

Title:

Successful Performing Artist - The 20 Things you Need to Know

Word Count:

986

Summary:

Tips for appearing professional & organised. Advice to make sure your gigs run smoothly. How you can impress venue owners and gain more bookings.

Keywords:

Live performance tips, performing, artist, musician, gigs, shows, venue, business attitude, equipment, stage, contracts, soundcheck, set list, audience, PA system

Article Body:

As a "performing artist", you want to come across to your audience and other music business professionals as being reliable, and professional in your work.

To do this, it is important to maintain a business ATTITUDE throughout all your stage shows, and when communicating with venue owners and staff.

1. Where possible, issue written contracts or letters of agreement in advance. Check with your employer or agent the week before the show, to make sure no details have changed.

2. If you are booked to play at a venue that you've not been to before, try and visit on another band night before your gig. This will enable you to check access for the equipment; where the stage or playing area is located; where to position your mixing desk and speakers; whether your cables need to be flown over fire exits; what volume levels are tolerated, and what kinds of music the regulars enjoy most.

3. Always arrive at the venue in plenty of time to complete a full soundcheck BEFORE the public arrive.

4. Always carry spares of things like fuses, cables, backing tracks, strings, or any other small item that could mean the difference between doing the gig or not.

5. Always take along an extra long mains cable in case the nearest socket is broken.

6. Safety first! - Buy yourself a mains power polarity checker (such as a "Martindale" Ring main tester) and a set of circuit breakers for all your backline amps. No matter how badly your guitarist played tonight, he didn't deserve to die!

7. Always create a "set list" for every show. This can be tailored to the type of audience that you now know frequent this venue (See tip no. 2). If you have rehearsed well, you will know exactly how long your set will last. Don't go on stage late and overrun your contracted time. The venue owner's license will depend on all music ceasing at a certain time. You don't want to be the one who gets the venue closed down!

8. Play your set without long gaps between songs. Only communicate to the audience what REALLY needs to be said. A slick presentation and tight performance shows how well rehearsed you are, and keeps your audience on the dance floor.

9. Rehearse a polished entrance and exit. There is nothing more unprofessional than a bunch of musicians meandering onto a stage carrying the remains of a sandwich or pint, then spending several minutes chatting to each other, tuning up, playing along with the record on the disco, jamming, smoking, adjusting their clothing, answering a call on their mobile.... The list goes on! Believe me, I've seen it all!
Use the dressing room to apply your stage clothes and make-up. Wait for your performance to be announced, then march briskly onto the stage and launch straight into your first number. At the end of your performance, the reverse should be observed. Don't hang around trying to encourage the audience to shout for an encore. Leave the stage as quickly as possible and wait in your dressing room to hear whether the audience want more.

10. Never be seen on stage in the same clothes as you were wearing in the soundcheck, or whilst mingling with the crowd.

11. If you are hiring a PA system, take your own can of telephone cleaner/sanitizer. Rented microphones are rarely cleaned!

12. Rehearse in your own time, not in the soundcheck!

13. Practice, the show thoroughly, but always leave a "breathing space" of a few days between the last rehearsal and the gig. Over-familiarity can make you complacent.

14. Always be pleasant and business-like when dealing with staff at the

venue. Especially with the person who is paying you! Don't automatically expect gratuities such as free food and drink. These are bonuses unless stipulated in your contract, where they then become part of your "fee".

15. Respect the venue's fixtures and fittings. Don't damage their furniture or wall coverings with your speakers and gaffa tape. Ask permission first! They will often be glad to fetch you some beer crates to stack your speakers on, rather than using their tables.

16. Don't get drunk, or high on illegal substances before, or during, the show.

17. Don't hang around the venue for longer than is necessary after the show.

18. Don't stop playing a number whenever a small problem occurs. Never re-start a number if someone in your band makes a mistake. You should be sufficiently well rehearsed for these mistakes to go unnoticed by your audience.

19. Don't play any louder than you absolutely need to. Not everyone in an average venue will be there to listen to you. Don't try to fill the whole venue with loud music. Just the area or dancefloor immediately in front of the stage will do! People will want to be able to hold a conversation in other areas, such as at the bar.

20. If you know you have a good mix and a member of the audience wants you to turn down. Pretend to turn a knob in order to please. The chances are, he just doesn't like that particular song. On the other hand, if the venue owner or bar staff tell you to turn down ... DO IT!! They know when it is too loud, after all, they are there every night!

Finally... Your bonus tip No. 21. **21.** If you have released CDs. Make sure they are on sale at every gig you do. Employ a friend, or one of your fans to set up a table with your merchandise. It is also a good excuse to get new people to sign up to your mailing list. After the show, you can even go out front and sign a few autographs!
