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## [Independent Rockstar](#)

Insight for Independent Musicians

# How to Write a Bio That Doesn't Suck!

Written by: [Scott James](#)

May 28, 2010 8:58 pm [14 Comments](#)



A bio can be a tough nut to crack for independent artists. So how *do* you write a good bio?

First of all, proper spelling and punctuation are imperative. Don't have errors in your bio! Have other people proofread your bio, especially if this isn't one of your strengths. (I've been guilty of spelling and grammatical errors plenty of times myself – just make sure you don't let yourself off the hook too easily. Proofread. Care. It matters)

Structure your paragraphs in a way that's easy to read. **Be digestible**. Giant paragraphs and run-on sentences are amateur and make your bio difficult to read – not what you want!

As for the content, there are many ways to approach it. Here's one of them:

First paragraph = **Who are you? – in the present moment.**

This is the first question on people's minds. Hit 'em hard with a good concise answer to this question. If you're a kick ass yodeler from Mongolia with the worlds largest mustache, who is well known for his world renowned backwards yodeling technique, then don't start off your bio with a story about how you took yodeling lessons at age 7 (zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz). Start off you bio with some thing like this:

*Joe Blow is more than just your typical man from Mongolia with a 5 foot handlebar mustache. He's also quite possibly the best backwards yodeler in all of Asia.*

Who is Joe Blow? Bam! There's your answer. **Compelling**, no? Elaborate further with a few more lines about who you are and you've got your first paragraph.

The opening paragraph should do two things. It should set the context for the reader to be able to process the rest of the information – a starting point that answers their question, “**who is this person?**” – and, it should be **compelling** enough to make the reader want to know more.

If you can't condense your story into a couple of tasty lines to open your bio, then you may have a bigger issue to deal with. You need to establish a coherent identity as an artist, otherwise you'll have difficulty



who is viewing your page to actually read your bio. **THIS IS RARE!** You are not going to get many people who like to read bios – especially long bios! It doesn't matter what's in it if people don't read it! Make it short and sweet. Be the exception. Be the 1 out of 100 artists whose bio actually gets read.

How do you get people to read a bio? It starts with how it looks. Literally. Look at it, without reading the words. Cross your eyes a little bit if that makes it easier.

People have gotten very good at sizing things up quickly. Information is EVERYWHERE today. We've learned to make very quick decisions in which we weigh the perceived time investment on our parts against the perceived **value** that we'll receive.

What percentage of bios do you read that you find **compelling** and entertaining? Most people do not expect someone's bio to give them very much pleasure. Weigh that against the amount of information and stimuli in our worlds that are competing for our attention, and then again, against how long we perceive it will take to read a bio. It's usually a losing battle.

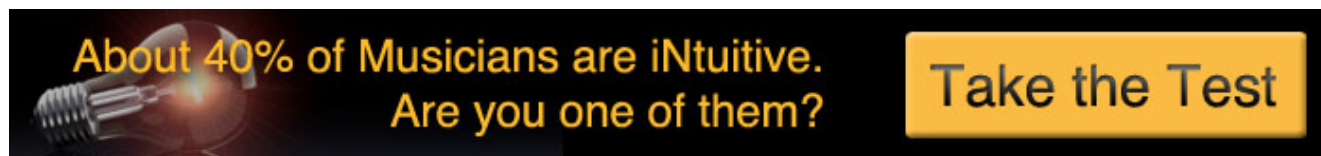
If you're like me, then when you look at a book of quotes, for example, you go right for the short ones. Bios are no different.

That's why I advocate short but sweet paragraphs. You want people's brains to say "yeah, I can handle reading that," when they glance at your bio. Then you have a chance to be **compelling** enough for them to read it 'till the end and actually get to know a thing or two about who you are. If your bio is good, and people actually read it, then you are way ahead of the game. This is rare.

You can always make a longer bio available if necessary, but I wouldn't recommend leading with it in most cases. If you follow my formula and you've got people complaining that your bio is too short and they want more information then, a) write to me, because I'd like to see that , and b) consider that a very good thing!

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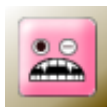
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## About Scott James

Musician / Blogger / Web Designer / MBTI Nerd living in Hollywood, CA  
[Scott James](#)

### 14 Responses to “How to Write a Bio That Doesn’t Suck!”



1. *Joe Blow* says:  
[May 28, 2010 at 9:59 pm](#)

I AM the worlds best yodeler!!! My mustache reminds me that me greatness is overshadowed by my lame bio!!!

[Reply](#)



2. *Dee* says:  
[June 1, 2010 at 9:59 am](#)

Nice one Scott, this is so helpful to me right now, cheers!

Dee

[Reply](#)



3. *Chris* says:  
[June 8, 2010 at 1:47 pm](#)

Awesome tips! One thing that gets me is the overuse of cliches in bios. Things like “born from” to describe how the band got started, “thought provoking lyrics”, or my favorite “tired of the current music scene” to describe how driven the artist was to do something different. Adding these things to your bio don’t make you sound unique in any way. I think the ultimate sin are bios that are written to look like interviews and the band is actually quoting themselves. “Our music is a mix of aggressive punk and barnyard sounds, yet gives everyone something they can relate to” says Joe Smith the lead guitarist.’ And Joe was the one who actually wrote the bio. I personally know bands who have done this.

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4. *walter t kuebler* says:  
[June 9, 2010 at 1:43 am](#)

this independent rockstar material is excellent.  
it really sees the music biz the way it is  
the point of view is positive and honest and very helpful if you want to achieve something while being who you really are

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5. *walter t kuebler* says:

[June 9, 2010 at 1:44 am](#)

it really sees the music biz the way it is  
the point of view is positive and honest and very helpful if you want to achieve something while  
being who you really are

[Reply](#)



6. [Scott James](#) says:  
[June 9, 2010 at 7:59 pm](#)

Thanks y'all. Glad that was helpful. Thanks for your insights, Chris.

[Reply](#)



7. [BagpiperDon](#) says:  
[October 12, 2010 at 7:33 pm](#)

Your article made me think about the bio on my web-page — let alone all other sections! I keep getting the reflection from friends that I need to shorten my writing, which tends not to be my thing and I know its a down-fall. Your 'write these 4-paragraphs' helps give me a guide to work from. I will be reworking the text on my website ASAP.

"First of all, proper spelling and punctuation are imperative. ... Have other people proofread your bio..."

"Literally" in your article is spelled wrong. I understand the grammatical errors as it is clear you are writing in voice.

[Reply](#)



- [Scott James](#) says:  
[March 8, 2011 at 11:55 pm](#)

Good catch! Thanks.

[Reply](#)



8. [Don Red Bear Watkins](#) says:  
[March 8, 2011 at 7:06 pm](#)

Very awesome advice. Thanks.

[Reply](#)



- [Scott James](#) says:  
[March 8, 2011 at 11:55 pm](#)

Thanks Don!

[Reply](#)



9. *Ana Pinto* says:  
[November 30, 2011 at 1:37 pm](#)

Hi Scott,  
Thanks for all the tips you've been sharing.  
Would it be possible to send you a bio I wrote for a friend's band and give me your opinion on it? I followed your tips so I hope I got what it needs to catch people's attention.  
Thank you in advance,  
Ana

[Reply](#)



- *Scott James* says:  
[November 30, 2011 at 1:46 pm](#)

Hey Ana, sure. Send it on over.

[Reply](#)



10. *Jay van Bruggen* says:  
[June 5, 2013 at 5:10 am](#)

Hey, thanks for the tips. I read yours and some likewise sites, and now it's time to do it!

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