour (2000-2001). Being "in persona" I was able to take flight as an artist. Always a diamond in the rough, my music, songwriting and voice got stronger, but at least I got attention.

When I was signed to tribe Records I even dressed up as a man for a year on stage. That was fun. We had developed a band called Jessica Christ, which pushed the envelope with gender issues: actually we wanted the audience to remove the gender association with songs and promote the lyrics, the words, to be the most important elements, so I changed my stage gender for kicks, a direct idea from the Label in order for us to get some media attention (which came). I'd start off in plaid trousers and a jacket buttoned up, short cropped blue hair and a Salvador Dali curly mustache on my face, singing sweet love songs and full on rock and roll too. Half way through the second song I'd literally strip and reveal a short body hugging dress, always keeping my black high boots on.

Jessica Christ was a real breakthrough for my stage persona and for releasing my inhibitions. There is something to be said about going "over the top" on stage. You really confront all your fears and learn to let go. As soon as you let go of any fears or nerves, which can be disguised behind costumes as we become a different persona, the more your inner natural self can exude. I remember doing a gig at The Gig on Melrose Avenue in West Hollywood and it was packed: girls and guys up front, with lighters swaying in the air. Girls looked on with awe and felt the power of a woman doing what I was doing on stage. It gave them strength. Guys were curious about my sexuality, but they felt the sensuousness. They were all in love and it didn't matter. The crowd started hooting and hollering when I'd change attire, never missing a beat on the song. It was an electrifying feeling. I really let loose and didn't care what people thought. My sexuality is tied into my expressing myself through music. When I perform, sexuality naturally exudes. For me, it was all about entertainment and through my image development over the years, my musicianship and vocals got tighter.

Blog entry: June 2000

We've (the Jessica Christ band) been playing the traps around L.A to great crowds and not so great crowds (you have to take the good with the band), sometimes rude club managers and sometimes great promoters. Playing live in L.A is somewhat challenging because you never really know who's going to come and see you on any given night. We had all of 15 people at The Mint on Pico, but a couple of weeks earlier the club was packed with 150 at the Gig. I've been battling with the ideas flowing in my head about my music. I have had so many deep and emotional events that have taken place over the past year... the new songs are all very autobiographical.. like you will hear the beginning, middle and end of the relationship in one sitting. The edge is interesting. No more miss nice girl. I'm coming alive!

Following the Jessica Christ era was my "temperamental" phase, promoting my first U.S release on my own label Warrior Girl Music. The album "temperamental angel" conjured up a lot of imagery and ideas as to how to present myself on stage. For me it was about being a rebel and an angel, in the way I sung, performed and how I sounded. I wanted to bring out different personalities, as we all are complex individuals with many personalities and masks. I had a song called "Naked" which was very sensuous and the title track really spoke about my multi-personalities, being the angel and the devil (or at least dealing with those different parts of us).

Blog entry: March 2001

I spent last Sunday trotting down old train tracks downtown L.A. in a sticky black plastic dress with dark sunglasses, my 'don't mess with me' boots and white wings, while a train came by. We were filming the rest of the footage of the Temperamental Angel" music video. They then had me wrapped in saran wrap, naked, in the living room. I love getting naked! Just got home from The Gig, Hollywood where Jeff, Gordie, Ric and I played at Mike Galaxy's Industry Showcase. I felt it went really well and we sold quite a few CDs plus accumulated new fans. Both Jeff and I wore our wings and Ric adorned my pink feather bower by the 6th song. I love "doing Hollywood" because you can wear whatever you want on stage and in fact so do the people in the audience. Tonight for me it was simply freaky colored hair and my angel wings. The blue warriors, the honest, hunky and adorable band who funk and groove with or without Gilli Moon, are knocking the socks off everyone and that makes gilli a proud mother goose. The Whisky a Go Go never saw anything like it last Thursday even though they've had, well, just about everybody there.

But we have paint flying - and Gordie our guitarist enjoyed that on is body, dress swaying (that's mine), heads nodding, boots kicking, a voice warbling and music well, will take you away to the MOON. It's quite funny that where once gilli moon was so sweet and a "piano ballad" gal, she has turned almost heavy metal in her black boots but still so calm and sultry when "Naked" comes on. The Press seem to enjoy the controversy."

When I came out with the "Woman" album, I was all about the "warrior girl" - wearing combat attire (before it was popular), with green army camouflage pants, boots and a cool, spunky tank top. It gave me room to run around on stage. I also was painting a lot on stage, what I call "SensuArt". I'd erect a large clear piece of Perspex (plastic) on stage and get my brushes and paint out. I'd stand behind the clear canvas painting lots of female nudes and faces, while the band would solo and jam. I have painted my band members many times too. It was a lot of fun.

I've run the gamut of stage personas. It helps develop the artist's story and removes the fear. Every gig should be special. They have all been for me.

My "live image" changed when I started touring. I began seriously touring across the United States in '02, promoting the "temperamental angel" album. To keep it affordable, I went solo, without the band. This meant that that I was responsible for everything: getting to the venue, organizing my music, playing the keyboards (my fingers certainly got a lot stronger), entertaining a strange crowd, selling CDs (although have always had help on this from fans and friends) and packing up. At a certain point it got too tiring to "put on the big show" with the costumes and any theatrics. I started out on my first tour with a small color wheel light that revolved and changed lights as I performed. But I sold it for \$50 in Phoenix Arizona into the second week.

I ended up just taking my shoes off and just singing my songs on the keyboard. This was the beginning of finding my true self on stage.

I no longer wore the outfits, frizzed my hair up or even put on any over the top makeup. Over a few years of being on the road consistently, traveling every state in the country, I became less and less concerned about my costuming or stage persona. I didn't have time and I was too tired. I became more concerned about my songs, my vocal and music performance and being authentic.

Authenticity is the ultimate goal as a live performer. If the audience doesn't feel your truth, then they can't relate to you. Being on the road was a huge awakening. I don't have a problem with any band going for the "glam rock" or over the top image. I feel every band has to go through that process and it has many positives, especially when developing and you want to learn to "let go" on stage. If you are all about "image" and that's what people relate to, then all the power to you. But I have grown accustomed with the notion that it doesn't matter how you look: it's how you act. It's who you are inside.

I've seen the worst bands all dressed up, with the full stage presence - lights, costumes, props,... the works and then be left unimpressed with their talent and their songs. Then I've seen the most humble of artists get up in jeans and a T-shirt, no makeup or frills and truly grab my attention with a powerful stage presence, talent and story.

The more grass roots I've become, more laid back and real, the more positive feedback I've received on my show and my music. Of course, this is a ten year overnight success story here. I'm no spring chicken. I've learned a lot. One has to get their chops up on stage for a long time to make it look natural!

These days, especially after the fourth album, "extraOrdinary life", I've really tuned in to my songs and writing and I remember the story around them whenever I sing them. I go back in time, every time and live that emotion and the audience feels that. Being able to touch souls is so magnificent and it doesn't matter what you wear. But it does matter how you exude your passion. It does matter how you deliver. Eye contact is important. Contact in general, with your audience, is important.

Humility is important. Not taking yourself so seriously is VERY IMPORTANT.

I remember seeing Celine Dion in concert in Sydney. Whether you like her music or not, I encourage anyone to see her perform live or check out her live videos. She is amazing as a stage entertainer. There must have been 20,000 people at this concert and she had every one of us eating out of the palm of her hand. We were silent and riveted. She spoke to me like I was the only person in the room and sung my life stories in her songs. She has a fabulous sense of humor (she knows what to say between songs) and never ends a song until she's ready. If you notice, she'll finish the song on a note, maybe an arm outstretched, maybe her eyes closed; and the band will stop, so will she - and everything is silent. We hang in the suspense. When she finally drops her arm (it could be even 5 or 10 seconds after that final note), we then applaud, as if we've been given the silent nod. She decides when the song is over. Until then, we are her audience slaves. It's superb.

I have loved my stage persona journey. I'm sure there is more to come with how I will express myself live. I have always admired Madonna's finesse in reinventing her image every album she makes. I like that idea because I love making concept albums. Each album tells a story. It has a theme, a plot, a journey to take the audience on. So too should the live performance, matching the essence of the album. Madonna is great at that and never afraid to push the envelope.

Stage costumes can be a great ice breaker, to bring across your artist story and concept. Developing an image is crucial, of course. But with or without costumes, if you can touch people's hearts, then you're on the right path. There is much controversy about developing an artist's image in the music business. The media love to grab on to a story of some kind and the business doesn't like to have to guess who you are. They like to see it in your music and how you look. They want to be able to market something. It's the same for independent artists too. Image around your album concept, your website, your live performance persona, even your character in the general public, all tie in to who you are as an artist. I believe that your persona as an artist is crucial to telling your story and creating a buzz.

But in all of that... always remain authentic to your true self. Keep changing, evolving and tap in to your passionate self. TRUTH and PASSION is everything. This, my friends, will make the difference between you being a quick, fly-by-night fashion trend, versus being an eternal, lifelong, rock star. `

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IMPROVISATION & SURPRISES: THE KEY TO A GREAT COVER BAND

by Kevin Minihan, Singer/Songwriter

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So you're in a cover band or your band happens to play a few cover tunes. First of all, congratulations! That is how everybody gets started. Some musicians enjoy the familiarity and choose to stay the path. In fact, cover bands often make more money per show than original bands. But playing the same songs every show (not to mention songs you've heard everyday for the last 20 years!) can cause major burnout within a band and, more dangerously, in an audience. So how can a cover band raise the bar for themselves as well as the audience? The answer is improvisation and surprise.

First let's discuss what I mean by improvisation with cover songs. Now, I'm sure you're thinking, "Wait! Aren't cover songs supposed to be note perfect recreations of the original version?" Well, yes and no. Yes, the audience wants to be able to recognize and sing along to their favorite songs, but you should take a little 'poetic license' and tweak the songs in your band's favor. The fastest way to put someone to sleep is to play an average cover of a great song. A simple example of this technique would be changing the solos in a song. If your guitar player can really shred, have him come up with an original solo that highlights his abilities. You could also add an unexpected break in a cover song. Try playing very quietly during a section of the music, then rise to a rousing crescendo. Play around with songs. Have fun. Not only will this make playing the same old sets more interesting for you, it will make the audience sit up and listen.

Think about the average Joe in the audience. He's heard the song you are playing a million times on the radio and subconsciously knows every note. All of a sudden his ears and brains notice something is different! Not wrong, just different and he really pays attention! Mission accomplished.

Now, let's look at the more radical (and increasingly popular) 'surprise' version of a cover tune. What I mean by this is taking an old favorite and totally reworking it. Here, we are not only changing solos, but possibly choosing a totally different tempo (ex. slow down a usually fast song) or musical style (ex. play a Country song in a Metal style). Change anything and everything musically but keep the words the same. There is, however, a fine line you need to be aware of. First of all, don't do this to every song in your show. Remember you are being paid to play covers, so don't play you way out of a gig. Just throw in a reworked song maybe once or twice in each set and you'll get the desired affect. It's always fun to watch the 'light bulb come on' in someone face when they finally realize what song you are actually playing!

So keep it loose and fun. Use the original versions of the songs as a guide, but make the songs your own. I have people come up to me after every show and comment on how they loved my version of their favorite song. These people start showing up at other gigs and, the next thing you know, you've got a following and can demand higher pay! Changing up your cover tunes is a great way to separate your band from the pack.

Kevin Minihan is a musician, writer, jack of all trades (master of none!) residing in the questionable outskirts of Dallas, TX. He plays in 3 bands and never gets enough sleep. When he is not playing music, he is writing about it. He enjoys sharing his experience and knowledge with other musicians. Along with writing articles for this and other websites, Kevin plans to write a series of books in order to help others achieve their dreams of success in the music business.

GET MOVING!: SINGING BETTER WHEN YOU MOVE YOUR BODY

by Mark Baxter, voicelesson.com

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It was Sir Isaac Newton who said, "A body at rest tends to stay at rest." I don't know much about science, but his words serve as a reminder that your desire to perform will never become a reality if you're just sitting home dreaming. The hardest part of a musical journey is the first step. Fear brings up a lot of questions that can freeze your feet in place. Who's going to help me? What if no one likes my voice? When will I be ready? The problem with questions like these is that they can't be answered before hand. You can wish and hope all you want but the only way to become an experienced performer is to get out there and perform. It would be great if there were a map to follow, but the truth is that everyone's path to the stage is different. So throw away that career compass and get moving!

A practice routine is always a good direction to start with. The more you vocalize the more you'll trust your reflexes. Plus, getting to know what your voice does well will pay off when it's time to shine. Remember, nobody can do everything. What great singers do is sing to their strengths. In order to find out what your strong points are, you've got to sing every day and explore a variety of music. After a while you'll end up with a bunch of songs that highlight your assets. Even if you can't imagine a situation where you would need them, rehearse these tunes often to keep them fresh. Opportunities are only golden for those who are prepared. Don't wait for a reason to practice - get moving!

Another observation Isaac Newton had was that, "A body in motion tends to stay in motion." Which means: Once you get your butt moving it's far easier to keep it moving. Once you start auditioning it gets easier to audition. Once you start singing in public it's easier to keep singing in public. It's expected you'll take many wrong steps before you gain momentum in a direction that makes sense. Use audition and gig opportunities that you know aren't right for you as practice for those that you will care about in the future. What's important is that you jump at every chance to sing, whether you think you're ready or not. Now, for most people, what's really stalling them is a fear that they'll choke at the moment of truth. If you're petrified that stage fright will rob you of all your dreams and desires, I still have just two words of advice. Get Moving!

That's right, but this time the movement is more than a metaphor. At the first sign of performance butterflies, get physical. Nervous pacing and fidgeting isn't enough.

It takes an organized activity to pull your mind away from fear. The best thing to do is dance. The coordination required is a perfect distraction. If dancing isn't your thing then do some light exercises. It can be as simple as going for a walk. If so, make sure you take large steps and swing your arms nice and wide to get your heart pumping. You want to work hard enough to trigger perspiration but not hard enough to sweat. Walking, dancing, exercising, it's all the same to the body. What's important here is that you take control over your nerves and get moving.

At twenty minutes before show-time, slow your heart rate by reducing the level of activity. Once things calm down, begin your usual breathing and vocal warm up exercise routine. Slow inhales to the count of ten are a great way to start. Long sustained comfortable singing notes will focus your mind on coordination. If your voice is still shaky then sustain single notes using a buzz (zzzz) sound. Keep your volume low until you're feeling relaxed. The temptation to push when you're nervous is strong and the extra force can irritate muscles in and around the larynx. Once you've gotten some experience performing or you're only dealing with a mild case of butterflies, simple arm, leg and back stretches should be enough to get you loose. Do them as you run through your warm up routine. No matter how much stage experience you have, though, no one gets away without doing something before a performance. From superstars to super beginners, everybody has to get moving.

If all this fuss over movement seems un-cool consider this: If you're too embarrassed to move and stretch out in front of other people, just imagine how much you're holding back when you perform. Stage fright is nothing to be ashamed of. The anxiety just means you care. Isn't that a good thing? The worst thing to do is to sit there in a panic and pretend you're not nervous. You're not fooling anyone - especially yourself. So take advantage of those around you before a performance and force yourself to loosen up in front of them. As difficult as it may be, it's easier than working through your inhibitions on stage. The point is not to talk yourself out of being nervous; it's all about setting your career in motion and creating a great physical environment for you to sing your best when it counts the most. So get moving!

Often the biggest obstacle for performers is time. The clock is always in motion - and always against us! It takes years to develop talent, months for promotions to click, weeks to rehearse a show and days to learn a song. On top of all that it can take many hours to get a handle on your nerves before you sing. Since it's impossible to squeeze a three hour pre-show routine into twenty minutes, it's best to err on the side of caution. Allowing plenty of time before a show may seem like a luxury, but not having enough time can certainly be a misery. Should you find yourself all warmed up with no place to sing - balance your check book during the extra time. Just remember it's your responsibility to create some career momentum and properly prepare for every show. Time's a wasting. Don't make me say it again...

Mark Baxter's client list includes Steven Tyler (Aerosmith), Gary Cherone, Tonic, cast members of RENT, members of Vertical Horizon, Regina (#1 single on Billboard's pop chart), Amiee Mann, Peter Wolf (J. Geils), The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Quicksand, Expanding Man, Loudness, Gigolo Aunts, Cara Jones (Japanese "New Age"), Combustible Edison, The del Fuegos, Thanks to Gravity, Talking to Animals and on and on. Discover what thousands of singers ... from garage hopefuls to Grammy winners, have learned from Mark's in depth knowledge and unique approach to vocal improvement. Mark Baxter offers private and video lessons to singers of all levels. Visit his website at: www.voicelesson.com

PERFORMANCE POWER

by Yvonne DeBandi, Sing Smart Vocal Coach

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Singing: Acting through Song

A singer is an actor that uses the singing voice as a tool. Every musical phrase tells a story, which is also affected or shared through body language, facial expression, diction and vocal dynamics.

With this idea, performance preparation should include analyzing song material to determine the song's heart. What does the song really say on paper and how are those emotions best expressed in general? Loud or soft? Crisp or warm consonants? Vibrato or not?

This part of vocal study is just as important as learning the vocal line, the rhythm and the lyrics. It gives you the foundation for a sincere performance. Once this study is underway begin working with the mechanics needed for you to sing the song. Once you have conquered the basic mechanics and are beginning to sing the song in performance mode, the artistry really begins.

Consider again the motivation for each melody line. As you adjust your voice accordingly, also adjust the rest of your character: body language, facial expression, diction and dynamics to match the sincere message. Following this type of training concept will help you provide a more sincere performance.

Remember, once you hit the performance stage, very little of your energy should be focused on the mechanics of singing. If you practice regularly, most of your basic mechanic actions should be second nature. If a track runner had to consistently think of right-left-right-left in order to run the race, he probably would not come in first. You should be “practiced” enough that you are able to focus your concentration on enjoying your voice and conveying the message.

To make sure the point about how important sincerity is to singing and live performance is clear, consider this: many singers that might be considered “average” if rated on a “technical scale” receive standing ovations and encore calls; while the singer that performed almost perfect “mechanically” received polite respectful applause. Engage your audience and sing sincerely.

Battling Stage Fright

You hear your name being called and your knees begin to tremble, you begin to breathe more heavily and your mouth goes dry – a singer’s nightmare.

Here are some tips:

1. First, remember that you are an actor performing through song. If you are shy and have difficulty getting on stage, remember that we all have different sides of personalities. Obviously there is a side of you that enjoys music or you wouldn’t be in this position in the first place. So, let go. Give this “character” the right to take over when it is time to perform. Just like in the acting exercises above, build the character you want your audience to see.

Bottom line, perception is everything. Your performance and all aspects of it, will help people build their perception on whether they are enjoying themselves or not. Who is in control of that perception? You.

2. You have to get your breath under control, bottom line. If you lose your breath control due to nervousness, you have undermined your voice’s foundation and it is going to be a long song. Keep this in mind on days of performance and be sure to engage in cardiovascular exercise. If possible, stop and do jumping jacks several times throughout the day. It is also recommended that in addition to your regular vocal warm-up that you do jumping jacks or other low impact cardiovascular activity around thirty to forty-five minutes prior to performance. Stay hydrated.

Also practice getting your breath under control when the nervousness begins. As soon as you begin to feel that panicky feeling and your heart rate increase, take deep, long and low breaths.

This type of breathing will send your brain the message that everything is under control. Short and fast breathing alarms the brain and puts the body (your instrument) into “alarm” mode. Obviously not conducive to giving the performance of your life. Take control of your body and your breathing.

3. To combat the dry mouth try to find something that will create saliva when you are nervous and use this knowledge during these times of crises. It may be putting your finger in your mouth; it may be sucking on your tongue or swallowing several times. You may even consider a product solution like “Entertainer’s Secret Throat Relief” to help in those times of desperate dehydration. We do recommend this product, but always suggest you learn natural solutions as a safeguard.

4. Learning to sing, the vocal journey, is usually a very a personal one. Learn to love and enjoy your voice. If you don't like the way you sound you are sure to express this emotion during performance...so why should others enjoy listening to it? Believe in yourself and learn to use your voice, along with its unique characteristics, to your best advantage.
5. Finally, focus on what is important throughout the entire performance. Distraction is usually a full body experience. I've heard a statement made about athletes in the middle of a really good athletic performance, "They got game!" If just for a moment you wonder if Mom made it in time to get a good seat, if your friend heard you hit that note with such power or if you remembered to lock the car door, you no longer "got game." You are the control central of your performance...so stay focused and tell everyone else in your mind to get lost for the next three minutes or so. You deserve the time and so does your audience.

Yvonne DeBandi, NATS Member and magna-cum laude graduate of the renowned Florida State University School of Music has been educating singers and musicians since 1989. As creator of the Sing Smart, Not Hard™ vocal training method and co-founder of The A2Z Educational Network, her primary focus has been on providing vocal education to the masses through the development of unique and innovative vocal education tools, as well as networking and working closely with many other vocal educators. In 2000 she began training singers around the world using online training curriculums and distance training programs with great success and is known as a true pioneer in the vocal education industry. www.singsmart.com

A2Z SINGING TIPS

by Teri Danz, Vocal Coach for One World Music
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A = Athlete

Singers need to train their body like an athlete. Your body is your instrument. Put a priority on:

1. taking care of your body - rest, food and warming up to sing
2. building and maintaining your instrument.

B = Breathing

Knowing how to breathe in singing is a basic technique. A diaphragmatic approach is important here. Use your back muscles for support. Fill up air into your rib cage and back but not into your throat. This creates a baseline support level called holding up. Then take smaller breaths for phrases as you need them.

C= Control

Control in singing is a combination of techniques. Breath control, resonance, pitch, placement, holding up and being able to ride the air are all elements of control. Like riding a bike, it's the balance of all of these things that contribute to effortless singing.

D= Drop Your Jaw

Relaxing and dropping the jaw in (pop) singing is the key to reaching notes effortlessly, making range transitions and supporting the ends of your range.

E= Eat for Energy

Proteins are essential for maintaining energy in singing. Singing takes energy. Many performers lose energy halfway through a set and then end up pushing and stressing their vocal cords.

F = Fatigue

Fight fatigue. As a singer, this is a huge enemy. Fatigue will sap you of technique and have you working against yourself. Many singers strain their vocal chords, push their range, get hoarse and get a variety of other problems when they get tired. The antidote is rest and self-care.

G = Get out there

The best way to create your own style as a singer is to do it. If you're a beginner, work with nurturing people (and a coach). You can play coffeehouses, open mics, sing with friends, but just get started.

H = Hydration

Stay hydrated. Drink lots of water (no lemon). It takes energy and lubrication to sing.

I= Initiate

Look for opportunities to sing. They are out there. Be like a tiger, watch for opportunities and do the work to be able to take them.

J = Jaw

Relax your jaw. Called a Dumb Duh, it will feel unnatural to keep your jaw loose and dropped but it is the best way to get a smooth sound and not effort in singing. It also allows you to get exact placement of pitch and replicate it.

K = Keep Your Eye on the Ball

Don't get discouraged if your voice isn't where you'd like it to be. It takes time to develop your instrument. Singing is a complex performing art and everyone who's successful has done the work at some time or another. Keep going and you'll keep growing.

L= Less is More

Strive to do justice to the song and your interpretation of it. Just deliver the message. Vocal gymnastics is not a prerequisite for doing a great vocal performance.

M= Mouth sounds

Using mouth sounds such as a creek or a cry, give your voice more resonance and presence. In your chest voice, knowing how to use mouth sounds properly is critical - especially in getting to record quality. Many singers mistakenly put their sound in their nose. Practice putting the sound in your mouth by placing it all the way in your nose and then forcing the sound into your mouth. FEEL the difference. Your body can assist you with correct placement.

N= Not Efforting

This is a concept of using your body as an instrument. Not efforting involves holding up (standing straight, having a support of air in your body), doing a proper placement of pitches, dropping your jaw, riding the air up and over and relaxing into the groove.

O = Open Stance

An open stance to the audience is: holding up, standing straight, shoulders down, head and jaw relaxed, head straight forward, eyes open -

focused on a point, arms relaxed and wide. Watch Bono, Jagger, Aretha to get the idea.

P = Placement

Knowing (not guessing) where pitches are placed is critical to being in control as a singer. You can actually have your body help you in remembering where pitches are placed. If you are on stage and can't hear/have no monitors etc..., knowing placement will allow you to stay on pitch no matter what happens around you.

Q = Quit Pushing

Feeling powerful in singing and being powerful in singing are two entirely different things. While efforting - pushing chest, singing louder to hit pitches, creating and pushing sound from the throat - may feel powerful, it actually sounds worse. It's easy to go off pitch, sound strident (even painful), hurt your voice, crack etc... when you sing in this way.

R = Riding the Air

Riding the air is a concept and a set of actions that are extremely helpful for singers. Riding the air means holding up the air in your body so that you are supported, then sending/directing the sound up and over in a line to a point (imagine) across the room. Part of this is a mental image, part is a body muscle memory stance and the last part is mouth placement (riding along the palate).

S= Sing, Sing, Sing

Sing everyday. If you aren't in a group, sing in the car, take classes and most importantly, do vocal exercises. They will maintain your instrument (and build it) as you look for a steady singing gig.

T= Take feedback and direction

Be teachable. Sometimes other people can guide us when we don't know the way. Sometimes other people are dead wrong. Trust your intuition. Learn who to trust and then take what you like and leave the rest.

V = Vocal Exercises

Vocal exercises are critical to maintaining and building your instrument. Do NOT underestimate them. They warm up your vocal chords in ways just singing a song cannot and will not. Lip rolls are a good way to start any warm up routine and can be done on a variety of scales.

W = Warm Up

This is critical to a great performance - you must warm up your muscles. A rule of thumb is to do at least 20 minutes of vocal exercises and 40 minutes of singing. If you perform a lot, it could take less time. If you perform infrequently, warm up longer. Otherwise you warm up on your audience or, worse, you find congestion, range weakness or other problems on stage rather than in the privacy of your home - where you can work to overcome them. If you're sick or tired or very congested, having enough warm up time allows you to make good decisions on song selection and the actual set list.

X= X Factor

Once you've got some solid vocal technique, let your personality and spirit shine through. Your voice is the window to your soul and vision; your technique needs to support your vision, not overtake it. If you are technically in control and have clear intent, even a single word can move listeners to tears.

Y = You are the Messenger

If you're on stage or in the studio and you have to be perfect, it never works. Focus on communicating the song, sharing that experience with the audience. It's easy to make mistakes when it's all about us (how great or not we are).

Z= Get in the Zone

Singing is a mental, spiritual, emotional and physical pursuit. It takes preparation, focus and energy! Prepare mentally for a performance. Take time to get quiet and focused before you sing. Warm up and visualize yourself giving a great performance.

Teri Danz is a pro recording artist and vocal coach/producer with record credits, national press. Her band played the very cool November FemMuse Hard Rock show and has their debut CD in Tower Records!! For more info: go to Teri Danz www.teridanz.com

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCAL HEALTH

by Yvonne DeBandi, Sing Smart Vocal Coach

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Many singers believe if they do not perform regularly they do not need to worry about vocal health and singing “properly.” Unfortunately, just like an unexpected fall out of a tree can cause a broken bone that aches when it rains the rest of your life, one impromptu karaoke performance and improper vocal belt on that high note can cause irreparable vocal damage. A more common condition and resultant situation, however, is Vocal Hyperfunction and Muscle Tension Dysphonia or hoarseness.

Vocal tone is created when air bursts through the cleft created by our vocal cords and vibration occurs. To create a clear sounding tone, the vocal cords need to come together solidly and completely. If the membranes or surrounding tissues are swollen (or contain lumps or tears), hoarseness will occur. While the damaging effects of infrequent hoarseness are not usually permanent, hoarseness is a sign of significant vocal abuse or fatigue and should not be ignored.

This week I will discuss some basic techniques to prepare your vocal cords for singing and prevent vocal damage.

Tip #1

Warm-up your voice before you sing. Just like you wouldn't jump into running a ten-mile race without first stretching and warming your muscles, give your voice the same courtesy. It is a good idea to develop a regular routine. Repeating your effective warm-up routine before each singing event will help prepare your voice. Here are some specific tips to get you started: relax your body, do some proper breathing exercises to wake up your airflow and diaphragm, hum your favorite song and do some vocal sirens (slide up and down your singing range on the syllable “ee” imitating the sound of a siren).

Tip #2

Vocal hydration is extremely important, so drink lots of water. Be sure to drink room temperature water before, during and after singing. Drinking anything but room temperature water shocks the vocal cords: cold water tenses the muscles (like jumping in a cold swimming pool does to your whole body) and drinking warm water or substance relaxes the muscles.

It is also important to note that water must be absorbed by the body before being redistributed to your voice organ, so drink water all day long. You might also consider a quality vocal hydration substance, like Entertainer's Secret Throat Relief to help.

Tip #3

Know your limits. Don't try to sing too high or too low, especially not right off the bat. Allow your voice to prepare for this type of action. Kind of like the high-jump in a track meet - start at a comfortable range and extend from there.

Tip #4

Avoid abusing your voice throughout the day:

- a. don't talk for extended periods of time
- b. don't “talk over” loud noises, such as machinery in the workplace or loud music
- c. avoid whispering.

All of these actions are stressful to your voice and will cause vocal fatigue.

Performing these basic exercises and remembering these basic facts will reduce the risk of vocal damage, help you enjoy a better singing performance and keep you from sounding like a frog afterwards! Using a professional vocal warm-up and training program is recommended as a fun and easy way to ensure that your voice will be ready to perform day in and day out.

Yvonne DeBandi, NATS Member and magna-cum laude graduate of the renowned Florida State University School of Music has been educating singers and musicians since 1989. As creator of the Sing Smart, Not Hard™ vocal training method and co-founder of The A2Z Educational Network, her primary focus has been on providing vocal education to the masses through the development of unique and innovative vocal education tools, as well as networking and working closely with many other vocal educators. In 2000 she began training singers around the world using online training curriculums and distance training programs with great success and is known as a true pioneer in the vocal education industry. www.singsmart.com

BREATHING 101 FOR SINGERS & VOCALISTS

by Yvonne DeBandi, Sing Smart Vocal Coach

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Introduction

Breathing properly for singing is the most important foundation technique. Each and every tone we create is carried on the airflow of our breath. The more control you have over the air flow, the more control you will have over your singing tone.

Imagine a kite flying high in the air. When the airflow is consistent, the kite will fly smoothly and steadily on top of the air current. When the airflow is inconsistent the kite will bob and dive with no rhyme or reason. Your singing tone is much like that kite. If you provide a strong steady airflow, your vocal tone will have the opportunity to ride strongly and smoothly to our ears. But if your airflow is uncontrolled and inconsistent your voice will break and waiver.

The purpose of this narration is to teach you to breathe properly. The purpose of the breathing exercise below is to increase your breathing capacity and control.

Before beginning this breathing exercise variation, please note that bringing more oxygen into your body than accustomed can sometimes result in lightheadedness or dizziness. Please take care to stand close to something that offers support should you need to steady yourself. Conferring with a physician is recommended before beginning any exercise routine.

Breathing 101

To breathe properly for singing, you must breathe low into the bottom portion of the lungs, engaging the diaphragm. Your rib cage and back will expand. Your shoulders and upper chest will remain still and will not rise.

Try it yourself: Inhale deeply and exhale completely. Again inhale and exhale.

Now try it again, only this time inhale for four counts, hold your breath for four counts, exhale over four counts and then wait four counts before inhaling again. Let's do three complete sets of that counting exercise. Remember to inhale deeply and properly for singing.

Inhale 2 3 4, Hold 2 3 4 Exhale 2 3 4 and Wait 2 3

Again.

Inhale 2 3 4, Hold 2 3 4 Exhale 2 3 4 and Wait 2 3

Last Time.

Inhale 2 3 4, Hold 2 3 4 Exhale 2 3 4 and Wait 2 3 4.

This basic exercise is an easy one you can do every day. Plain fact, the more you exercise your breathing, the more control you will have over your voice. With a little time and practice you will be a master of breathing control. As you make progress, challenge yourself to increase the breathing count to 8, 12, 16 and more. For best results mix and match the numbers. The size of singing phrase is never the same, so practicing all different airflow situations is ideal. Breathing correctly needs to be a habit, meaning you need to do it correctly without thinking about it. So in the beginning you really want to concentrate on the proper technique.

Bonus Tip

Are you sure you're breathing right? If you are uncertain of yourself see if this little experiment helps. Sit in a chair and while keeping your back straight, lean over and put your elbows on your knees. Take a deep breath. Feel your back and rib cage expand? Now sit up and work to duplicate the feeling, only the expansion should be a ring around your entire body.

Yvonne DeBandi, NATS Member and magna-cum laude graduate of the renowned Florida State University School of Music has been educating singers and musicians since 1989. As creator of the Sing Smart, Not Hard™ vocal training method and co-founder of The A2Z Educational Network, her primary focus has been on providing vocal education to the masses through the development of unique and innovative vocal education tools, as well as networking and working closely with many other vocal educators. In 2000 she began training singers around the world using online training curriculums and distance training programs with great success and is known as a true pioneer in the vocal education industry. www.singsmart.com

WICKED COLD AND A BIG GIG? TIPS FOR SINGERS - WHAT WORKS!

by Teri Danz, Vocal Coach for One World Music

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So you've got a big gig and a wicked cold or flu (especially with lots of congestion), the bad news is that this is the worst for singers. Your body is your instrument, so when you're ill, stressed or compromised in any way, it can impact your performance directly. The good news is that you can still sing and perform, in most cases, without the audience knowing. It's just a bigger challenge than a normal performance. The key is to prepare, take care and modify to get the best performance possible. It's a tribute to your skill, training and professionalism to pull off the vocals convincingly. no matter how compromised you feel.

When you have a cold, flu or sinus infection type illness before a gig, there are a number of things you can do that really work.

Being good at assessing the situation is critical - how sick or ill you actually are (do you need to see a doctor for instance?), what type of gig, what time (it takes longer to warm up for a day gig), how many sets, the venue, your schedule around the gig and how much time you have to take care of yourself with rest prior to the gig. Once you clearly assess the situation, there are lots of things you can do.

First let's look at remedies and then specific steps you can take to "deal"!!

Remedies

A while ago, a dentist recommended putting Lipton tea bags on my gums to decrease the intense inflammation. Lipton tea has tannin root in it and is very soothing. Miraculously, the aching was relieved. It works when your voice is congested, stressed or when you're just ill. You can use it to warm up faster (it works!) or just if you can't seem to get your voice or throat clear. You can also try Throat Coat tea (Medicinal tea) - it has slippery elm root in it. Commercial products also work such: Two Tree Voice Lozenges (www.thayers.com) or Vocal eZe Throat Spray (www.vocal-eze.com) or try music stores (Guitar Center).

The following are recommended tips that really work

Assess the damage

This means doing vocal exercises to see exactly where in your range the notes are compromised. Usually with a cold or extreme nasal congestion, there will be "drop-out" on the high end. Don't force your range - you just need to find out where the real problems are.

Rest, rest, rest!

Fatigue is the enemy of singers and worse when you're sick. Sleep more!

Don't sing at rehearsal

Talk the parts so as not to strain your voice. Your band will be fine with the vocals simply marked.

Warm up gently

Drink lots of Lipton tea before and during the warm-ups. This has worked for me for countless gigs. Also, drink lots of water! Stay hydrated. A

rule of thumb for a normal gig is to do at least 20 minutes of vocal exercises and 40 minutes of singing. You may need more (but gently) when you're sick.

Consider changing your set list to exclude demanding or very rangy songs

Also, trim the set list if possible. It's better to do less songs with a small range than force your voice and crack etc... This is a professional and less stressful approach.

Quit pushing

Feeling powerful in singing and being powerful in singing are two entirely different things. While efforting - pushing chest, singing louder to hit pitches, creating and pushing sound from the throat - may feel powerful, it actually sounds worse. It's easy to go off pitch, sound strident (even painful), hurt your voice, crack etc... when you do this. Singing this way when you're sick or very congested compounds the problem.

Use decongestants on a per need basis

I like to use the 4 hour ones and experiment with when they're working but I'm not too dried up to sing. Lubrication is essential in singing, so keep that in mind.

Coughs are even worse for singers

The reflex is hard to suppress. Use a cough suppressant. Take Lipton tea with you to the gig. If you feel like you will break into a cough, it's better not to come in than risk a coughing fit. (I did this at an original gig and no one except my band knew the difference ... or that I was so sick!).

Be sure to eat!

Proteins are essential for maintaining energy in singing. Singing takes energy. Many performers lose energy halfway through a set and then end up efforting, pushing and stressing their vocal chords. It takes even more energy to sing when you're not well.

For health and sound quality reasons, use your own microphone

A hot bath or steamy shower will loosen up congestion

And most of all: be gentle with yourself

Come up with plan B or C until you find something that works. Do whatever it takes to get functioning for the gig. Your reputation depends on people being able to depend on you! A pro attitude is to show up and do the very best show possible despite the obstacles.

Teri Danz is a pro recording artist and vocal coach/producer with record credits, national press. Her band played the very cool November FemMuse Hard Rock show and has their debut CD in Tower Records!! For more info: go to Teri Danz www.teridanz.com

DRUNKEN MELODIES

by Kate Hart, Detroit Women

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The other night there was a special on television about the amazing Roy Orbison. Memories of opening for him in 1985 came flooding backor rather faint recollections came seeping through. The day I stood in the Coliseum in front of eleven thousand people I was horribly hung over. Bonnie Raitt stood at the side of the stage, Roy and his band waited backstage as I numbly went through the schtick of being a blues mama. Walking off stage Bonnie grabbed my hand and said, "You can sing the blues!"

So what's really wrong with that picture? It took me a while to have the answer revealed to me. I was there in body, but I wasn't there in spirit. Here was this golden moment and I couldn't grab a hold of it. It was as if it had happened to someone else. Even as I sit here, years later writing this article with eleven years of sobriety under my belt, I wish I could remember the details of that evening. What was I wearing? How did it feel to sing in front of all those people? What did the roar of the crowd sound and feel like? That's what it really boils down to, isn't it? All we have is the moment, as human beings and especially as artists. When you get done singing in front of a band humping so hard you think you are going to die, singing notes that just fall out of the front of your face to an audience that is hanging on every note, you realize if you are lucky, that it only lasts as long as the song. And then, it's over. And that is how it is supposed to be. But the booze and the drugs keep you out of the center of things and feed the rockets on your back, keeping you from re-entry. But of course you have to stop sometime and when you do, honey, re-entry ain't no pretty picture. Because all you want to do is just put those rockets back on and chase the magical moment all around, just sure that you can recreate it.

I had gone to bed 5 or 6 A.M. The rhythm the night before had been intense and frantic coming off of a great gig in Pioneer Square. The show had moved too fast, it was hard for me to stay in the center of it. I was trying to make it all manageable. At that point in my life I was still trying to control the flow of things, but that evening I just couldn't get drunk right away and I was so tired that I had no choice but to let go and feel the madness. The crowd in the bar was a part of the beat change, making it impossible to separate any of the moving parts.

When I did finally wake up from my drunken stupor years later, I realized that I had gathered pieces from the past, the present and worries about the future and created my own monster. My head belonged to someone else, because when I looked in the mirror I didn't recognize myself anymore. If I could just undo those two bolts on the side of my neck and find a new head, one that had a familiar look to it; I would be able stop screaming inside. Just like Dr. Frankenstein's creation, the monster had taken on a life of its own and was out terrorizing the countryside. But I was in the bars and the little girl I almost drowned was me.

I have spent over thirty years in the music business and today I won't touch caffeine, sugar, cigarettes, drugs, alcohol and starch. I walk and meditate and incorporate Tai Chi in my life. I have come to believe that if I am going to be an artist with any true vision that I have to be clean and connected to someplace above my hair. I have become so sensitive to that connection that even a cup of coffee disrupts the place where the truth comes from. Being "plugged in" or "connected" or whatever the hell you want to call it, I wouldn't trade for any amount of whiskey in the world.

But there was a time when it was necessary. I had to play it out until it didn't work anymore. Play it out like you do a bad poker hand.....just sure this time you are going to win, only to lose over and over again. Not only do you not care if you are going to lose that hand but you begin to look forward to it. And then one morning, if you are lucky, like I was, you will wake up and know you can't do it anymore. That none of it works and there must be something else out there. Another life that is part of the dreams you originally had before the booze and drugs stole them from you. When that happens that is when your life truly begins. Allowing the music to finally begin to play.

Kate Hart has been nominated for several Grammy's and has been the recipient of or nominated for over 25 awards including the NAMA award for best Blues Recording, 4 WC Handy Awards, 3 Washington Blues Society Awards and 8 Detroit Music Awards. www.katehartblues.com

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14. DEALING WITH STAGE FRIGHT

HOW TO BEAT STAGE FRIGHT

by Jocelyn Brady, Suite101
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Everyone suffers from stage fright from time to time, but there are ways of subduing the sensation of fear.

Your heart is pounding; sweat dripping into your eyes, head about to implode from thoughts of failure. You are about to step onto the stage and the fear of forgetting your lines has turned into reality. You freeze, imagining them all laughing at you.

Sound familiar? Stage fright is something that EVERYONE deals with. From seasoned Hollywood celebrities to fourth graders reading their first book report, the fear of performing in public grips all ages and walks of life. But how is it that some people manage to make it look so effortless?

Some scholars say that among the shy folk who overcame their timidity are greats like Abe Lincoln, Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein. Even stars like Kim Basinger and Michael Douglas have talked openly with their battles with this crippling ailment. Michael Douglas remembers his initial fear of stage fright: "I used to sit there in (drama) school with a waste basket offstage, throw up and then go off onstage. I conquered it. It took a long time."

The point is, you're not alone. And despite what the instant-cure-in-a-bottle populace thinks, there is no overnight cure for fear of performing on stage. But there are some simple steps you can take to ease the butterflies (and stomach bombs).

Take deep breaths

This is the key to relaxation. Yogi masters have known this for centuries and the science of breath has been studied in Eastern philosophies way before 'American' entered the global vocabulary. Unfortunately, our society often overlooks this simple life-changing and essential practice. We tend to think that breathing is something we needn't think about, because it happens automatically.

But the fact is, yogic breathing has helped millions of people stave off high blood pressure, heart problems and stress. All you have to do is take a long inhale, counting to five, then exhale, counting to ten. When doing this, think about your breath traveling to all your internal organs, soothing them like a cool breeze under those hot spot lights. Imagine that your breath is releasing the tension of all your muscles, allowing for smoother blood flow and oxygen to travel to that frozen stump upon your shoulders.

Try taking ten of these deep breaths before moving on to some stretches.

Make faces

This may sound silly, but so does sweating like you're on fire when preparing for your first monologue. Remember – these people in the audience don't like watching failure because it's uncomfortable. They want to see you succeed. So get over your apprehension of silly exercises and scrunch up your face into as tight a ball as you can muster. All your facial muscles should contract. Then release, stick out your tongue, open your eyes wide and stretch that face out like your trying to scare away your in-laws with insanity. See? It can be fun.

Warm up those vocal chords

The worst thing about public speaking is everything gets so tensed up, that when you finally manage to let a word pass through those pursed lips, it sounds like an excited squirrel who just dropped his prized chestnut. To avoid those embarrassing squeaks, start with some simple voice warm ups.

Now pant like a dog. A little dog, who just took a BIG long run. Do this for a few breaths to open up your diaphragm and stabilize your breathing. Now take a deep inhale and as you exhale, keep your lips loose but closed and let out a 'Hummmmmm.'

Next, recite some silly tongue twisters. Some favorites from acting classes are: "The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue." That one is more for pronunciation. Now try: "Unique New York," three times.

Get on that stage

Now that your body and voice are warmed up, you're ready to go! Don't freak out, instead, take some more of those deep breaths. And remember that the audience is looking out for your best side. Besides, under the glare of that spotlight, you probably won't see 'em anyway. And if you do, you can always revert back to the good old "pretend they're all naked" trick.

Just be yourself (or who ever you are pretending to be) and act out as that superstar you always wanted to be – the one who belts out tunes in the shower and dances around the living room naked. You know you want to.

Jocelyn Brady is a freelance writer that writes for Suite101 www.suite101.com She offers a creative catalyst for all of your ghostwriting, sales collateral, copywriting, storytelling and marketing conundrums. www.jocelynbrady.com thejocelyn@gmail.com

7 SURE FIRE WAYS TO OVERCOME STAGE FRIGHT WHEN SPEAKING OR PERFORMING

by Reverend Michael Bresciani

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Prayer or meditation can't ever hurt. Use it to try and clear your mind.

Here are some other tips.

Concentrate only on what your doing or saying

Finding something to focus on in the room, the podium or in your own head is the quick road to failure. If you are concentrating on some external matter your attention is divided and everyone will see that as clearly as a red blinking light on your head. One hundred percent of your attention on your subject, your music or anything else leaves zero percent wasted on fear, faces and nerves. It also goes without saying that you should never give

any attention to time. It is another great false detractor. If you're in a hurry, it shows a lack of confidence, if you go over time you must be approaching expert levels in your field. Take that as an unspoken compliment.

Ask yourself one single question

Before you begin speaking ask yourself one all important question. Who in this entire audience could do or say what I am doing or saying? If you consider the answer very carefully you will always arrive at the same answer which is, few to none. When I was playing American and Irish Folk music I constantly reminded myself that I had a repertoire of about one thousand songs. I wasn't trying to feed my ego but I was reminding myself of one fact. If I were to ask my audience how many people could do one thousand songs, I would get no answers at all most of the time. When I get up to speak I am reminded of years of schooling, hours of personal preparation, scores of published articles and two published books. Ego, no, it is only the answer to the all important question.

The bottom line is that since no one can say or do what you are saying or doing just get on with it. Waste no time on what anyone thinks. If they could do what you are doing they would be in the podium and you would be in the audience.

Get emotional

If you stuff doesn't move you it won't move anyone else either. This is an immutable rule of presentation. If you are singing your interpretation of

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star pour yourself into it. If you are speaking about the nocturnal habits of fire ants do it with gesticulations, reverberations and tremors.

Ridiculous you say, think again. One of the greatest influences in my days of performing music was a man I had never met and I never heard even one note of his music. His influence came from the remarks I heard others make about him. They all agreed that his shows were amazing because he was so overwhelmingly emotional and caught up in what he was doing. I soon discovered that when I got all wrapped up and emoted in my music that even when I thought my performance was poor the audience did not. Try it you'll like it.

Use humor

Not everyone is good at telling jokes and humorous stories but almost everyone knows at least one or two good ones. Nothing breaks the ice quicker than humor. If you get them laughing early you have already invoked at least one basic human emotional response, provoking others will be a great deal easier from then on. Don't comb the joke books looking for the best jokes. Think of the jokes you have heard others say recently. The key is twofold. Pick a joke or humorous story that is somewhat related to what you are presenting. And do not pick jokes that you alone think are funny. Use jokes that you have seen bringing others to a belly laugh. Use humor that has worked in the public domain. Don't overdue the humor angle because people can recognize filler material very easily. The other side of the coin is not to ignore this useful tool of the trade. Laughter is a great equalizer for both audience and speaker.

Get personal

This is far more than good advice, it is a rule that if ignored will become the difference between success and failure. I have watched skilled musicians who never once addressed their audiences. Their performance may have been impeccable but in the end met with little acclaim. I've heard speakers who know their subject forward and backward but left people yawning and fidgeting. What was missing was often if not always the personal touch. You must get a rapport going with any audience on the personal level or will get nothing else going at all. How can you do that? Take a cue from the stand up comedian or the storyteller. They ask mundane questions and they wait for someone to answer or acknowledge it with a gesture or murmur. Where are you from, any one here from New York? Hey, does it ever stop raining here in Washington. Let me see how many of you are here tonight; if you're here raise your hand. For those of you that didn't raise your hand I have a question, where the heck are you? I often started off by saying, thank you for having me here tonight and it is good to see you all here to hear my music, now get out of here every one of you. Some were shocked, some giggled some roared but all came to attention. Sound silly, it is but make no mistake, it works.

See the crowd as only one person

No science is available to prove how or why this little tool works, but be assured it will never fail. Always speak to the audience as if you were talking to only one single person. It makes them feel that you are being very personal with each individual, they can feel the difference. It shrinks the crowd on a perceptual level for you. Remember that perception is often the better part of reality. It moves the entire matter to a, one on one. Who wouldn't admit that they are more comfortable talking to their neighbor or some stranger but not a whole crowd? Approach your performance or address as if you were doing just that and you will succeed.

Rev Bresciani is the leader of a non-denominational ministry in the New Orleans area. He has written many articles over the past thirty years in such periodicals as Guideposts and Catholic Digest. He is the author of two books available on Amazon.com, Alibris, Barnes and Noble and many other places. Rev Bresciani wrote, Hook Line and Sinker or What has Your Church Been Teaching You, published by PublishAmerica of Baltimore MD. He also wrote a book recently released by Xulon Press entitled An American Prophet and His Message, Questions and Answers on the Second Coming of Christ. Rev Bresciani has his own website at www.americanprophet.org

CONQUERING STAGE FRIGHT

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If you experience stage fright during speaking or presentation assignments then take heart because you are not alone. Actors, singer, musicians, dancers and athletes are frequently afflicted with the same syndrome. Biographies of well known celebrities often reveal continuing and acute stage fright even after decades of recognition and success.

You should also recognize that there are varying degrees of stage fright. At one end, there is simple excitement with adrenaline preparing the performer to excel. At the other, there is a near death experience. Somewhere in the middle is a cross over point at which your performance becomes impaired by the state of your nerves.

If you are reading this article then chances are that you have crossed that point on more than one occasion. Read on!

In order to begin conquering your stage fright, you first need to recognize when you are approaching your crossover point. This will differ from individual to individual and may also be affected by the type of performance event. For example, some people find that facing an audience of thousands is nothing, but performing before a small group turns them into jelly. Others find an audience of friends more intimidating than strangers. Secondly, you must know how to take immediate remedial action.

Almost everyone experiences stage fright at some time. The polished speakers you see have learned to take control of the stage fright experience through a mixture of preparation, physical skills and positive attitude. Master these and you will be able to conquer your fear.

Preparation

Preparation is absolutely vital. This includes your material, audience/event analysis and the physical setting. You may know the subject, but do you know the audience and the significance of this occasion? Not knowing can be a significant cause of anxiety.

Practice by video or audio recording yourself which helps to visualize performance and to develop muscle memory. Researchers have confirmed that use of video tape in preparation for public speaking or singing reduces anxiety and improves performance.

Develop an inconspicuous personal relaxation ritual. Singers, musicians and dancers can often do this behind the scenes but presenters are usually on the stage before their performance and would look a bit odd doing tai chi, yoga or standing on their head.

Improvise a prompt so that you are not anxious about forgetting the sequence of your material. You can use prepared flip charts, pictures on the wall, slides or presentation software.

Physical skills

Public speaking is a physical activity. Stage fright is an emotional reaction which restricts physical abilities. To unlearn the unwanted physical reactions associated with stage fright, you must practice performance before an audience. Once is not enough. Mastery requires distributed and incremental learning. One possibility to obtain regular speaking experience in a less threatening environment is to engage a professional coach or enroll in a class or seminar. You could also consider joining a local Toastmasters club. With practice you can access other kinds of intelligence and appear physically relaxed, enthusiastic and confident even though you are not.

Positive attitude

Mold your attitude around all your successes. Remember what success feels like, what it looks like. Even when you perform in a less than stellar fashion, remember the parts you did that were outstanding. People overwhelmed with stage fright have negative attitudes. They imagine everything that could go wrong or develop a litany of other negatives. Replace negative attitudes with positive ones. A positive attitude will lead you to seek any help you may need to improve. A negative attitude shackles your personal and professional life.

Think about all the things you have to share with this audience and how it will benefit them.

Decide beforehand that it will be a fun experience. Performance is an act of faith. You have to believe your body will perform what it has practiced whether it is a speech, a song, a dance or an athletic competition.

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STAGE FRIGHT

by Donn Marshall, University of Puget Sound
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“I freaked out”

Those were the words of a good friend describing his experience of playing as a finalist in a mandolin competition at a major festival. He had practiced long hours.

He knew just what he wanted to do and had done it well many times. He had done well in the preliminary round well enough that he made it to the finals.

Stepping onto that main stage was something he had dreamed about for years. He was nervous and hit a wrong note in the first measure of his first tune. At that point his mind and fingers, froze.

What it is

We all experience it to some degree. You may recognize it as butterflies in your gut, profuse sweating, dry mouth, frequent trotting off to the lavatory (or port-a-potty), rapid short breaths and quick heartbeat.

You see it in others as the nervous chatter, short temper, giggling or the avoidance of conversation prior to going on stage. Everyone responds a bit differently, but almost everyone experiences performance anxiety.

For some of us it is a much more serious problem. The jitters become debilitating. For some it does not have to be when you are "on stage" in a formal sense. One mandolin player recently shared with me his experience of being so anxious about playing "in public" that he is nervous even when playing around his wife even when she is sleeping!

For some people, performance anxiety is an extension of anxiety they experience in other areas of their lives.

Prior to the preliminary round of a recent mandolin contest I overheard a friend whipping through an amazing rendition of Kentucky Mandolin. I expressed my support by observing that the playing I just had heard would have won the first prize in the contest the year earlier. He nervously replied that he had a history of choking in pressure situations, pointing to his freezing up during college exams. The outcome: He didn't make it past the preliminary round, largely due to the incapacitating anxiety.

What to do about it

Fortunately there are several approaches to the effective management of performance anxiety. I'll offer a sampling that should help you be aware of the possibilities.

The first suggestions about how to manage anxiety involve changing how you think about anxiety-provoking situations in order to shift the way you feel. For example, people with anxious responses tend to catastrophize or anticipate the worst possible outcome and react as if that was actually happening.

Here's an example of this kind of thinking: "I'm not ready for this next solo. Everyone will notice and I'll look foolish. I'll feel humiliated and never have the chance to play in public again." With that kind of pressure who could do their best?

A related common thinking pattern that causes disruptive anxiety is the tendency toward perfectionism setting impossibly high expectations. Aiming high can be helpful and motivating. Aiming beyond reach and then condemning oneself for not getting there is a prescription for feeling like a miserable failure. These sufferers set such high standards for themselves that there is little chance that they will feel satisfied with their performances; thus, they fill themselves with dread and fear in advance of any public outings.

The first step in changing these disruptive thoughts is to recognize them. When you feel the anxiety building, use it as a cue to do a mental scan: Am I telling myself this is going to be a catastrophe? Am I pressuring myself excessively?

Practice some alternative thoughts to break up these anxiety-producing patterns. Instead of "I must play perfectly or everyone will laugh at me." - try substituting, "I'm going to do my best and I know that most people out there really hope I do well. Friends and family are going to love me no matter how well I play." The first thought is likely to increase anxiety and actually distract you from doing your best. The second can be calming and help your focus and performance.

The strategies identified above focused on shifting your thinking in order to influence your feelings. There are several other helpful strategies that are more "behavioral." That is, they involve engaging in some types of action to address the feelings and the anxious symptoms. We all know something about these approaches since the most obvious is called "practice." Let's face it, there is no substitute for knowing the material you are going to perform. In fact, learning a piece and then continuing to practice results in an "over-learning" that allows performance with limited drains on your concentration. The playing can begin to feel automatic while still being quite musical. Even when you ad lib, over-learning relevant patterns can provide a comfort zone for your playing.

There are ways of practicing intentionally to help manage anxiety. First, practice playing loose. If your hands or arms tighten up that translates into anxiety. Take the time to slow the speed until you are playing with good form and no unnecessary tightness. Experiment with posture so that you and the instrument are at peace with each other instead of wrestling around.

Next, pay attention to how you breathe when you practice those difficult parts. Again, slow it down so that you can breathe deeply and steadily throughout the piece and not hold your breath during that section with the tremolo and triplets. If you find yourself continuing to take rapid, shallow breaths or not breathing at all, it might be helpful to practice some breathing exercises. There are lots of options out there for learning forms of meditation (Zen, deep breathing, yoga), all of which help build the skill of focused relaxation just what you want for smooth, flowing musicianship. Practicing these skills can help your stage anxiety and other anxieties, in dramatic ways.

One of the most effective approaches of dealing with anxiety is to confront it. In fact, it is well known that avoiding anxiety typically serves to maintain it since you never learn that the feared stimulus is manageable. Therefore, if your anxiety peaks any time you play with other people, get out every chance you get to play with others. Even if that means you crash and burn, do it and learn that you survive.

But even better is learning one piece that you find relatively simple well within your reach skill-wise. Get a few trusted friends together and ask them to play that piece with you. Give yourself a success experience! One e-mail friend of mine wrote that going to one of the players' camps was the key. He put himself in a situation where players of all abilities were playing constantly for a week. By the time camp was over he discovered he wasn't nearly so self-conscious of playing with others.

Now that's diving in!

One whole class of strategies to reduce performance anxiety is referred to as desensitization." This basically means you should take every opportunity to play in the situations that cause you anxiety. If you know from experience that your anxiety grabs you on stage, try practicing in conditions as near to those you'll find in performance as possible. If you are preparing for a coffee shop gig, maybe you can actually go to that stage and play a couple of tunes in advance of the show without an audience.

Here's a cool thing

Many people benefit from imagining themselves successfully engaging in the feared behavior, reducing their anxieties noticeably before they actually set foot on stage. To make this approach work you must first relax. Close your eyes and breath deeply. When you are aware of feeling relaxed, imagine as clearly as you can playing your part. Imagine what you see, what you hear, what the pick feels like in your hand. Remind yourself to breath deeply as you picture yourself performing while feeling comfortable on stage.

Repeat this imagination practice daily and you'll likely experience less anxiety when the performance comes along in real life. You may have heard that this technique is now common practice among top athletes who learn to practice complex routines in their minds as a performance aid. It is equally helpful for all performance-oriented activities.

If your fears have to do with all eyes being on you get a few friends together and play as an informal group. Go to local open mics and you are pretty sure to have a supportive audience who have all been there terrified. They will want to you do well and will appreciate your efforts, even if you flub up.

Of course, many people turn to some form of substance to help manage anxiety. The most common would be alcohol in its many incarnations, but stories about musicians becoming dependent on the widest range of substances imaginable are legion.

In addition to the risk of dependence or addiction, relying on alcohol (or other drugs) to get you "into the zone" is unreliable. For example, the effect of alcohol is highly dependent on how recently we've eaten, how well rested we are, our overall stress levels etc.

However, utilization of prescriptive medication to help control performance anxiety has proven the most helpful course for some. Medications known as beta-blockers were originally developed to help regulate heart rate and manage blood pressure. They have been discovered to assist many whose performance anxiety is so extreme that they become physically incapacitated prior to going on stage.

One e-mail correspondent offered real hope for using beta-blockers to treat extreme anxiety. He wrote that his stage fright was extreme (he cited lack of skill combined with a Type A personality as contributors) and the use of beta-blockers provided the much-needed relief. Plus, he wrote that with more stage experience, increased acceptance of his level of skill and by allowing his playing to become more fun he has not needed to use beta-blockers in years. A real success story!

Summary

Spending time on managing performance anxiety is a form of practice and is as important as working on the tunes themselves. After all, the whole effort is aimed at improving your skills at communicating through the music and anything that interferes deserves attention. Most of us do not relish the thought of practicing scales and arpeggios, but we do them because doing so helps us play better.

What works for you is most likely to be what has worked in the past: What did you do in preparation for and during those big tests in school to help manage your fears and do your best? What can you apply from that experience that might help with your playing? Take what you know about yourself and develop a systematic, intentional plan for addressing your performance anxiety.

Remember, the goal is not to eliminate all anxiety. I wouldn't suggest that anyone become so detached they are numb, zombie-like on stage. An appropriate amount of anxiety can be a performance aid it helps motivate us to do our best. We're anxious because we care and the experience is meaningful to us.

If you find that you are not able to make progress toward managing your performance anxiety on your own, consider seeing out an experienced mental health practitioner to help develop a systematic approach to addressing the fears.

Just as you might consider taking mandolin lessons as a learning aid, you might consider working with a professional to assist you as a performance aid. Most importantly, don't ignore your anxiety when you discover it is negatively affecting your performance and your enjoyment. Start taking steps to learn what will work for you. Let me know what you discover!

Donn is the Associate Director for Counseling Services at the University of Puget Sound. www.ups.edu/x8193.xml He works at managing his own performance anxiety with the bluegrass group HeyWire and the singer/songwriter trio, Late Harvest.

GETTING PAST THE FIRST THIRTY SECONDS

by Yvonne DeBandi, Sing Smart Vocal Coach

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During an audition or performance situation it is some times necessary to introduce yourself. Be sure to get started on the right foot because sometimes you only have thirty seconds to make an impression. Practice introducing yourself in front of the mirror and analyze your first impression-no matter how silly you feel. Learn from opinions, but do what feels right.

Tip #1

State your name, don't ask it. Have you ever heard those introductions that make you wonder - is that their name or are they asking me? Practice your delivery tone and make sure your inflection does not rise at the end of the sentence making it sound like an inquiry.

Tip #2

Slow down. Nerves can often cause you to speed up your speech pattern without you even knowing it. Before you begin speaking, take a deep breath and then speak slow and clearly with good articulation.

Tip #3

Mind your body language. Don't fidget. Stand comfortably with one foot slightly in front of the other, with the weight on the balls of your feet. Your arms and hands should remain relaxed by your side unless effective hand motions are being done.

Tip #4

Eye contact. Look confident, even if you don't feel quite that way underneath. Make good eye contact with your audience. If you are not comfortable with making eye contact, try looking just over the audience's head. When using this technique they will often think you are talking/singing directly to them.

Yvonne DeBandi, NATS Member and magna-cum laude graduate of the renowned Florida State University School of Music has been educating singers and musicians since 1989. As creator of the Sing Smart, Not Hard™ vocal training method and co-founder of The A2Z Educational Network, her primary focus has been on providing vocal education to the masses through the development of unique and innovative vocal education tools, as well as networking and working closely with many other vocal educators. In 2000 she began training singers around the world using online training curriculums and distance training programs with great success and is known as a true pioneer in the vocal education industry. www.singsmart.com

STAGE FRIGHT? ME?

by Anne Minnery, Recording Artist

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I am one of those people who suffer dreadfully from stage fright. I find that I am fine until about 2 minutes before going on stage and when my stomach starts to churn. Then, as soon as I hear my name called, my mouth suddenly goes completely dry. Worse than that, when I start to sing I find that my stomach is fluttering and my chin quivers. Once the first song is over, I seem to settle down and by the second and third songs I am in full control again.

I have tried everything I can think of to get over stage fright. I have attended lectures, read books, looked on the internet for ideas and talked to singing coaches. The only thing that really seems to work for me is 'comfort'. If I am comfortable in a setting or a club and know members of the audience that seems to help. I used to sing at happy hour in a piano bar in Greenwich Village in New York called "Rose's Turn". At the beginning I had all the prior problems that I mentioned, but the more I sang there the more comfortable I became and I found that the symptoms seemed to disappear - all except the dry mouth - that I still had. My singing teacher told me to bite the inside of my cheek or bite down on the inside my mouth to try to get a bit of moisture going, but nothing seems to work.

Then I discovered another horrible tendency I have - and that is to allow my mind to wander while singing. I have had to really talk to myself about this and force myself to stay focused on the song from beginning to end. I have read that people are so worried about forgetting the first few lines of a song that once they get past that part they let their guard down and then they run the risk of forgetting the middle part. That describes me to a tee.

What I have found works in helping me get over my stage fright is "control". If I have done all the rehearsal necessary and know all my patterns and moves, then my nerves don't seem as bad. And, as I mentioned earlier, if I know the place and feel comfortable in the surroundings it helps too. However, how many times are we going to have the occasion to get used to a place before we have to play it? Mostly, we just get a gig and have to show up and perform. So, I have to use other tools at my disposal.

My sister is an entertainer with tons of confidence and is completely at ease speaking with the audience. She can work an audience better than anyone else I know. I asked her once why she never has stage fright and she told me "Because I know when I get up there that I am the best singer in the room and that I am the best person to entertain them". This coming from a person who is quiet and unassuming off stage. But, she is right..she KNOWS that she is the best when she gets on stage - and she is. She takes command of the stage and is totally at ease with her performance. Why? Because she rehearses her material so well off stage that it is second nature to her when on stage.

She knows her lines so well that if something unexpected happens (and when doesn't it in a live show?) she is able to handle it and move on. She told me that the audience deserves the very best from a performer and that comes from the performer providing the very best she or he can.

I had a wonderful singing coach who once told me that I had to be so well rehearsed before a performance that I knew each song as well as I knew "Happy Birthday". We all know that song so well, by heart, that if the walls started crumbling around us while we were singing it, we could still carry on while moving out of harm's way. She told me that I had to know each and every song as well as "Happy Birthday" - to OWN each song, make it mine. And that I had to own not just the first few songs but the entire repertoire of songs.

Another trick she told me was to always 'eye' the parameters of the room or stage, not only what was in front or at the side of me but at the back as well. She said this could be done quickly while entering the stage area and while saying hello to the audience. Her reasoning for this was so that the singer would own her space and give her a sense of control or comfort..

I am getting better at focusing, I have noticed. I have learned the hard way that I must stay completely focused on the words and meaning of each and every song and to sing it from the heart, not just mouth the words. If I am in touch with the meaning of the song, I don't lose focus - not as much.. A good trick I learned was to actually say the words of the song out loud during rehearsal. Each song has a story or message to convey and by speaking them we commit them better to memory and to heart. I hope by sharing my story of stage fright I have helped some of you who suffer from the same thing. There are probably many of you who have never suffered the fear of being on stage like I have but this article is for those who have and who may have an even worse case of it than I.

There are many books on dealing with stage fright and I can recommend a great internet site run by Art Nefsky that has online help available at www.nefsky.com.

Give it a try. It is fun and has some great ideas. Hope it helps.

Anne Minnery is a Country singer/songwriter with 3 CDs to her credit. Anne has been featured and has enjoyed #1 status for her songs at MP3.com, Amp3.com and FranceMp3.com. www.minnery.com

LIVE PERFORMANCE: CALMING YOUR NERVES

by Catherine L. Tully, Indie-Music.com

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Just about everyone experiences "nerves" before a performance. Some people have learned to ride the wave and it feels more like excitement to them. "Adrenaline junkies" thrive on it. Others feel just a pinch of jitters. But sometimes there are situations where even the most seasoned performer is just plain nervous. A larger crowd than ever can do it - but so can something like an ex-girlfriend or boyfriend in the audience. Can you learn to get past the butterflies and give it your best?

You bet you can! Its all a matter of finding out what works for you.

Take a breather

Part of being nervous is mental, but your physical self plays a role in it, too. Taking deep, belly breaths is a technique that works very well to get rid of tension.

Breathing from the belly is taught in T'ai Chi and can have a profound effect on your body. Learn to feel when your body starts to get tense and respond by taking some nice, slow breaths to counteract this feeling. The best part about this technique is that you can do it anytime and anywhere!

Distract yourself

Focusing on whatever is making you nervous will only make it much worse. Don't keep peeking at the crowd - practice a song - with your eyes closed for added concentration. Talk with fellow band members. Call a friend and have them distract you for a few minutes. Break the cycle of thinking about it and refocus your mind elsewhere. Stewing about it will add to the problem.

Pump yourself up

Take an inventory of your successes instead of thinking you might fail, after all, that is where most nerves stem from. Is there someone in the audience you need to impress and you are feeling the pressure? Visualize how you are going to go out on stage and WOW them instead of worrying you might not do well. Seeing yourself do well in your mind's eye can help boost your confidence.

Develop a routine

Routine can be comforting when you get a case of the nerves. Try to develop a set of things that you do before every performance so that you know what you will be doing each time. If you have things to do, it is less likely you will be focusing your energy on worrying about going on stage - you will be too busy preparing for it.

Blow off some steam

If you are really feeling tense, do a little something physical and take the edge off. Try some jumping jacks. Run in place for a minute. Strike a yoga pose. Get rid of the tension by getting active - it works.

Walk away

If the nerves have really got you and you have a few minutes - step outside and get a little fresh air. Sometimes the scene itself gets you all pumped up and shaky, so just walking away for a minute can help rid you of some stress. Before you go back in, take a few deep breaths. (And before you leave - make sure you can get back in!)

Listen up

Musicians love music - why not get into some before the nerves set in? Grab your headphones, kick back and let the music take you away. Anything that you know you'll get into will work - it doesn't necessarily have to be mellow. Just be sure someone comes to get you when it's time to go on!

Do something simple

Play solitaire. Put on makeup in the exact same order every time. Fold PR brochures. Anything that is easy and repetitive can soothe your jitters if you do it for a while and keep a slow, steady pace.

Stretch out

Do a basic stretching routine to relax yourself. It doesn't have to be anything complex, but if you do the same one every time, you will eventually come to associate it with unwinding. Make sure you don't push too hard though - you don't want to pull a muscle before you take to the stage!

Think things through

What relaxes you at other times will probably work here, too. Is there something that soothes you? Can you adapt it to your pre-performance routine? Take a look and see if you can find something that really works for you at home - or even on vacation - and apply it backstage.

You don't have to let your nerves get the best of you when you are waiting to perform. Figuring out what works may take a few tries, but if you can get a system going, you'll be a lot happier in the long run - and a lot less likely to get wrapped up in a case of the jitters!

Catherine L. Tully is a freelance writer and photographer. You can see her work at www.moonbeamdigital.com She is on-staff at Indie-Music and you can reach her at ctully@freelance-zone.com

HOW TO TURN SHAKING KNEES INTO A NICE VIBRATO

by Don Bray, Singer/Songwriter

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I remember reading somewhere that the number one fear in women is death by fire and the number one fear in men is public speaking, followed by death by fire. As a firefighter I can handle running into a burning building, but as a songwriter, getting up on stage can scare the bejeezus out of me. Go figure. The uncomfortable feeling I get when I perform has long been an issue for me. In fact, it was the core reason I took a brief hiatus from performing that lasted well over a decade.

Earthquake knees, Gobi Desert mouth, Iron butterflies...the symptoms are no fun. I've been playing guitar and writing songs for about thirty-five years and they still haunt me. It's been only over the past few years that I've begun to feel more comfortable. It would be a relief to be one of those people born for the stage (some day, after a really bad gig, I may be borne from the stage by an angry mob, but that's something else entirely).

For the longest time I thought it was a matter of performance anxiety, worrying I would forget a lyric or flub a guitar part. Going stone cold blank in front of a few hundred people (which, believe me, I have done) can be uncomfortable in the extreme. Certainly this adds to the butterflies, but I don't think it's the basis of my problem. In fact, in a perfect world (or at least one in which I had a perfect attitude), it would just add to the excitement of living on the edge (of the stage).

Lately I've gained insight into why it's an issue for me. I'm hoping this will allow me to become even more comfortable as time goes by.

It came to me in a flash of light (not like a back draft, you understand, more like a good-sized camp fire or when a smoker doesn't realize the butane lighter is set too high). Having never done a house concert, I was looking forward to doing my first one. I pictured myself going into some stranger's lovely home and sitting in their living room in front of a small group of smiling people. I thought to myself, 'What a nice intimate setting'. It was then, with the utterance of the "I" word, that the bells went off (not like a fire alarm - more like a doorbell rung by a panicking victim).

Intimacy, oh my gosh, it's intimacy!

I guess this might seem obvious to some, but to me it was a revelation, one that made more sense the longer I thought about it.

I've never considered myself to be a person with intimacy problems. Over the years I've had tons of intimate relationships. I've enjoyed them, reveled in them and grown from them.

All of these intimate relationships have one thing in common. I had the opportunity to get to know these people first, become comfortable with them and come to the conclusion that I could trust them before drawing closer. You need to know whether the spittle on their lip is because they are crazy in a potentially dangerous way or because they have a bad habit of putting too much jalapeño sauce on their Cheerios like your uncle Bob. Either one is OK, and maybe they're the same thing ... but it's nice to know.

When you get on stage, of course, it's a different thing. Though you may know some of the people in the audience, there are sure to be some you don't. At least not that well. And what about the one drooling in the front row? Are you really sure you want to sing that painstakingly crafted song whose underlying symbolic meaning is the psychological damage caused by how small or large your...well you get the idea.

Some things you don't even tell your mother.

My mother taught me that emotions were perfectly acceptable to express as long as they were mild happiness or half-assed enthusiasm. Anything else was anathema.

As a sensitive singer/songwriter of course, I saw this as being counter-productive and worked, with what stifled passion I could evoke, to overcome my inability to emote (my brother calls me a SNAFF—Sensitive New Age Fire Fighter—I think it might be an oxymoron).

Over the years my songs have become an acceptable way for me to express my emotions. Take sadness for example. I have trouble expressing it in my day-to-day world. It embarrasses me still, despite all the work. So I write a sad song. It's a real tear-jerker. (Not like a 38mm hand line sprayed on a working house fire, you understand, but more like half a cup of coffee tossed on a smoldering ashtray or perhaps the bottom eighth of a warm beer thrown at your face in a bar by an irate but strangely beautiful woman you've never met before with deep green eyes and who doesn't like the suggestive way you were leering at the "I Love Cats" brooch strategically located on...her lapel). Anyway I get to release my sadness without admitting to any chinks in the armor, so to speak.

Getting back to intimacy, the problem is that I then go out and play this song in front of complete strangers. Not friends, family or my dog, who knows me deeply in all my glorious and transparent weaknesses, but others, more distant and alien to my faltering ways.

And that's why my hands sometimes shake when I play the guitar. These people are going to judge me by my music: nothing more, nothing less. And they'll be able to see things. They'll know I was sad when John committed suicide, that I was horny when I saw the girl in the tank top riding the bicycle on Queen Street in the rain. The more perceptive or astute might even figure out that "Yum" is about my secret eating disorder, not my dog's (that's why I'm so skinny).

And none of this "seeing" of me will be mitigated by an understanding of the deeper me, by seeing my weaknesses juxtaposed against my strengths or by having an overlying view of the context that makes up my life and my point of view and tends to make me mildly fearful of stout women in high heels.

So what does all this mean to me as a performer?

I know I'll continue to get nervous and worry about breaking strings, dropping picks, going out of tune, forgetting lyrics and leaving my fly open. I know not everyone is going to like me (but that's OK, my family's stuck with me and, besides, my dog loves me). I know that just when I'm coming up to the particularly poignant line I always have trouble remembering in that sad song about homeless people, some devilish aspect of my inner psychology will internally blurt out, "You idiot, you forgot to pick up Soy milk at the health food store for Mary's breakfast tomorrow. Boy is she going to be pissed!"

The bottom line is this: there are a few facts I just have to accept. I'm a songwriter who feels the need to perform his songs. I can be sensitive and emotional as well as tough, concrete-headed and slightly middle-aged. People can be cruel. They can also be incredibly accepting and supportive. There is a great deal of joy to be had (and hopefully given) in saying what you feel and really feeling it too.

I guess in the long run it's apparent that my performing isn't going to go away and the best thing for me to do is learn to accept who I am, including all those yucky emotions. Despite the front row droolers I should perform with honesty, not only because people have built in Bull-poop detectors, but because they deserve it. If I can do these things maybe I won't worry so much about what people think of me and I'll be able to execute a more relaxed and full-hearted performance.

Singer/Songwriter Don Bray works as a Toronto firefighter to support his music habit. His award winning songs can be heard on his CD "Decisions". You can check out his website (and buy his CD if you'd like) at www3.sympatico.ca/donbray

BETTER PLAYING THROUGH CHEMISTRY (BETA BLOCKERS)

by Blair Tindall, mozartinthejungle.com

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For the Record

Ruth Ann McClain, a flutist from Memphis, used to suffer from debilitating onstage jitters.

My hands were so cold and wet, I thought I'd drop my flute, Ms. McClain said recently, remembering a performance at the National Flute Convention in the late 1980's. Her heart thumped loudly in her chest, she added; her mind would not focus and her head felt as if it were on fire. She tried to hide her nervousness, but her quivering lips kept her from performing with sensitivity and nuance.

However much she tried to relax before a concert, the nerves always stayed with her. But in 1995, her doctor provided a cure, a prescription medication called Propranolol. "After the first time I tried it," she said, "I never looked back. It's fabulous to feel normal for a performance."

Ms. McClain, a grandmother who was then teaching flute at Rhodes College in Memphis, started recommending beta-blocking drugs like Propranolol to adult students afflicted with performance anxiety. And last year she lost her job for doing so.

College officials, who declined to comment for this article, said at the time that recommending drugs fell outside the student-instructor relationship and charged that Ms. McClain asked a doctor for medication for her students. Ms. McClain, who taught at Rhodes for 11 years, says she merely recommended that they consult a physician about obtaining a prescription.

Ms. McClain is hardly the only musician to rely on beta blockers, which, taken in small dosages, can quell anxiety without apparent side effects. The little secret in the classical music world - dirty or not - is that the drugs have become nearly ubiquitous. So ubiquitous, in fact, that their use is starting to become a source of worry.

Are the drugs a godsend or a crutch? Is there something artificial about the music they help produce? Isn't anxiety a natural part of performance? And could Classical music someday join the Olympics and other athletic organizations in scandals involving performance-enhancing drugs?

Beta blockers

Are cardiac medications, not tranquilizers or sedatives - were first marketed in 1967 in the United States for disorders like angina and abnormal heart rhythms. One of the commonest is Propranolol, made here by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals and sold under the brand name Inderal. By blocking the action of adrenaline and other substances, these drugs mute the sympathetic nervous system, which produces fear in response to any perceived danger, be it a sabre-toothed tiger or a Lincoln Center audience.

Even the most skillful and experienced musicians can experience this fear. Legendary artists like the pianists Vladimir Horowitz and Glenn Gould curtailed their careers because of anxiety and the cellist Pablo Casals endured a thumping heart, shortness of breath and shakiness even as he performed into his 90's. Before the advent of beta blockers, artists found other, often more eccentric means of calming themselves. In 1942, a New York pianist charged his peers 75 cents to attend the Society for Timid Souls, a salon in which participants distracted one another during mock performances. Others resorted to superstitious ritual, drink or tranquilizers. The pianist Samuel Sanders told an interviewer in 1980 that taking Valium before a performance would bring him down from wild panic to mild hysteria.

Musicians quietly began to embrace beta blockers after their application to stage fright was first recognized in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal, in 1976. By 1987, a survey conducted by the International Conference of Symphony Orchestra Musicians, which represents the 51 largest orchestras in the United States, revealed that 27 percent of its musicians had used the drugs. Psychiatrists estimate that the number is now much higher. Before Propranolol, I saw a lot of musicians using alcohol or Valium, said Mitchell Kahn, director of the Miller Health Care Institute for the Performing Arts, describing 25 years of work with the Metropolitan Opera orchestra and other groups. "I believe beta blockers are far more beneficial than deleterious and have no qualms about prescribing them."

But use of drugs is still largely secretive. "Inderal is like Viagra," a woodwind player at a major orchestra said. "No one admits to using it because of the implication of weakness." Robin McKee, the acting principal flutist of the San Francisco Symphony, agrees, saying, "It's too bad we're reluctant to talk about using such a great tool."

Indeed, the effect of the drugs does seem magical. Beta blockers don't merely calm musicians; they actually seem to improve their performances on a technical level.

In the late 1970's, Charles Brantigan, a vascular surgeon in Denver, began researching classical musicians' use of Inderal. By replicating performance conditions in studies at the Juilliard School and the Eastman School in Rochester, he showed that the drug not only lowered heart rates and blood pressure but also led to performances that musical judges deemed superior to those fueled with a placebo. In 1980, Dr. Brantigan, who plays tuba with the Denver Brass, sent his findings to Kenneth Mirkin, a frustrated Juilliard student who had written to him for help.

I was the kid who had always sat last-chair viola, said Mr. Mirkin, whose bow bounced from audition nerves. Two years later, he won a spot in the New York Philharmonic, where he has played for 22 years. "I never would have had a career in music without Inderal," said Mr. Mirkin, who, an hour before his tryout, took 10 milligrams.

For the last two decades, such use of beta blockers has generally met with approval from the medical establishment. "Stage fright is a very specific and time-limited type of problem," said Michael Craig Miller, the editor of *The Harvard Mental Health Letter*. Dr. Miller, who is also an amateur pianist, noted that beta blockers are inexpensive and relatively safe and that they affect only physical, not cognitive, anxiety. "There's very little downside except whatever number you do on yourself about taking the drugs."

BUT now that the drugs have established themselves as a seemingly permanent part of the classical music world, some musicians and physicians are beginning to question the acceptability, safety, efficacy and ethics of using them. One concern is that many musicians use beta blockers without proper medical supervision. The 1987 survey of orchestra musicians revealed that 70 percent of musicians taking beta blockers got them from friends, not physicians. Mr. Mirkin, the Philharmonic violist, first obtained Inderal from his father, who took it for angina. Others buy it while touring countries where they are sold over the counter.

Stephen J. Gottlieb, a professor of medicine who published a study on the effects of beta blockers in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 1998, says beta blockers should be obtained only after a medical examination, since people with asthma or heart disease could develop problems like shortness of breath or a slowing of the heart rate. "One-time use of low doses of beta blockers should be safe in healthy people," Dr. Gottlieb said, adding that the fatigue, hallucinations, tingling and vivid dreams listed as side effects in *Physicians' Desk Reference* would be unusual in those using Inderal only occasionally. The risks are far more serious for those who use beta blockers consistently and take up to 700 milligrams of Inderal a day. Musicians typically take 5 to 20 milligrams in isolated doses.

But some performers object to beta blockers on musical rather than medical grounds. "If you have to take a drug to do your job, then go get another job," said Sara Sant'Ambrogio, who plays cello in the Eroica Trio. Chemically assisted performances can be soulless and inauthentic, say detractors like Barry Green, the author of "The Inner Game of Music," and Don Greene, a former Olympic diving coach who teaches Juilliard students to overcome their stage fright naturally. The sound may be technically correct, but it's somewhat deadened, both men say. Angella Ahn, a violinist and a member of the Ahn Trio, remembers that fellow students at Juilliard who took beta blockers "lost a little bit of the intensity," she said. Ms. Ahn doesn't use the drugs, she said: "I want to be there 100 percent."

Indeed, the high stakes involved in live performance are part of what makes it so thrilling, for both performers and audiences. A little onstage anxiety may be a good thing: one function of adrenaline is to provide extra energy in a threatening or challenging situation and that energy can be harnessed to produce a particularly exciting musical performance. Performance anxiety tends to push musicians to rehearse more and to confront their anxieties about their work; beta blockers mask these musical and emotional obstacles.

Some musicians are also grappling with the ethics of better performing through chemistry. In auditions, which are even more nerve-racking than regular performances, do those who avail themselves of the drug have a better chance of success than those who do not? Should drug testing apply to performers, as it does to some athletes and to job applicants at some companies?

If you look at the logic of why we ban drugs in sport, the same should apply to music auditions, said Charles Yesalis, a professor at Pennsylvania State University who studies performance-enhancing drugs. But the issue receives little attention because, unlike athletes, classical musicians are seldom called on to represent big business ventures. "If Nike offered musicians ad contracts," Dr. Yesalis said, "more people would pay attention."

Speaking from the Athens Olympics in August, Steven Ungerleider, a sports psychologist and the author of "Faust's Gold," said that beta-blocking medications are prohibited for some events, like riflery, in which competitors use the drug to slow the pulse so that they can fire between heartbeats to avoid a jolt. The drugs are banned in a number of other sports, including motorcycling, bobsledding and freestyle snowboarding.

But Dr. Miller, the Harvard physician, points out that beta blockers differ significantly from steroids, which use testosterone to increase muscle mass, strength and speed. Inderal enables rather than enhances, by removing debilitating physical symptoms; it cannot improve tone, technique or musicianship or compensate for inadequate preparation.

As Ms. McClain's firing demonstrates, the use of beta blockers by students is a particularly delicate issue. Those who openly use the drugs believe they have a responsibility to mention them to students suffering from severe stage fright.

If I'm looking out for the welfare of my students, I cannot in good conscience not tell them about beta blockers, said Ms. McClain, adding that she would be more careful about how she represented the information in the future.

Some teachers believe that coping with performance anxiety is an essential part of a classical music education and that early use of beta blockers deprives students of the chance to confront their stage fright. Robert Barris, a bassoonist and a co-chairman of the music performance studies faculty at Northwestern University, encourages students to address the roots of their anxieties while avoiding psychological dependence on chemicals. Unlike previous generations of musicians, these students can draw on a rich array of non-chemical treatment options. The new field of performing-arts medicine includes some 20 centers across the country, many of which treat stage fright with therapies that range from Inderal to more holistic approaches like hypnosis, yoga and aerobic exercise.

But several musicians interviewed for this article expressed impatience with these treatments, which can seem slow and uncertain compared with the instant gratification and convenience offered by the beta blockers. "Holistic solutions take work and time to be effective, whereas Inderal is a quick fix," Mr. Barris confirmed. As it happens, he takes Inderal by prescription for a heart ailment and he said that he works to combat any soporific effects the drug might have on his musicianship by putting extra energy into his concerts. "No one wants to listen to a secure, accurate but disconnected performance," he added.

Jim Walker, a former principal flutist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic who has recorded more than 400 movie soundtracks, says that preparation is the best medicine. Still, he describes himself as an Inderal advocate, with the caveat that the drug be approved by a physician. Some of his best students at the University of Southern California, he said, are too nervous to deliver a representation of how well they really play and might stand to benefit from beta blockers.

It's absolutely legitimate to recommend Inderal to a student who's unable to perform because of nerves, he added. "If I'd never heard the story about Ruth Ann McClain, I'd be far more blatant in recommending it."

Blair Tindall, a professional oboist, is writing "Mozart in the Jungle" for Grove/Atlantic Press www.mozartinthejungle.com. Elaine Aradillas contributed reporting for this article. This article originally appeared in The New York Times, October 17, 2004

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15. GENERATING CD SALES AT YOUR SHOWS

SELLING MORE CDs AT GIGS

A Case Study: The Rogues

by Marc Gunn, The Bard's Crier

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A few weekends back, the Brobdingnagian Bards performed at the Austin Celtic Festival. We shared the stage with some amazing bands, but at the very top of my list were The Rogues.

We first met The Rogues last year at the Texas Renaissance Festival. Since then I've been a big fan of not only their killer bagpipes and drums, but their phenomenal ability to sell CDs. They work magic on and off stage and sell tons of CDs.

What do they do that is so special?

Well, The Rogues are very proactive when it comes to selling. While many bands will setup a table and say, "go to our table and buy our CDs", The Rogues take it a step further. They send their sales ladies to their fans.

I remember at the Kansas City Renaissance Festival when they played the Pub Sing. They began playing music. Their Sales Ladies danced to the music. Then they picked up their baskets of CDs, grabbed a couple, held them high, while The Rogues invited the audience to, "Go buy our CDs." Then the lasses walked through the aisles through the rest of the entire performance.

While the rest of us were on stage watching with shocked amazement at our own untouched sales table, The Rogues sold a dozen CDs! They repeated that performance at the Austin Celtic Festival.

We shared a booth with The Rogues at the festival and I asked Sharon about how they do it. She told me it varies in different parts of the country. In Texas, this direct approach works magic. In Florida, an older recreational audience gets angry if sales people disturb their show. But the key is to realize that your sales team is a PART of the show!

They don't just stand up there silently holding up CDs. If they do, they disappear. We learned that during our first show this weekend. Integrate your sales people into your show. Get them to dance in the isles, clap their hands, sing-a-long. If they do, the audience will follow their lead. This will help them to attract attention to the CDs and you will sell more.

Be proactive. Don't wait for your fans to come to you or they may never! If you go to them, you'll sell more CDs and make more fans in the process.

Bard Marc Gunn of the Brobdingnagian Bards has helped thousands of musicians make money with their musical groups through the Bards Crier Music Marketing and Promotion E-zine and the Texas Musicians' Texas Music Biz Tips. Now you can get personal advice by visiting www.bardscrier.com for FREE "how-to" music marketing assistance.

CONFESSIONS OF A MASTER CD SALES WOMAN

by Sharon Wothke, The Rogues
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As head sales person for the band, I think that I would be the one to talk to. The Rogues are definitely unique in what they do and if you will indulge me, very good at what they do.

As a sales person, I know that the way the guys play their music definitely is the biggest factor in their sales quotient. When the music, which can be described as infectious, is smoking hot and everyone is having a good time, the sales are usually pretty good. Most people who come to a Renaissance Festival, where the band still does the lion's share of their gigs, do not come expecting to buy a CD with bagpipe music on it. The Rogues have converted many people to this form of music. So in other words, they create a unique atmosphere which is conducive to sales.

If the guys are doing their job (making great music), it makes my job a lot easier. I just have to be available and approachable to people and looking like I am a part of the show for people to feel comfortable in coming up to me. We started from the very beginning employing the use of a roaming basket. It is very effective and other groups have successfully copied our approach.

Our sellers walk around holding up the product so people can see them. Our sellers try to blend in with the show and not be pushy, just visible. I personally enjoy interacting with the crowd, spoofing off of what is being said on the stage and telling jokes to make the audience laugh. And I will talk and be nice to everyone, even if they don't buy a CD simply because I enjoy people and I am trying to be an ambassador for the band. They may not buy today, but chances are they will think about it and buy a CD at another time."

Straight from the Master's mouth. What does it take?

- great music
- great live performance
- roaming sales people with baskets of CDs
- sellers hold up product DURING the show
- sellers blend in and interact with the show

Well a great performance and an interactive sales crew is just the start to selling more CDs at gigs. The Rogues also employ other salespeople.

Our sellers work off of a commission, with bonuses built in when an individual's sales total reaches a certain amount. Giving a salesperson a commission motivates them to sell more product than just giving them a flat rate. We do have minimum pay for a day's work when the sales are not good. In that case the band usually pays \$50 day or a 10% commission of the sales total, whichever is greater.

At the more modern venues, such as highland games and Celtic festivals, we have found that having a sales table is an extremely successful way to increase sales, especially in combination with a roaming salesperson (when using both are appropriate). At pub gigs, we only have a sales table. Having someone roam in a tight space like a pub would be seen as too aggressive or invasive, which the Rogues do not encourage their salespeople to be. Friendly competition between two or more sellers is fine as long as there is a feeling of team spirit. Our sellers help each other out when one needs change or more stock.

The larger the crowds, the more sales people are needed. The sheer size of the crowd has a tremendous impact on sales. When you get that many people standing or sitting that close together and they are all excited about the music, it is like a ripple effect -once the sales start flowing, everyone seems to jump on the buying bandwagon.

At one particular show at the Maryland Renaissance Festival, where the crowd was huge, our three sellers were not able to maximize the full sales potential. A good indication of my not being able to tap the sales potential that is when I am standing in one spot and have not moved out of it the entire show. Just as soon as I finish one sell, another person comes up to buy a CD. I call that standing in a sweet spot - when people come up to you already wanting to buy a CD. My job then is to try to figure out, as quickly as possible, what CD or CDs would best suit what they are looking for. I always try to point out the fact that they can order more CDs through the website or mail order or listen to the music online.

As a band member's wife, I am always trying to promote the band. I take business cards from people who want to hire the band for potential gigs and I direct them to my husband, Randy, who is the business manager for the band.

- reward sales people with commission
- set up sales table for venues
- encourage friendly sales competition
- more people to sell for larger crowds, enjoy 'ripple effect'
- take business cards to gigs and hand out at every opportunity

Mrs. Sharon Wothke first and foremost, is the fifth cog in the Rogues traveling circus. She has been with the Rogues from the inception and continues to be a vital part of the organization. She designs; she dances and she keeps the guys organized. Bard Marc Gunn of the Brobdingnagian Bards has helped thousands of musicians make money with their musical groups through the Bards Crier Music Marketing and Promotion E-zine and the Texas Musicians' Texas Music Biz Tips. Now you can get personal advice by visiting www.bardscrier.com for FREE "how-to" music marketing assistance.

TIPS FOR SELLING YOUR CD AT GIGS

from The IGS Guitar Forum

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I've been doing well lately - selling about 50 CDs every week. I only sell 4 or 5 per month through my website.

Here's a few things I've learned about selling at gigs. Don't be bashful. I used to be ashamed of myself for trying to sell CDs. I don't know where those feelings come from, but I know I used to MUMBLE at the end of the show, "oh by the way, talk to me if you want to buy a CD". It was ridiculous and it never worked. I've learned to say it loud and proud, "I have a great CD for sale, buy one after the show and help me send my kids to college!." Or "I have a new CD for sale, you'll like it a lot ... feel free to buy in bulk!"

In our society, people respect hard work and creativity and if you show some boldness, they'll be happy to help support your adventure. Don't apologize. Just smile and say "Thanks a lot, enjoy!"

Make the transaction easy!

People want a quick easy transaction. The best investment I ever made was buying a bunch of displays from Disc Makers. Make sure that there is a poster attached to the display that clearly displays the price of your products. If people have to ask "how much" - it's an unnecessary step that's in the way of the transaction.

I taped two displays together and attached a big piece of foam board to the back. On the foam board is a short description of each CD along with the prices. Now people can just read about the different CDs. I've attached a small money box with a slot to the side of the display. Now I end up selling CDs before, during and after my show.

Placement

Put your display right on the stage or on a table near you. People will see it and start thinking about buying a CD while you're playing. Always have change. If you get stuck making change for one person, the other people waiting might drift.

If you don't want to invest in a bunch of displays from Disc Makers, you can find permanent wooden CD stands at www.CDStands.com

This article was posted originally at The IGS Guitar Forum. The IGS was created to provide a "safe" place where beginners as well as advanced players can learn from each other, expand their musicianship and take musical chances. Thanks to our incredible staff and the enthusiasm of our students, we have succeeded in creating one of the premiere guitar workshops in the world. www.guitarseminars.com

HOW TO SELL 60,000 CDs

by April, Singer/Songwriter

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It has taken me over four years at 200 performances a year, combined with all my fans' word of mouth, for me to sell 60,000 units, says April, referring to the sales of her self-released album, *Strong Willed Woman*. Selling 60,000 CDs is no small feat.

Major label artists often dream of selling that many discs — and they have national distribution behind them. So, how does an independent artist with limited distribution and no major label marketing power behind them do it? With a combination of hard work, talent and classic marketing strategies.

April moved to Nashville in 1997 "to live and breathe songwriting" and to submerge herself into the music business. She was hired as the National Membership Director for the Nashville Songwriters Association International where she worked with over 100 chapters from all over the world, making valuable contacts along the way. "Additionally," she said, "I served on a grassroots coalition with ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, NARAS, CMA, NSAI and top publishers in this town to fight on Legislative issues such as Life +70, The Copyright Extension and Digital Infringement."

One thing that every successful artist we've interviewed has in common is they realize the importance of having a mailing list. April not only had a mailing list but had a fan club with almost 3,000 paid members. She explains, "My fan club fee was \$10.00 a year, which included: an autographed photo, a subscription to my quarterly newsletter, a membership card, special merchandise offerings and more, like chances to win concert tickets. I spoke about how to join the Posse Fan Club at every show I performed or any review, article or interview I had."

The newsletter proved an especially helpful promotional tool. "I used it to keep our fans up to speed with our shows, album releases and personal notes on the group. I would hand out thousands of those a year at every show and would always get CD orders back."

Aside from gig sales and orders from her newsletter, April had to get creative with her distribution to bring in the sales. "I originally sold my CDs and cassettes via consignment at the Watt Avenue and the Downtown Tower Records but soon I started selling them in local record stores, western clothing stores etc. I even placed them in beauty supply stores."

Another promotional tool April has found extremely useful is her music video. "I am so proud of my video "Tempted," it was produced by the same man who does Gloria Estefan's videos. I originally had it done to get the eye of a major label, but then after it was done, I found it was getting me better gigs. Booking agents loved it, they felt like were getting an artist from CMT or something. The coolest thing is one time I was performing in Vegas and they displayed it on this multimillion dollar screen. To see me on a Vegas strip in lights was incredible."

Her parting thoughts for musicians: "Stay true to yourself first, enjoy what you sing and write and it will project to the fans! If you try to force the music, people can tell. Also, you can't please everyone, so why try? That's why there are many genres of music."

If someone doesn't like your sound, that's OK, it doesn't mean you're not good, it's just their opinion. But above all, have fun!"

April is a seasoned performer, opening for over 40 major country artists and legends over the past 8 years. She has won four years in a row for her and her six piece band, "The Texas Rangers", as band and artist of the year. April was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1996 for Singer/ Songwriter, proving her fans and industry professionals believe in her talent as well. www.aprilynash.com aprilinnashville@aol.com. This article first appeared in Disc Makers' Fast Forward e-Newsletter.

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16. SELLING MERCH AT YOUR SHOWS

HOW TO DOUBLE YOUR GIG REVENUES BY SELLING MERCH

by Tony van Veen, Disc Makers
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It's a long-established fact: it's easier (and more lucrative) to sell more to your existing customers than to find a new customer. Read any business book on marketing, attend any sales training seminar and there is no shortage of expert advice on how to sell more to your existing customers. We artists have the bad habit of calling our fans, well, fans and forgetting what they really are: our valued customers. And customers have this wonderful habit of buying our stuff.

In a career filled with unpaid gigs, gigs for beer money and gigs for gas money, there is one sure way to make sure you walk away from every performance with cash in your pocket. It's called your merch table — and it's where you sell whatever you have to sell to your fans, ehh, customers. CDs, posters, stickers, buttons and that most popular and best-selling item of them all, wearable merch. Everyone loves merch, don't they? Your customers love advertising how cool they are because they are wearing your cutting edge brand on their chest (or back or sleeve or head). And for you as an artist, what could be better than having someone pay you to advertise your brand?

Of all items artists can sell at their gigs, wearable merch such as T-shirts, baseball or trucker caps, hoodies, baby doll shirts, long sleeve T's and skullies, sell better than anything else they can sell, even better than CDs. Why? Because your fans feel that your coolness rubs off on them when they wear garments with your name on them. They just become a smidge cooler than they were before as soon as they walk out their front door with your T-shirt on.

The appealing thing about merch is that you don't need any notoriety to start generating revenues. You don't need to be famous. You don't need to have 12 songs recorded (and released on CD). All you need is a desire to perform live, a few gigs booked (where else are you going to find customers?) and a cool design. Once you're performing live, people WILL buy your merch, so long as it's cool. Lame merch is a waste of money. You want your customers to covet the items you have for sale.

Ready to take the merch plunge?

There are plenty of merch vendors out there, ranging from local silk screen printers to national companies. There are some tricks to buying merch, so here are a few tips to make the buying experience a breeze:

How to buy merch without getting burned

Choosing your item(s)

Who are your fans and what do they wear? You'll definitely want standard T-shirts, which represents 80% of all merch sold. But feel free to add other garment items. Sometimes offering more unusual items will be more appealing to your fans. The greater the variety of Merch you have to sell, the greater your opportunity to generate real revenue. What's better than selling someone a T-shirt? Selling them a T-shirt AND a baseball cap!

Design

If you decide to design your Merch yourself, here's some advice: Keep it simple. That doesn't mean "uncool." It just means that intricate designs don't necessarily translate well to silkscreen printing. You want something eye-catching and memorable. Also keep in mind that silkscreening onto garments is not like printing on paper. The more simple and iconic the design, the easier it will translate to a T-shirt or hat. In addition, more simple designs tend to appeal to a larger, more varied audience base. Maximize your potential for Merch sales by offering a design that will appeal to the most people possible.

Choose ink color(s)

Choosing ink colors will be based on both your design and the color of the garment you are printing on. Unlike paper printing, it's usually not possible to do full color printing on your merch. Maybe that's why most classic and memorable T-shirts are one or two colors. If you are choosing multiple garment colors, make sure you take the extra time to ensure your ink colors will work well on ALL of the garment colors you choose. You don't want to end up picking a yellow ink and then specifying a yellow shirt.

Three things to know when deciding on ink colors

1. For every color you choose, there's a screen that needs to be made. Your printer will charge you for that screen. More colors = more screens = higher costs
2. Your printer will charge you per color. If you print colors on a shirt, it'll cost you more per shirt than a one-color design.
3. And if you want to print a light color ink (say, yellow) on a dark garment (say, black), the printer will often need to first lay down a base of white (known as flashing) before they overprint the yellow. That means a second screen and possibly a fee for a second color printing (1st color white, 2nd color yellow).

Choose design location(s)

On some garments you can print in multiple locations: front, back and sleeves. While that can look really cool, I'll give you the same advice we've been giving you.

Keep it simple: For every color and location you add, there will be an additional cost involved. Check with your printer.

Choose garment color(s)

While most printers will let you mix garment colors within the same order (ie: you can select your 48-shirt order in smaller lots of black, white, red and pink shirts), you need to keep the ink colors in mind. Red ink on a white shirt will work and it may work on the black shirt (though white flashing may be required), but it probably won't work on your pink shirt and definitely not on the red one. Again, simplicity rules. Start with one shirt color. Black is a good start, chosen by three quarters of all artists.

Choose sizes for each color

You can usually split your order into S, M, L or XL for any garment at no additional charge. XXL and larger sizes usually cost more. Check with your printer.

These basic tips cover most of the merch buying decision points. Once you start contacting merch vendors there are other things to be aware of as well. Most will have design templates and recommended design software programs they'll want you to use. And there are many brands of shirts, ranging from cheap no-name brands (stay away from those) to premium (and costly) name brands like American Apparel. Usually a heavyweight 100% cotton shirt will do the trick.

How to sell the most Merch

Once you've bought merch, you've got to maximize your sales. Fortunately, selling mucho merch is easy. Just follow some of these common-sense tips to make the most of every selling opportunity.

When you're on stage, mention that you have cool merch for sale at the table in the back.

And mention how much — or better said, how affordable it is ("Only \$15."). Trust me, if you keep it a secret that you have merch for sale, you won't sell any.

Prominently display your Merch at a table in a high traffic area at your gigs

Close to the entrance or exit is often good. Or maybe even on the way to the rest rooms. You want to be in an area where lots of potential customers will see it and then display your items attractively.

Keep prices reasonable

You're an independent artist, not a chart topper (yet) — and be sure to list those prices clearly on or next to the items you're selling.

Sell a range of garments

Standard tees, baby dolls, long sleeve, hats. The more options you offer, the more customers you'll appeal to. And sell CDs too. Here's where the theory of "it's easier to sell more to existing customers than to find a new customer" becomes real. Make sure that the person working your merch table is a sales person and actively tries to encourage customers looking at a CD to also take a look at a T-shirt.

Offer bundles

If you sell a CD for \$12 and a shirt for \$15, sell both for \$25 (a \$2 savings).

People love getting stuff for free

Offer something free with purchase — a poster, sticker or maybe even a copy of an old CD whose sales have cooled off. Tell your audience that the first 50 people to buy a shirt get a free copy of your last CD. Or, tell them you'll be signing CDs at the table later. Anything to get folks to come to your merch table...

Accept credit cards

Our friends at CD Baby have an excellent program which allows you to get your very own credit card swiper, which you can take to your gigs and which will help you sell a LOT more Merch www.cdbaby.net/swiper

Play out a lot

The more gigs you play, the more Merch you'll sell. Just make sure you remind your audience every time that you have Merch to sell.

Make sure whoever is selling your merch is also wearing your merch

Nothing looks cooler than a roadie in full gear. Go as far as getting "crew" printed on the back for them — it will get them psyched and work hard for you.

Give your merch to whoever booked you into the club

Always cool when the owner is wearing your stuff the next time you come to perform. Same goes for DJs, program directors and other industry folks you run into.

Have friends wearing your merch hang out in front of the venue before the show

Nothing like creating a buzz before the show even begins and having folks walk around the venue with your gear on.

Don't underestimate the power of friends and family

Spend the money and give away your merch as gifts for the holidays. They will wear your merch to the mall, soccer practice, in school- you get the idea.

You are in for the long haul (aren't you?)

Give stuff away in the beginning — it will all come back in the end.

Selling merch is as close to a no-brainer as an artist can get, frequently leading to gig revenues more than doubling, merely by having apparel for sale. If you think you can't afford merch, think again. You can't afford not to have merch for sale at your next performance.

Tony van Veen is president of Disc Makers and a drummer. When he was performing and touring, his merch always outsold his albums by a large margin. He finally got the hint and took a day job at Disc Makers, where, after a 20-year career, he is proud to at last have introduced a full line of custom merch services for artists, available at www.discmakers.com/merch

HOW TO MAKE MONEY: WYLIE GUSTAFSON ON MERCHANDISING

by Scott McCormick, Disc Makers

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One of the reasons we've become successful is there's a market out there that Nashville and the major labels have forgotten about. That's where the independent labels come in, filling niches that the majors forget about.

Despite playing a style of music long forgotten by Nashville, Wylie & the Wild West Show's years of hard work has brought them respectable indie success. They've appeared regularly on Country Music Television, The Nashville Network and the Grand Ole Opry. Their last two releases, *Way Out West* (voted 1997's "Best Independent Country Album of the Year" by AFIM) and *Total Yodel*, were picked up by Rounder Records and are distributed through Mercury/Polygram.

However, even with a record deal, major label distribution and constant touring, it's merchandising that puts *The Wild West Show* over the top into a profitable venture. "It's what makes us able to tour," says Gustafson. "It's one of those things I didn't see the potential of until I got down to business with it—now I think every band should pay attention to that aspect of their business, because it can be the make or break point.

We sell CDs, hats, T-shirts, refrigerator magnets, photos, bumper stickers...in the last few years CDs have become the main item, but some people only have a couple of bucks to spend so they can buy a bumper sticker or a signed photo.

"We also have a Website and have developed a mail order business which we run out of my home. The Internet is nice for our fans because it's a place where they can find our records. Since we're on an independent label and K-mart doesn't carry our product, a lot of people in areas where K-mart is the main shopping place can't find our CDs in stores, but they can go on the Internet, do a search and place an order. We've just refurbished the Website, trying to make it simple and user friendly. We find it's best to put in the least amount of information that you can so when people download it doesn't clog up.

Gustafson estimates that about 10 percent of the *Wild West*'s merchandising currently comes from online sales. That 10 percent has proven fairly simple to achieve, even though the business runs on the honor system and isn't set up to accept credit cards. So far the fee for credit card sales seems prohibitive," he explains. "Fans just send a check and we mail them out a CD. In the four years or so that we've been doing this we've never yet had a bad check. If people call and want our CD, I'll send one out even before I get the check and they always send payment—we've had nothing but good experiences."

Tour sales account for the bulk of the band's merchandising income, with, according to Gustafson, about 75 percent of the venues taking a cut of sales that varies between 10 and 30 percent. "Those 30 percent venues hurt us," he says ruefully, "By the time we pay seven dollars for the CD, then another 30 percent to the house out of the 15 dollars we're selling the CD for, it's almost not worth it. But most of the venues that take that much are very advantageous for us to be playing and we're just happy to be there. Since we're not a big enough band to be able to negotiate, we just have to bite the bullet.

The Wild West has found that it pays to offer quality in the items that the band has for sale. "We don't always go for what's cheapest, we go for something that lasts," Gustafson asserts. "It doesn't cost that much more for 100% cotton or for good quality 50/50 shirts. We deal with companies who do quality product and are reliable and we stick with people we can count on because in the summer we go through a lot of product. If we sell out and need 100 more shirts, we need to get them as fast as possible.

The group hasn't encountered any conflicts with local retailers about selling at shows. "Rounder has always been behind us, making it easy for us to do. They recognize that it's an opportunity because after a good show people are inspired to buy the product right there," continues Gustafson. "We make a point of telling people after the show that we'll be selling merchandise at the table and that we'll be signing autographs. People love that—it gives them a chance to meet us. We talk to them and find out where they're from and what they liked about the show. I think that's a really important part of touring, meeting the audience and relating to them—making them feel they know you a little bit better by the time you're heading down the road. Direct contact also helps you understand what people like about you. It's something we always strive to do, whether it's through the music or just talking to them, to relate to them and entertain them in a way that's a real good experience for them.

Scott McCormick is a production manager at Disc Makers. In business since 1946, Disc Makers is the nation's leading independent media manufacturer, offering a wide variety of products and services, including state-of-the-art automated printers and duplicating systems as well as complete CD and DVD replication and custom packaging for independent musicians, filmmakers and businesses. www.discmakers.com For tour dates, music clips and more info on Wylie & The Wild West Show, check out their website at www.wyliewww.com

THE “T” IN TOUR MERCHANDISE STANDS FOR T-SHIRT

by Gigi Swanson, M.G. Incentives

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When you think of tour merchandise you might envision major label artists playing large arenas and selling everything from tie-dye t-shirts, bumper stickers, embroidered baseball caps and in the case of the Rolling Stone's famed Voodoo Lounge tour—a custom motorcycle.

But even if you are an independent artist you can run your business like the big acts by utilizing an added revenue stream source—custom merchandise. As an artist/performer you are selling an experience and fans will buy a souvenir of that experience in the form of a CD, clothing, buttons, posters etc. As music fans we have all come home with something more tangible than a ticket stub and it's usually something we can wear.

The custom wearables market has plenty to choose from, but let's focus on the long held wardrobe staple - the T-shirt. What better promotion is there than a walking billboard to advertise who you are and what you do. It's generally inexpensive to produce and if made with good-quality materials it can last a very long time. But better than that, there is a healthy margin of profit in the sales of wearables, which can at least offset or even cover your travel expenses.

You can package CDs with a T-shirt for an “added value” sales incentive such as offering them “half off” with a CD purchase. You can use them as door prizes or as a thank you for the sound guy or the waitress at the clubs you play. The same applies for coffeehouse, church and house concert gigs. Even when you play for free you can earn money and build goodwill and name recognition.

Don't think selling T-shirts is for more visible and established acts. If you are playing out and selling CDs you can sell shirts. But before you jump in, here are a few pointers to make your promotional dollars work for you.

The most popular T-shirt is the basic crew neck. Not only is it low in cost, it's a style people are familiar with. As far as color options are concerned, the sky is the limit with the least expensive being the standard white, then the heathers/naturals and then the darker colors. Besides the basic tee, you can branch out with different styles such as '70s retro ringer tees, baseball raglan tees and new styles made for women such as scoop necks, baby-doll tees and the new layered looks.

I prefer 100% cotton heavyweight Tees in the 6.0 oz range for long term durability. Brands such as Gildan, Hanes and Jerzees have been common favorites for years. Heavier fabric is knitted tighter which enables a better screen print, especially when using detail and four color process. Plus they are typically cut larger and hold up better with multiple washings. But you must think of the tastes of the end user and the image you are trying to promote. That's where fashion often comes in. Knowing your audience is key.

For example, one of my Rap group clients goes for the extra large size heavier weight tees, whereas a rock group client sells mostly light weight, smaller tight fitting "alternative" tees. They cost more but the look they achieve supports their brand image. Check out the on-line stores of different recording artists to get a sense of what fans are buying and to see what might work with your audience.

What makes your T-shirt sell isn't the style, its size or color but its logo design. Logo art needs to be readable and convey the image you want to promote, but keep in mind it should be something a person will want to wear.

When it comes to printing logos, you can opt for gel, sugar-glitter, suede, reflective, metallic, glow in the dark and ink in one color and up to 12 colors.

Screen printing using one color ink in one position on the shirt is the most economical. You have to pay for an art screen with each color you use as well as for any extra handling of the shirt. That includes flipping it over to print on a different side. Some artwork may require added film screens to replicate more complicated designs. So keep it simple if you can. If you have to go with a certain "look" make sure you get a thorough quote before you proceed.

Your logo art needs to be in a graphic format generally saved as an eps file. Many imprinters charge an hourly rate to prepare art that isn't standard or isn't vector art for more complicated designs. Most printers carry standard Pantone Colors but also offer color-matching inks for an added charge.

How many T shirts should you buy? The real price breakpoints in the industry start at 144 units, but that amount isn't practical for everyone. You can find reasonable shirts at the 72-unit range or even less if you plan it right. Funds still short? I know of some bands that purchased co-op shirts with another band or with a sponsor such as a local nightclub. They basically sold space on the shirt to share or subsidize the cost and helped promote their partners at the same time.

If you can get your shirts for under \$5 and sell them in the \$10-15 range you will see a quick return on your investment. When I taught music business classes, I used to illustrate the power of selling tour merchandise to my students this way: A typical major label recording artist might make a little over \$1 off the sale of a CD . He would have to sell five CDs or more to make the same margin off the sale of one basic T-shirt. That's why some of the major labels have affiliated merchandise companies as an added revenue stream for themselves.

Tour or gig merchandise can be incorporated in your overall marketing plan. It fits right in with preparing press kits, driving traffic to your website, getting people in the door and selling CDs. The right product will promote you long after the gig.

Keep an eye out for future articles on more promotional products. Trucker hats anyone?

Gigi Swanson started an entertainment division three years ago when she left her teaching and administrative duties as director of the music business program at McNally Smith College of Music located in the Twin Cities. She commutes between the company's Minneapolis and St. Petersburg offices and recently opened a satellite office in Nashville. M.G. Incentives, Inc., a company that specializes in promotional products. The company has worked with advertising firms and corporations for over 15 years.

WHY SHOULD YOU ORDER SHIRTS TO SELL AT YOUR EVENT?

by Django Bohren, Seatthole Shirts

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There are a variety of reasons you might need

T-shirts, pins with your logo on them or bumper stickers. This article will focus on why you need to sell this stuff if you're a band.

According to Rolling Stone magazine, Britney Spears was expected to make as much as \$125,000.00 per concert in merch sales alone. Of that, she'd keep up to \$60,000.00. That's sixty thousand dollars for Britney per night. Do the math and you'll see that over the course of a big ol' tour, she'd make a lot of money.

Billboard.com reports that Ozzy Osbourne has raked in more than \$50 million in merch sales.

Of course, most bands aren't at that point yet.

But if you're playing decent-sized venues, you've got cool shirts and your band has some sort of following, there's no reason you can't make WAY more in merch sales than you do at the door.

Selling CDs is fine (and a smart thing to do), but why not offer your more affluent fans something extra? T-shirts, pullover hoodies, girlie shirts, panties, all with your logo on them will give people a chance to have something they like and support you at the same time.

Don't worry about sounding like you're selling out by hyping your merch onstage. It doesn't show that you're money hungry, just that you won't be begging for gas money to get to the next show.

And who knows? By the time you've sold out of shirts at a few concerts, you might just become as big as Britney Spears.

Django Bohren is the owner of Seatthole Shirts. Django has been in the design and printing business for nearly 10 years. He's got many projects under his belt and his fingers in many pies, but Seatthole is his primary source of excitement. "I have two strange fetishes," says Django, "The office supply aisle in Target and making custom t shirts, one-inch buttons and vinyl bumper stickers for anyone and everyone who needs them. All of my other fetishes are pretty standard."
www.seatthole.com

SELL YOURSELF AT GIGS (NOBODY'S GONNA DO IT FOR YA)

by Tim Ziegler, LostRock.com

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Once you have something to sell - a CD, T-shirts, upcoming gigs - you'll get a lot more bang if you sell yourself. It's not hard, it's just basic self-promotion.

Selling yourself at gigs entails a few basic principles.

Tell them what you've got

You might feel cheesy doing it, but announce what you have for sale from the stage. Wait until the audience digs a song, then say what you have for sale in any way that doesn't make you not feel like a prostitute. Be sure to announce upcoming gigs too. Repeat this info a couple times during the performance and make sure they know where your merch is set up. Make sure to announce your website address too.

The display kit

You'll need to display your wares if they're physical and you'll need to make the display beforehand (or at least have the materials - tape, sharpie, paper etc. with you).

If you have, for example, CDs, T-shirts and bumper stickers for sale, you can either make an elaborate stand-up cardboard display or just make a sign for each item saying what it is and how much it costs. We played with the San Marcos, TX band Richardson Seeds the other night and they just taped their T-shirt and CD to the club wall along with a sign that had prices. You can also just lay it all out all your merch on a table in the club. If you have a T-shirt or poster, put it up somewhere the audience can see it while you're playing.

Get help

It's important that somebody does the selling during breaks and after the show. Help comes in the form of one single person who is willing to sit at the merch display and sell stuff. It helps if that person can speak the native language and is not a felon. Sex sells, of course, so hot girlfriends and boyfriends at the merch booth will increase sales. If you can get friends to do this for free, all the better. If not, try giving somebody a cut (10 percent?) of everything they sell.

Price well

Finally, it's important to set your prices well. My band's theory is that the more of your band stuff you get out in circulation, the more you'll sell in the long run - so we sell our CDs and T-shirts for an affordable \$8-\$10 and give away our bumper stickers for free.

There are many theories of pricing. Keep in mind that the more merch you sell, the more people will get to know about you and possibly come out to see your live shows.

LostRock.com is a music website with promotional tips for independent artists. The idea behind Lostrock.com is simple: Market your own damn music. Created by Austin resident Tim Ziegler, the site tells you how to promote your band, get gigs, become a rock star and achieve nirvana in this lifetime. www.lostrock.com

LIVE CONCERT RECORDINGS ON USB STICKS

by Ryan Jarrett, blog.ryanjarrett.com

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Recently, I blogged about a new company planning to sell recordings of concerts on USB sticks as you leave the venue. Since then I've actually found articles proposing a similar idea that dates back to 2004, although I believe it was a slow starter then. Nowadays, USB sticks have surpassed floppy disks and even CDs as the most popular way to physically move data around, plus they have a much higher capacity than they used to and are more physically robust.

This is an excellent way of making money out of every live recording an artist makes — usually only one live recording is sold on through CDs/DVDs — and I think people would love to have a recording of the gig that they were actually at, rather than buy a recording through a record store of one random concert. The USB keys could be customized with artwork from the current tour or contain video footage and photos from the show, which in-turn would make them more collectible. Not only does this let artists and promoters monetize their events more effectively, it's also one in the eye for the commercial bootleggers. If the concert recording is available to buy legally then this weakens the appeal and strength of the bootleggers product, an illegal copy, which is probably going to be of poorer quality than the official product.

I think that the immediate delivery of a recorded event, whether it's a rock concert, an opera, a sporting even, a play or a West End musical, is likely to become more and more prominent as technology becomes more efficient and the costs come down. I can easily imagine being able to take home a recording of a Formula One race or a football match. In theme parks, instead of having your picture taken as your roller coaster carriage tips over the brow of the biggest hill on the track, on board cameras will record you for the whole ride, as well as external cameras recording the carriage's progress.

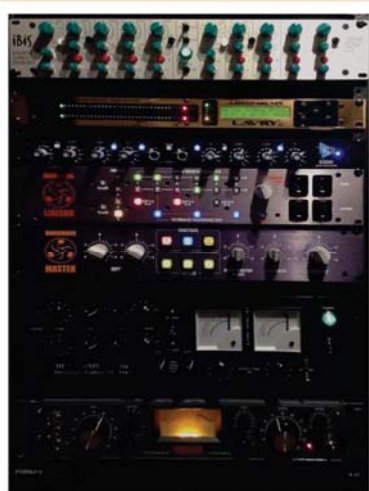
As always, Digital Rights Management (DRM) plays a part. I've found no definitive answer to whether or not these recordings are sold with DRM or not, but I suspect the label/artist will decide in each case. It has been reported that Canadian group, The Barenaked Ladies, are selling their concerts without DRM on USB sticks, along with albums in the same format. All live recordings are also available for purchase online and without DRM.

Ryan Jarrett is an IT consultant, specializing in network and desktop design/support and Microsoft Office/VBA scripting. He has 8 years commercial experience and has been freelance since 2003. For more information contact Ryan at ryan@ryanajarrett.com blog.ryanajarrett.com



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Mastering - World-class mastering is within reach for the Independent Musician or Label

Each recording requires a unique mastering process. Whether it's tubes, transistors, vintage transformers, or the highest-resolution digital processing - what is needed is immediately available. The result? Breathtaking sound that translates on a portable player, car, or home system. With the gear and decision-making that's musical - not clinical - dynamics are kept intact, ear fatigue is non-existent, and the musical message comes through, play after play.



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17. GETTING MORE PEOPLE TO YOUR SHOWS

HOW CAN I GET PEOPLE TO MY GIG?

by George Howard, Artists House

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You must first pick the right gig. Too often artists do everything they can to book a gig at a club, only to find themselves playing to two men and a dog on a Monday night. This is counterproductive. Chances are you will not be invited back to this club to play a second time.

So it makes sense to build up a following in a more organic manner. Look to alternative venues — house parties, college gigs, churches, even open-mics — to not only refine your live show, but to begin building a fan base. To this end, it's essential that you collect information (email and snail mail) from those who attend your shows. It's often not enough to simply pass around a mailing list. You may want to consider burning a three-song CD to give out to people only if they sign your mailing list. In this way, you're not only giving them an incentive to sign your mailing list, but more importantly, you're giving them a tangible souvenir of your gig (encourage them to burn copies for their friends).

Once you've played enough of these non-traditional (ie: non club) gigs and have developed a decent mailing list, you can begin thinking about booking a "professional" gig - that is, a gig in a club.

Once you book this gig, your work really begins. You have to not only notify all of those people whose names and e-mails you've collected about the upcoming gig, but you must also try to maximize the gig in other ways. It's imperative, for instance, that you notify the local media (press and radio) of your upcoming gig and try and get whatever coverage for the gig you can. This may very well be just a listing in the paper or an announcement on the college radio station, but in addition to being a reminder to those who know your music, it also serves the purpose of putting your (or your band's) name in front of those in the media. Doing this repeatedly will cause them to take notice and eventually lead to more substantive press and radio coverage.

Of course, you should use the new tools as well. MySpace, Facebook and other social networking sites are effective ways to alert people of your upcoming gigs.

My only caution regarding these new tools is that you must do the core things (build a following organically, have great songs etc.) before you will see any sustained long-term benefit from tools like MySpace.

Once you've successfully played a few club gigs, you have to begin timing your gigs. Too often bands over-play their home market. You really shouldn't play your home market (unless you're a GB band, of course) more than once a month (I'd advise once every three months or so). You have to make every gig an event. If you're playing every weekend, it can't be too eventful. What should you be doing during the time between home-town gigs? Get out and play in other cities of course. Repeat what you've done in your home town in the cities within driving distance to you. One way to accelerate this is to find an artist (or band) who is in a similar career place and musical style as you are and trade opening slots. That is, if you can draw 150 people in your home town and there's an artist a town over who is stylistically similar to you and can also draw 150 people, you go open for him in his town and let him open for you in your home town. In this way you can speed the process of developing a following in nearby towns. Keep doing this, in ever expanding circles away from your home base and pretty soon you'll be touring.

I'll leave you with the one fail-safe way to get more people to your gig: make an emotional connection with them when you play. If you do this and follow the other guidelines I've listed above, you'll build a real and committed fan base.

Former president of the storied Rykodisc label and founder of Slow River Records, George Howard is an accomplished musician, producer, executive and educator. He currently holds posts as Assistant Professor of Management at Loyola University, Instructor and lecturer at Berklee College of Music's BerkleeMusic program and editor and frequent contributor to Artists House. He is the author of Getting Signed! An Insider's Guide to the Record Industry and Publishing 101, both aimed at educating aspiring artists in how to succeed in a music industry game that at times seems rigged against them. www.artistshousemusic.org

TIPS TO NURTURE YOUR FANS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Building your audience and growing your fan base is your golden ring to success. None of the industry executives at labels, management firms, booking agencies, the media or retail can ignore a demanding, loyal fan base. Job number one, in that case, is to nurture your audience.

It is not enough to simply have someone come to one show. You want them to sign on for the long haul. You plan to be around for a while. You want the fans to grow with you. In order for that to happen, you need to care about them by providing them with something more than just the show. Here are a few tips to get your fans involved, excited and committed to the act so that they show up at your gigs often and they bring others to shows with them.

Mailing list benefits

Having a mailing list with both snail mail address and e-mail address is a must if you want to target your marketing directly to those who have indicated their interest in your music. Don't just use the list as a name-gathering device though, use it to help your fans feel like they are special and that they are participating in something special.

Create Individual sign-up cards to be placed on seats, at tables or handed out at the door. Ask that they be returned before intermission. Do a drawing from the cards for someone to win a CD, T-shirt or other logo-clad item of the groups. You will get more sign-ups and the anticipation of winning something is infectious. Do this at each gig and it becomes something to which your fans will look forward.

Be informative in your mailings. Share newsy items about the industry, something that you are involved with or concerned about as well as group information, upcoming performance dates and new merchandise items. Be creative with your information. Perhaps share the words to a new song to build excitement about the material going on the next CD.

Offer special mailing list only sales or discounts. Again, the fans feel special when they are on the mailing list and receive these special considerations. It drives more people to sign up when you mention this from the stage.

Be accessible to the audience during the intermission and after the show

Invite people to the merchandise table from the stage. Let them know you'll be at the merchandise table and would love to meet them. Don't be shy about promoting the merchandise table. Even though the merchandise table is placed in a conspicuous spot, a direct invitation builds crowds clambering for your stuff during intermission.

Stand near the merchandise table, sign autographs and meet the fans. When you make it known that you will be available to "meet and greet," the fans feel closer to you. Don't run off to the dressing room and then out the back door.

Meet the winner after the show. Make a special announcement that you would like to personally greet the winner of the drawing and sign the prize. This will get more people signing those mailing list cards.

Establish opportunities for fans to get free tickets to your shows.

Bring a Guest. If a fan brings 4 or 6 other guests to a single show, they can get a pair of free tickets to either that show or the next. This works especially well when you produce your own shows and have control over the ticket sales.

Free Ticket Opportunities

Free ticket opportunities work nicely when promoted through the mailing list and are offered as a special for mailing list members only.

Create a five or six song CD and offer it for low-cost sale

If you are waiting for the record deal but have fans asking for your music, make something available to build the buzz and whet their appetites. Charge only \$5.00 and make back your cost quickly saving the rest of the money for other marketing projects or the full recording.

Send your mailing list an advanced sample MP3 of new songs you are working on during your recording session

Again, this keeps them in the loop and makes them feel like they are part of the process.

These suggestions will get your juices flowing and hopefully spark additional creative ideas. The main point is to let your fans know how much you appreciate their support. As you develop a long-lasting career, fan loyalty grows when they feel they have a part in your history. Challenge yourself to keep the fans in mind when you come up with new promotions and new tours. Consider your fans at each turn and they will remain loyal, enthusiastic and eager to help you expand your audience.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

DEVELOPING A HOME BASE OF SUPPORT TO BUILD NATIONAL SUCCESS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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There is great advantage to concentrating the majority of your development in your hometown as you plan for future tours to new territories. I have always been a believer in starting your career in a central place, like your hometown or a town nearby that would be conducive to your career development. Then, expand outward systematically from that central point. I picture a stone dropped into a pool of water—ripples cascade outward from the center where the stone landed. This approach helps you build your fan base and business skills in a step-by-step strategic manner.

Let's examine some of the benefits of developing a home base of support.

Build performance confidence

Your home base provides a supportive environment to test new songs and performance styles. Hometown fans want you to succeed and will be encouraging of each new effort. Most artists will be quick to say, "There is nothing like playing a CD release concert for their hometown fans." As you network with other artists locally, open mic nights and songwriter's groups offer avenues for creative growth, testing and critique. Your first fans grow out of those creative groups turning out at upcoming gigs to fatten the audience. These fans are also among the first to promote you to their fans as your accomplishments grow.

Build a local reputation

Creating that, all-important "buzz," needs to begin somewhere. Some of the most fertile ground to begin that process is in your home base.

As performance confidence grows and you begin to play more often, a solid foundation of fans forms. When you work within a concentrated area such as your hometown, the word can spread quickly about an act that is unique and has something new and exciting to say. A loyal audience begins to grow that might be counted on to attend your shows consistently. Once a solid following is built in the hometown, it is possible to expect some of those fans to follow you to the nearby towns when you begin to expand your touring. A local reputation has a tendency to filter out beyond the home base as fans share their excitement about newfound acts.

I can cite many examples of major recording artists touring today that started by developing a loyal home base of support. One of the closest examples to me living here in Charlottesville, VA is the Dave Matthews Band. He grew a solid home base foundation before moving into other parts of the southeast region. We all watched as his solo gigs at the local bar moved to a regular Tuesday night gig at the local club with his band. He expanded strategically around Charlottesville and throughout the southeast region -the rest is history! He remains committed to Charlottesville today as his entire organization still lives and operates out of Charlottesville. They consistently pump funds back into this community to support local businesses and charities. All of this grew out of their original development of Charlottesville as their home base. The community offered their loyalty as fans helped the band gain a local then regional then a national reputation and now the DMB support the community in return.

Keep costs down

Touring is expensive and touring long distances can whither an already slim budget. When concentrating on home base performance dates, you're not spending unnecessary money on hotel, meals and gas since you are sleeping at home. When guarantees are low and sometimes nonexistent, additional travel costs can deplete your motivation as well as your budget.

HOT TIP: As you play more home base performances, consider creating a savings account for future tour dates out of the area. Take a percentage of each home date profit and place it in the savings account. When the time comes to launch a regional tour, you'll have funds to invest.

Daily routines remain familiar

You can comfortably go about your business in familiar surroundings when most of your gigs are home based. The interruption to your daily routines is only for the brief time when you pack up and go to play the gig rather than days of preparation and being on the road for just a short tour. You can continue working on larger plans and projects within your normal, supportive environment.

Develop business skills

Just as you seek to practice your performance skills in a supportive environment, you need the opportunity to practice your business skills and become proficient. Working within the home base allows you such golden opportunities. Here you may work on your booking, phone techniques, build your confidence as you negotiate with local promoters and draw upon your network of musicians for gig information. There is less at stake in these circumstances rather than those of intense road touring situations. You can ease your way into better venues as you develop the various aspects of your performance career and business savvy.

While home based you can also begin to create a network of potential financial supporters or sponsors. Here you are constantly in touch with local businesses and organizations that are becoming familiar with your act. You can take the first steps to contacting some of them with proposals. Once you have success on the home front, it will be much easier to attempt a proposal to a regional, state wide or national business or organization.

Develop marketing know-how

What better way to become familiar with the marketing game than to practice in your home base. Here you are already aware of the various print media outlets and probably know each of the radio stations intimately. You won't have to spend much time researching in order to begin any marketing campaigns. What is unfamiliar to you, can probably be gleaned from one of your musician friends in your now growing network. Developing a marketing template here at the home base should be relatively comfortable and easy. Once you have a working system for the home base, it is easily applied to distant touring markets with a bit of research thrown in for each new market. If you apply the concentric circle expansion plan, you can use your home base media contacts to begin networking with those markets nearby. It is very likely that the features editor at your daily paper knows the name of the features editor two towns up the road.

Similarly, your hometown radio and television contacts can toss you some names to help get your foot in the door at nearby towns. Once you've established working relationships with the hometown media, their network can be open to you for your expansion. Use these contacts that you've worked so hard to develop and who have become supportive of your efforts.

Now, I'd like to help you determine just how much of a home base you have already developed and what you might do to build upon some of your successes.

First, it is important to take a realistic look at your current position within your community or wherever you have decided to call your home base. I've provided a questionnaire below to help you do just that. Once you complete the questionnaire, you will have a concrete assessment of your current situation and be able to clearly see the next steps necessary to move toward your goals. I think it would be helpful to use a similar form every year, revising it to start at your current position at that time and then increase the venue capacities and touring radius as your career develops. This will keep you on track in a very systematic manner enabling you to achieve success at each level. This systematic approach will ensure that you move at a manageable pace, rather than skipping to levels that might prove daunting and for which you are unprepared. Keep in mind that "overnight success" is a long and steady process of reaching one goal at a time that often takes many years.

We don't hear about all the hard work of a successful group until an historical retrospective is produced for MTV, VH1 or some similar media outlet.

Take some time to complete the questionnaire. Be honest with yourself even when your answers portray a vision of your career that you wish were more immediately successful. The sooner you begin working with a realistic picture, the sooner you can take the necessary next steps to improve upon your situation.

Once you've completed the questionnaire, alone or with other members of your group, share the outcome and use it as a catalyst to generate suggestions for new strategies within the group.

Assess Your Home Base of Support

Have you built a local fan base?

Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____

List three things that you can do or have done, to accomplish this.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Do you have local media recognition?

Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____

List three notable media events that support your media recognition.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Do you have a network of other local performers with whom you may communicate?

Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____

List three other performer resources that you regularly communicate with outside of your performing group or ensemble.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Do you have a steady ongoing local performance venue or venues?

Yes _____ No _____

How many times per year? _____

How many venues _____?

Can you sell out the smaller performance venues? 50-150 seats

Yes ___ No___ Sometimes ___ Almost ___

What type of venue are you playing? _____

What is your average ticket price? _____

What time of day are your shows? _____

How much merchandise do you sell in dollars per night? _____

Can you sell out a medium size performance space in town of 250-500?

Yes ___ No___ Sometimes ___ Almost ___

What type of venue are you playing? _____

What is your average ticket price? _____

What time of day are your shows? _____

How much merchandise do you sell in dollars per night? _____

Can you sell out one of the larger performance spaces in town of 500+?

Yes ___ No___ Sometimes ___ Almost ___

What size? _____

What type of venue are you playing?

What is your average ticket price? _____

What time of day are your shows? _____

How much merchandise do you sell in dollars per night? _____

Are you called upon for local community events?

Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____ Often _____

Not often enough _____

List three such community events.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Can you estimate the distance to which your base of support extends? 50 miles, the entire county, the three neighboring counties, (beyond that it becomes regional).

How many people are on your mailing list? _____

How many of them are from your home base? _____

As you review your answers, there are a number of issues that may be of interest to consider. For instance, at each increase in venue capacity, notice whether the type of venue has changed and what kind of impact that change has had on your ticket price, the time of show and how many are buying tickets. As you grow into a larger venue, make sure your audience is following you to that venue. If you notice a drop off in attendance, review the venue's location, whether the ticket price has gotten out of hand or if the start time is inconvenient for your particular audience. These issues can be addressed and altered if necessary once you understand what is driving the change in audience response.

With each growth spurt, promotional requirements may need adjustment to reach a larger audience. Are you keeping pace with those needs? Has your media outreach extended to accommodate the larger venue capacity? You may need to add some paid advertising to your marketing plans whereas the smaller venues required a less extensive and less expensive media campaign relying on free promotion posters, press releases, calendar listings and some radio interviews. You may also need to create some incentives such as a ticket giveaway and a CD giveaway on local radio shows or MP3 download giveaway linked in an e-mail campaign...

Before deciding to move to a larger venue, have you tried to increase your appearances in the smaller venue? Perhaps a monthly gig at the smaller venue would help build your audience and be a less risky test of your fan base. Perhaps you are playing too often and moving to a larger venue while reducing the number of plays in town may be the next best move to increase demand and expand your fan base.

Have you explored alternative venue opportunities to help increase your local reputation and build your fan base? If you find yourself struggling to maintain a steady audience level, even at the smaller venue, you may need to try some alternative venues and get out of the one you currently play. By stepping outside the venue you consider to be the right one for you, you may discover new fans for your act, fans that may follow you to other venues. Check the city papers, chambers of commerce, local universities, fraternities, sororities, downtown foundations, local organizations and charities for events taking place in the near future where you may be the paid entertainment. It may be necessary to use these alternative venue situations to shore up your local support and move to the next level within your home base.

Have you networked with some of the other local musicians to create some co-bill concerts or asked to be an opener to help transition to a larger venue with less risk of low sales? By joining together with one, two or more local artists to create a larger event, you expand your audience by tapping into the other act's fan base.

They, in turn tap into yours and everyone benefits from the joint effort.

Make a yearly assessment part of your growth process. It will help you make calculated and innovative decisions to spark future successes as you develop your local and regional touring strategies.

Happy assessing!

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com

BAND TOURING USING GIG SWAPPING

by James Blakely, GoListenLive.net

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In the beginning bands usually play local venues. This is great exposure to build a local fan base, but there comes a point in a band's life when it is time to move beyond playing the local club. Your music needs to be heard by people outside of your city.

Many bands are hesitant to make this step, but it is very important to play outside your area. Exposing your sound to other areas builds your reputation. The problems start with money. Traveling is expensive. Housing and feeding all of your band members looks to be enormous, but it can be a very good investment.

One of the best ways to get gigs in other cities is to gig swap. Gig swapping in the most elementary sense is to contact a band in another city and find venues that they play and give them information about venues in your city. Now you can get more involved and actually let a band open for you at a local club and then open for them at their club. Some even get the gigs for each other. Anyway you do it, gig swapping will help you get that exposure in different cities.

First you need to contact a band in another city. I would find another music scene near you that you haven't played. You can do a search online for bands in that city.

I would try and find a band that plays your genre or style of music, since they will have the in on bars and clubs that you will want to play. Plus you want to expose their fans to your music. Part of doing a swap is giving your fans exposure to their band vice-versa. You will be helping to promote the show in your city for them in exchange for the same. That way you won't be playing an empty hall.

Once you find a band that looks suitable shoot them an e-mail. I would make sure to choose a band that has a good fan base, but has not started playing in your city.

I would also not just pick one. Try and find 5 or more, if all five agree then you could fill a whole week of gigs and make the money back from traveling.

You will be surprised how open to the idea local bands will be. You can even link to this article to explain what you are talking about. Whatever you decide to say I would make it short. It is better to open a dialogue then to giving orders.

Just make sure that both parties understand what you are agreeing to. If you are going to help promote, let them open or get the gig, make sure everyone understands the deal. That way you won't have any problems and you can make a good business relationship.

James Blakely was the creator of the online music community GoListenLive.net

CO-OPERATIVE AUDIENCE SWAPS TO BREAK INTO NEW MARKETS

by Jeri Goldstein, Performingbiz.com

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Acts looking to expand their audience beyond their known markets need to be open to new options. One such idea is swapping audiences with another musician or band. The idea is perfectly suited to acts that have a strong following in their own market. Here's how it works.

First, find an artist in a new market where you would like to expand, whose work you like and with whom you think you would be compatible. Second, make sure the artist selected has a strong following in the desired market. You are attempting to break a new market and it only makes sense to do this with an artist who can sell tickets in that market. In order for this to work, it would be optimal if the selected artist is interested in expanding into your market. Suggest to the artist that you will book and promote at least one gig or perhaps even a number of gigs in your market where you have a strong fan base. You (or your team) will negotiate the dates, do all the press and generally do whatever it takes or whatever you normally do to promote your gigs to their fullest. The other group will provide you with their press materials and will co-bill the show. All the publicity will include the visiting group and you will even try to arrange print and radio interviews for the group.

Negotiate a percentage or minimal guarantee plus some percentage for the act. Make sure they understand that you will take a larger fee and greater percentage since this is your audience and you are doing all the work to introduce the group in your market. In return you expect the group to do the same for you in their own market introducing you to their audience.

There are so many benefits to expanding your audience in this manner. When entering a new market where you have no following, you have little leverage to negotiate decent fees. This alone can be a major budget drain when opening new markets. By swapping audiences you enter a new market with some momentum provided by the other group. There is a likelihood of making more money; selling more merchandise and gaining a larger number of mailing list names to contact for return dates. Since the hometown group is doing all the legwork, you will have the advantage of hitting all the possible media outlets in the area as well as performing in the appropriate venue(s). All of this spells success rather than chance. How often have tours to untested markets resulted in a huge investment expense and small turnouts? Audience swapping can reduce the risks while creating a favorable collaborative effort where everyone gains.

You have a chance to learn a new market and build a reputation within it while expending little of your own energy. Save your hard work for the exchange tour when you host the other group.

When considering this method of audience expansion, it is very important to select a group with similar work ethics as your own. You want to be sure they will extend you every professional courtesy in their market, as you would do for them in yours. It is certainly no benefit to you if they are lax in their efforts to promote you in their market. Therefore I suggest asking the following questions to be sure the group you are considering is the right one for your audience expansion project.

How often do they perform in their home area?

You want to be sure they play often enough to have built a loyal following.

When was their last performance?

You don't want to schedule a performance on the heels of one just played. Make sure there is enough time between their last gig so the demand is there to see the group again.

How many paying people do they draw to a concert?

Obviously, you want to have a group whose income can support a co-bill.

Do they ever perform at events that are free to the public where a large crowd may gather?

For example, some cities produce free concerts in the parks or downtown malls. This let's you know the expanse of their popularity in the market.

What size venues do they normally play?

This will give you some idea of whether the tour to their area is financially feasible. Splitting fees at 50 seat venues may hardly be worth the trip whereas co-billing in a 300 or larger seat venue may accomplish your audience expansion goals nicely.

What is the size of their mailing list in their area and the nearby surrounding areas?

If they have a small mailing list, then again the tour may not be worth the effort. Select an artist whose fan base is substantial.

Who does the booking?

This is just good to know so you have a point person. If the group has an agent, there may be some commission to pay.

Who does the publicity?

You will want to connect with the publicity person to get your materials to them as well as arrange any interviews. You may also offer suggestions on how best to promote your group.

Do they get coverage from local press and radio? Have they ever had a feature article written about them in local papers?

This relates to question #1 as well. If the group has recently been covered for gigs, the media may be reluctant to offer more space for this act. However, with you co-billing, your act may receive the lion's share of the publicity in order to breathe new life to the hometown band. Be careful about this one, it could work for you or against you. Make sure they hadn't recently had a feature article in the main paper.

The above questions all relate to you as the host band as well. Choose dates for your concerts after considering all of the above. You want to gain the most from all of your efforts in both markets.

I've seen many acts use this method to gain new audiences. When all of the factors are well suited, audience swapping can boost your career in a new market more smoothly than trying to open the market on your own. The real key to holding the newly-won audience is to follow up with return tour dates.

Good luck!

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, [How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED](#). She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program [Manager-In-A-Box](#) and presents [The Performing Biz](#), seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at [www.Performingbiz.com](#) or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at [jg@performingbiz.com](#)

THREE METHODS TO GETTING OPENERS AND SUPPORT ACT SLOTS

by Jeri Goldstein, [Performingbiz.com](#)

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One method to expand your audience is to serve as a support act for a known main act on multiple tour dates or to open a show for a larger act. These are choice slots and many acts are vying for them. Sometimes you can get lucky and be in the right place at the right time. If you are more interested in process rather than chance, here are a few suggestions on how to go about landing some of these choice performance slots.

Whether you are attempting to open a single date or be considered as the supporting act for a full tour, there are three methods to follow that may help you land those slots.

Contact the acts you have selected as logical, compatible choices.

In some instances, you may know a compatible band personally and are friends with some of the members. This would be the most direct route to getting on a tour or single date.

If you were unfamiliar with anyone in the act, the next step would be to contact the act's management. Emerging acts, still building their own following, but much more established than you, often have a hot list of new acts on the scene from which they select potential support or opening acts. Get on that hot list. First you need to contact the act's management. Check on their tour schedule for an upcoming or recently played date. If they are playing locally, check with the venue, if not look on [Musi-cal.com](#).

Once you reach management, tell them you are interested in being considered for an opener or support act. Let them know you are very familiar with the act and why you think you would be a good addition to the show. Offer to send your current press materials and latest recording and some support materials detailing your activities. Be realistic, you may be one of many acts attempting to be considered, make sure you represent yourself well.

This process may take some time as you develop a relationship with the act's management. Be persistent. Keep in touch with your contact. Provide them with updates as your career and tours take shape. The payoff may not be immediate, but it may be well worth a wait if you have selected the right act.

Contact the booking agency

Acts may not have management but may have a booking agent. They would be the next contact. Approach the agent in a similar manner as you would management. As you build a relationship with the agency, this may also serve as your entrée if you have been looking for an agent for your act.

As you consider logical, compatible acts for which you may open, it is likely that those agency's rosters would also be logical choices to represent your act.

Contact the venue booking person

As you determine where you would like to play, specific venues in certain markets become important. As you identify these venues, you may find it impossible to get a date if you haven't previously played the venue. Asking for an opening act slot may again be a way of gaining entrance.

Find out which acts have been booked for upcoming shows from the venue booking contact. If you can identify a few of the acts mentioned as ones that might be compatible with your act, suggest that to the booker and ask to be considered as the opening act. Send your promotional material. Often, they will have to check with the acts management or agency. You can ask for the act's management contact in case you need to establish contact and begin your process with the management or agent as suggested above. I would first let the venue booker make the initial contact. Some venues have the ability to arrange openers for certain acts and sometimes they receive strict instructions from the act's agent regarding the act's policy on openers. If you begin to let the venues know about your intentions, they may keep you in mind when appropriate situations arise.

The opening act is so often frowned upon as being a bad slot. However, the opening act can be a very strategic position if you plan appropriately. I don't believe opening for just anyone serves you well. It is important that you consider which act your act is compatible with in order to play to an appropriate audience. You want to expand your audience, so your choice of main act ought to be one whose audience you would like to eventually make your own. Here are some further tips to consider as you search for appropriate main acts.

Select an act that is at least one or two steps ahead of you with the market.

If you aim too high, for an act that is playing arenas when you are playing 200 seat clubs, you are unlikely to achieve an opening slot. Even if you did get to open for a much larger act, your ability to really use the occasion to your fullest advantage

may be hampered by the fact that you are probably not ready to do so. You want an act that has a large enough draw to have some room in the budget so you can get paid something.

Select an act within your own genre of music

If you are attempting to gain a country fan base select up and coming country acts. If you play Rock, Hip Hop, Blues etc., select the appropriate genre.

Select acts of the opposite sex in some instances

For example, single female Singer/Songwriter, most often, would select a male act rather than another female singer/songwriter. The same would work for male acts. This doesn't always have to hold true, especially in situations where many acts who know each other decide to join together to create a special multi-act tour. The other exception may be in cases where a solo male or female act opens for a group or the same sex.

Select acts that you may have some personal familiarity with or even have a friendship

Start with people you know. If they know and like your music, there is a greater likelihood of them being open to you sharing the bill.

Make sure you are added to the date in time to be included in media promotions and added to any flyers or posters.

This will help build your reputation in the areas where the dates are played.

The money for openers and support acts may not be great depending on the main act's budget, the venue budget and your relationship with the main act. In circumstances where the fee is low, negotiate 100% or as high a percentage as possible on all of your merchandise. Many openers make up for a low fee with their merchandise sales when they have a large and receptive audience.

Don't over stay your time on stage

Be clear about your arrangements with the main act. Set your start and end times and be prompt. If you get called back for an encore, check with the main act before heading back on stage for an encore. Leave the audience wanting more rather than wanting you to get off the stage.

Try to arrange for a welcoming introduction

If you have any connection to the main act at all, it helps if you can be linked to the main act in some way.

For example, "Please welcome the XYZ band, one of ABC's favorite new talents." If the audience is made aware of the respect the main act has for the opener, the audience is usually more enthusiastic about the opener.

Make friends with the main act's sound engineer

Unless you travel with your own sound engineer, the house sound engineer usually is the one designated to mix the opening act. If you can get to know the main act's sound engineer, perhaps they will mix your sound as well. Sometimes you may have to pay them something. It is often worth the money.

Landing a support act tour can boost your career a notch or two

Make the most of it. Make sure you notify the media of any support tours by getting your tour itinerary listed in the appropriate trade magazines and online sources. Issue press releases and get your CDs to as many radio stations along the tour route as possible. This may be the right time to explore hiring a radio promotions company to get airplay.

Getting opening act slots or a support tour should be one of the many strategies used to expand your audience. Begin this process by making a list of acts you might consider appropriate main acts. As time goes on and your act develops, the list will need updating. There is no time like the present to begin this strategic audience development process.

Jeri Goldstein is the author of, How To Be Your Own Booking Agent The Musician's & Performing Artist's Guide To Successful Touring 2nd Edition UPDATED. She had been an agent and artist's manager for 20 years. Currently she consults with artists, agents and managers through her consultation program Manager-In-A-Box and presents The Performing Biz, seminars and workshops at conferences, universities, for arts councils and to organizations. Her book, CD-ROM and information about her other programs are available at www.Performingbiz.com or phone (434) 591-1335 or e-mail Jeri at jg@performingbiz.com