

Writing and Producing

A 32 Page Report for Musicians

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Introduction

You may think that creating your own music is an arduous task reserved for the polished professional. What you probably don't realize is that the concept of "writing and producing" is an attainable goal to set, regardless of what skill level you may find yourself at.

While the process of coming up with the next billboard hit has historically been a unique process for each individual, there are some simple steps you can follow that will equip you with the tools you need to master this art form.

The final product is a refined and sophisticated piece of music which reflects your personal emotions and feelings. It is certainly worth the toil one goes through to get to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

The next question on your mind is probably, "**what do I need to get started?**"

The basic necessities would require you to have a piece of paper, pen, inspiration, and for our intentions with this booklet, a guitar would be an obvious prerequisite.



What you can expect in the following pages is an in depth guide looking at everything from the basics of writing lyrics, to mixing in chords and how to copyright material. Hopefully you come out with a new appreciation for writing and an unparalleled passion for your instrument. Our mission is to convey the benefits of

creating your own music. We think the proof is in the pudding, so let's get started.

Step 1: Finding Your Style

With the vast array of genres, it is no easy task to find where you fit into the spectrum. Some musicians choose to specialize into a specific area, say Country music for example, while others prefer to wander off and create an eclectic mix of the various genres which results in a unique style of their own.



Regardless of your personal preference, you need to figure out what one suite your writing style.

The best way to do this is to immerse yourself in music. Listen to anything and everything you can get your

hands on. Some things you will truly enjoy, and other songs you'll wish you had never encountered.

It is best to keep your guitar away from the stereo speakers at this point. What you want to do is to develop a taste, or a mix of tastes, which you will eventually take to your instrument to experiment with.

This sounds very simplistic in nature. That's because it is really that simple! Sometimes we miss the most obvious steps and the reality is, if you think you've heard good music you haven't even hit the tip of the iceberg.

There is a false stereotype out there that song writing needs to be a complicated process and creating your style takes years of refinement. Sure, it will take time before you put your own twists onto the genre of your choice and individualize it, but you can start making progress today. Here is your first homework assignment:

Starting with 1940, find ten songs for each decade leading up to the year 2007.

Make sure the song selection takes advantage of the various genres around at that time period for guitar. For example, in 1940, jazz was in full swing. You might want to select some of those songs.

Make sure the mix you select is very broad. The idea is to expose you to music you would not regularly listen to. Utilize the internet to find these songs, many sites will offer free song samples or even the full version. This is also a good spot to find out what was hot for that time period because societies taste in music has evolved over time and has seen a lot of change.

After taking a good sample of each decade and its respective genres, try to discern which of them you want to contribute to. This will make the process of creating your own style less overwhelming.

Side Note: Alicia Keys, a world renowned song writer and musician, started her musical journey on a piano at the age of 7. Her musical influences that she studied in the following years before she wrote her Grammy Award winning album included classical composers such as Chopin and Mozart. Her jazz influences included Marian McPartland, Fats Waller, and Miles Davis. As if those artists were not enough, she loved listening to Biggy Smalls and Tupac! In later years, her sound became so distinct that many knew her writings before they even heard her voice! If you want a well versed role model who knows a thing or two about listening to music, pay attention to Alicia Keys.

Step 2: Have A Solid Foundation On Your Guitar

Some styles of music are very hard to emulate on your guitar; however, most people with a solid foundation in guitar principals shouldn't have a problem getting sounds that are similar to those styles. Enjoying the process of writing is extremely important.

Why would you do something that you find tedious? Not knowing how to get some of the basic sounds you want is going to be a point of frustration for you. To make the process run smoother, do yourself a favor and get caught up on chords, rhythm, scales, and harmony.

Check out some of our sites that can really boost your level of confidence on your instrument: <http://www.guitartips.com.au>

As a side note, we don't just make these booklets to advertise our sites. We want you to succeed, and we truly believe that if you are just starting out on guitar that this program is the best you can possibly find on the web.

Step 3: Know Your Basic Theory

Everything in the music world revolves around theory. It doesn't matter who you are, what you do, or what you think... it is a reality. Sure, some of your favorite guitarists may have never read sheet music, but what they were playing is all based off of theory and scales, which they did know a lot about.

Most songs are written in the key's of C, G, D, A, and E. All of these scales have a relative minor, which is a popular soloing scale to play on top of the chords found in the song. The melodies often utilize the relative minor scale as well.

Starting to sound complicated? Relax, we have a site for this as well at:

<http://www.guitartheory.com.au>

What you need for song writing is very basic. You need to know what key you are writing your song in, which is the most important choice. Some people's vocal ranges are limited to simple keys such as C and G. If you choose not to have lyrics and do a purely instrumental song, then more complicated keys such as Gb could be utilized more effectively.

Quick Fact:

An instrumental is when you compose a song purely with instruments and no lyrics. For those of us who can't sing, this is usually the preferred writing method. Think in terms of Mozart and Bach for great musical composers who created timeless classical instrumentals. More modern day instrumentalists can be found all over the world in various genres. For example, Kenny G is known primarily for his soprano sax playing in which he replicates melodies sung by many famous vocalists (such as Celine Dion) and puts them on his records. We can do the same thing with our guitars!

The next theory tool you should have under your belt is a good ear. This may sound obvious, but unless you can differentiate between something that sounds good and bad, writing music could turn out to be a disastrous experience.

The belief that you either "have it" or "you don't" is really dated. While some of us are certainly more inclined to pick out one decent tune over another, most can develop a good ear provided they work on it. The process of ear training is far too in depth to cover in a few short paragraphs. If you take the time to do your research, you can find many sites who help you accomplish this goal.

While reading and writing sheet music is an obvious asset during the song writing journey, it is not absolutely essential. However, what you do need is a way of recording your guitar licks and chord progressions so you won't forget what you have written or how you played it.

This is where tab comes in. Regardless of whether you are a beginner or just a little rusty, take the time to master this aspect of guitar. Trust us, you'll be wishing you took this advice sooner rather than later!

How do you learn tab? It is quite simple actually, just check out this free resource we offer to all of our subscribers!

<http://www.elmore-music.com/email/how-to-read-tabs.htm>

Step 4: Know How To Build A Song

The process of building a song does not start with deciding what your lyrics will be, or how you will phrase your chord progression to be in sync with that hot lead you recently wrote. As an alternative to this popular myth, the professional writer gets started with a fantastic idea.

Have you ever heard of writers block? It's a phenomenon whereby you lose all ability to write anything that resembles sanity. It happens quite frequently during the writing process, regardless of whether you are writing lyrics or music on your guitar. One of the common reasons for this block is a lack of inspiration. Yes, if you're thinking this sounds artsy fartsy then you would be correct. However, do not underestimate the influence of a great idea.



Why do we prefer to watch an action movie over a documentary on botany? Simply stated, the action movie captivates our emotions more frequently than the documentary would. The same principal applies to the idea. Not only will it provide us with the ammunition to produce a song but it will relate to the listeners who will be looking for something that they can connect to in your music. That might be a certain lick, verse, beat, or melody.

How are you supposed to come up with this great idea? Most writers will use experiences from their past to convey the emotion they want their listener to feel. For instance, the makings of many great songs stemmed from the emotion a father/mother feels when their first child was born. That would turn into a happy song. However, the loss of a parent to the icy grip of Alzheimer's disease could result in a reflective, somber song that focuses on remembering who they still are, not what they lost.

The possibilities are literally limitless. Write down some events in your life that you would be comfortable sharing in a song and start pinpointing the major themes and emotions associated with it. A song is the retelling of a story or feeling, so try to blend the two mediums together. That's what being a musical artist is all about.

It is important to note that by writing a song you are not obligated to share it with the world. This may be obvious to most but this booklet is using the industry standard for writing a song that is marketable. Yours does not have to be that. Many people enjoy writing and creating music as a de-stressor or for personal therapy to express pent up feelings that have been accumulated over time.

FYI:

Did you know that music therapy is an actual clinical technique utilized by certified professionals to accomplish individualized treatment goals within the context of a therapeutic relationship? People who benefit include Children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly with mental health needs, developmental and learning disabilities, Alzheimer's disease and other aging related conditions, substance abuse problems, brain injuries, physical disabilities, and people in acute and chronic pain. Think, you could make a difference in someone's life with your guitar! (Derived from American Music Therapy Association)

The next important piece of information to consider is the actual construction of the song. A song consists of verses, a Chorus and sometimes a bridge. Sound like a construction site yet? Hopefully it does, because that's exactly what you'll be doing in the near future.

First off, you need to get a hang of the lingo that is used to describe the pieces of a song. You need to recognize what the melody is. The melody is that catchy tune we all get stuck in our heads.



Typically, the lead singer is the one who is actually singing the melody, or in the case of an instrumental, the lead instrument. A melody must be consistent in phrasing. Phrasing is the musical equivalent of a sentence. In a sentence we have apostrophes and commas, and the same idea transpires for a musical creation. You want your melody to be predictable and captivating.

Simple is better than complicated. Always ask yourself, "Am I trying to get too fancy?" Innovation can be a great thing, but too much "stuff" happening all at once will only confuse your listener.

Aside from the melody, other terms that you should be acquainted with include the verse, chorus and bridge. The verse is a melody whose lyrics change every time it is repeated. It is essentially the core meaning of what the song is about. It gets the listener filled in on the details and emotionally attached. Never underestimate its power!

The chorus is the core of the song, and is much more powerful than the verse. For comparison purposes, it's an earthquake and the verse is a slight tremor in the earth.

It's lyrics never change. The bridge is an optional addition to a song which adds a component which is even more intense than the chorus, and is usually only played once as to not diminish its effect. It helps keep your song from becoming monotonous.

It is important to note that the melody of the verse will always be different than the melody of the chorus. Take a listen to some of your favorite songs in your CD collection. Notice how the chorus is always a different tune than that of the verse? The melody of the verse utilizes a lower pitch which sets the stage for the chorus to follow it.

Jon Bon Jovi's latest hit "(You Want To) Make a Memory" is a perfect example of this. You want to use the melody of the verse to create a desire in the hearts of the listener. From that point, the chorus cries to break out and let the rush of feelings flow. This effect should be repeated for every song, regardless of style or content.

The structure of a song usually follows the following pattern for today's hottest songs:

Intro
Verse 1
Chorus
Verse 2
Chorus

Bridge
Chorus (repeat)

...As you can see, it's not rocket science. Mind you, things can get significantly more complicated as you progress in your writing skills, but for now try to work with the above formula. You can derive more complicated arrangements later when you piece writing in with your style.

An arrangement is how the music is organized to sound. There is an important component to the above formula that I have not previously discussed and that is the intro.

The introduction is pretty self-explanatory. It usually consists of an instrumental of some sorts which leads into the first verse. There is a common misconception that the intro is supposed to sound weaker than the rest of the song to build it up for the chorus. However, this, in my opinion, is a bunch of foolishness. Your introduction is the hook that makes the listener come to a decision as to whether or not they will stick around to hear what you have to say. In reality, it's probably the most important component because you can't share your message unless you have someone to listen to it.

The intro should be as strong as the verse, if not better. Don't include a melody line, save that for the vocalist or lead instrument, but it should have a little funk that is different from the rest. Think of it this way, you have one chance to hook a biting fish when you are out fishing. The same idea applies here. You want to captivate someone in such a way through the intro that they feel obliged to listen to the rest of what you have to say.

Dynamics are how loud or soft you play something. Generally speaking, verses are softer than choruses, and choruses are louder than most everything.

A bridge is put in place for emotional effect, not volume, so it can be either softer or louder than the chorus depending on what the song calls for. This adds contrast, which we will discuss shortly. Think of all the songs you've heard where the music cuts out $\frac{3}{4}$ through the song and it's just a powerful vocal or choir singing. You think, "Wow, that sounds amazing!" Well my friends, that was a bridge.

With all of the aforementioned material covered, keep in mind that musicians are known for being flexible. These are the core components of a song, but you can always include extra verses, instrumental solos, and much more.

Step 5: Traps To Avoid

The rhyme trap. All too often, new writers fall into the trap of believing that they need to make every word rhyme. This is not grade primary where we need to make a poem about our Mom, because she is AWE-SOME.

This is the real world, not grade school. The odd phrase that has a connecting word that rhymes adds to the music, and gets your message across. Many songs thriving in the industry today have a few rhyming words because most rely on the melody to emphasize the lyrics and give the impression of rhyming. This lets yourself express what is going through your head more fluently without awkward phrasing.

If you still don't believe us, try coming up with an idea which you could write a song about. It's dripping with emotion and thought.

Great, now the hard part is done, all you need to do is make all of those emotions into lyrics that all simultaneously rhyme with one another. Give it a try and you'll see the perspective this trap is coming from.

You can have beautiful lyrics without making them rhyme, just have a creative melody that emphasizes the syllables in stronger words. Another plus to avoiding this trap is that you avoid popular clichés of song writing.

We've all heard them: kiss you because I miss you, let's dance and take a chance, etc. Anything that rhymes in such a fashion isn't always negative, but pay attention to what you're listening to and beyond the good voice and impeccable style you'll see these common phrases.



If you can avoid that rhyming trap by being very specific about emotions, and making it your goal to rephrase those common rhymes in such a way as to eliminate the uniformity of it, then you have my permission to use moderate rhyming to express yourself. You will still have better success with statements and a great melody, but hey, you need to try it for yourself!

The subconscious rehearsal trap. This can be rephrased as the plagiarism trap. It's when you write a piece of music and say to yourself, "Wow, this

sounds phenomenal!” when the truth is the reason you sound so good is because you heard that melody from another song a while back and picked it up by ear. The mind is a funny thing and that tune can come out in your music, because your brain remembers it as sounding good.

This tells you one of two things. The first is that you have an excellent ear for music, which is a great thing.

The second is that you need to be particularly vigilant when writing music to avoid stealing ideas subconsciously.

Get a few friends who listen to lots of music to be objective and ask if they hear any other familiar tunes build into your own song. We see professional artists who fall into this trap all the time on Entertainment Tonight and other various gossip magazines.

They have a new catchy tune which is making millions and then it's discovered that it is conveniently similar to a popular song in the 60's that slipped away from the ears of the world.

The artists who wrote the original piece of music sue, get lots of money, and then the artist who made the mistake loses street credibility. Not good for anyone except the person you stole it from because they get rich off of you.

This whole musical phenomenon that we're speaking of actually has a psychological term called persistence. Researchers are actively looking at the neural mechanisms behind the reasons why we get songs "stuck" in our heads. Kind of cool huh?

This is the bottom line - Never plagiarize anything. Period.

This is a bad idea for reasons too great to list here, but the main one is copyright infringement. Even on a small scale, you can be in financial ruin for the rest of your life as a result of selecting a few choice lyrics.



Many musicians only write for fun with no intent on publishing, which is fine. But the moment that song reaches the public in any respectable number, you need to reconsider playing that particular song. It only takes once for a record company to hit you with a nice fat bill and a lawyer right behind it!

With that said, this opens the perfect opportunity to offer advice to the brand new song writer. A great technique to learn how to write songs and create captivating lyrics is to do what is known as "Ghost writing". This is where you take your favorite song, keep the music and melody, but put your own words to it.

Obviously sharing that with the public on a CD would be a bad idea for the reasons listed above, but it does help you gain valuable experience in honing your craft. There are even stories of professional musicians who use this learning technique as a standard step of their writing process.

After they have ghost-written a song, they then proceed to strip away the music, give it a brand new melody, and create a whole new sound which ends up being a original piece of music. I'm personally disinclined to the thought

due to the effect persistence can have in song writing, but it doesn't hurt for you to try and see if it fits your writing style.

The trying too hard trap. Ok, I'll admit, the title for this paragraph could use some work but we call it as it is here at Elmore Music. Some people simply try too hard to write a piece of music and it sounds pushed and misplaced.



As musicians, we need to flow with the music's natural beat and fit lyrics and melodies that suite the song. Often, we over complicate everything. There's an old saying with playing guitar that any song worth playing only has three chords. While this may be a little far fetched, there is some

truth to that. Keep your chord progressions short and to the point, along with your lyrics.

In the end, you'll come up with something that has a nice beat and your listening audience doesn't need a Ph.D to figure out what you are trying to convey to them. Steve Diamond / Songwriter & Producer sums this up perfectly, saying "Strip away all the filler. It may take three, four, five, ten re-writes. You don't need five more songs in your catalog. You don't need one more. You need one great one".

Step 6: What's in a Name

The title of your song is not something to be overlooked. The name is the centerpiece of your song. Look at it as the pillar of meaning

within the confines of your emotional world.

It adds an element of intrigue and gives insight to the topic that your song covers. Titles are normally of short length derived from key words found within the chorus of the song.

If you can manage to conjure up a really fresh concept with a title, chances are a great song will follow in its path. Keep in mind, this is a general rule of thumb, but for starting out, try to keep it to the major words that show up in the chorus which incite a moving response.

Try listening to some of your favorite songs and see where you hear the title within the song. It will usually show up within the chorus.

If you're stuck for some inspiration with this area, take out your local newspaper. Check out the headlines that pop out. Some are funny, some are serious. Mix up some words and see what you can come up with, it may just be the next hit song!

Step 7: Contrast the Colors on Your Canvas

Contrast is a term that many songwriters unfortunately forget. We've all heard songs that just make you think, "Gee, that's a lot of stuff happening all at once" and the songs where "I wish this thing would rock out!"

The key to good songwriting is to contrast between various intensities and dynamics.

With that said, you have a few tools in your arsenal that you can utilize to add contrast to an otherwise bland, or muddy song.

The first is rhythm, which is the backbone of your song. Regardless of whether you use drums with a band, or an acoustic guitar, you have control of the beat. This means that you can control how fast a song moves, how pumped up the song feels, and how catchy it is. A perfect example of the power of rhythm can be seen on Avril Lavigne's latest hit "Girlfriend". Despite being a pop example, this hit shows how powerful rhythm can be. Without it, her song would be toast.

Harmony is yet another component you can use. We haven't discussed harmony thus far due to other issues a guitarist is commonly faced with. Now it's time to deal with another point to remember: harmony is the melody sung three notes higher.

This is what you'll hear backup singers belting out to support the lead singer.

You might also hear it when an electric guitar solos over a singer. It's very important because it adds fullness to the song. There are many possibilities for harmony, so you can switch up the feel of your song a couple of times while keeping the rhythm (your backbone) steady.

Harmony can be played on the guitar as well. Although too in depth to cover in this booklet, all chords have a harmony to accompany them. Playing two different sets of chords in tandem that sound beautiful really has an impact. Jazz is notorious for this, although every genre employs harmonic chord building to some extent.

Step 8: Master the Art Of Literacy

No, this is not an insult. Remember the days when you were in school and you needed to know what similes and hyperboles were? Well, welcome back to your worst nightmare... the return of poetic devices!

While we are trying to aim for a guitarist based audience, I would be remiss not to mention the importance of English literary devices in the use of lyrical writing for those of us who enjoy putting words to our musical tunes. To start, let's get refreshed on the terms and definitions:

Simile – The comparison of two things using words such as "like", "as", or "than". Specific words can also be used to summarize the comparison.

Metaphor – Comparing two unlike things without the use of "like" or "as". The use of the metaphor uses two objects in order to give more clarity to one of the objects. Phrases such as "to be", "is" and "was" are used to link

the two objects. This is one of the most effective song writing devices you can employ.

Here is a great example of metaphorical language being put into action to describe waves:

"The winds were ocean waves, thrashing against the trees limbs. The gales remained thereafter, only ceasing when the sun went down. Their waves clashed brilliantly with the water beneath, bringing foam and dying leaves to the shore." (<http://www.writesville.com>)

Symbolic language – An object that has meaning beyond its literal value. For instance, a regular shoe box could hold the innermost secrets of an emotionally crushed child. This could be conveyed in a song, and we would know as listeners that this shoe box is much more important than its regular purpose of storing shoes.

Personification – Giving human feelings to inanimate objects. For example, "The clouds swirled in approval of our love." It is essentially pairing human traits or characteristics with classically non-human things, objects, or thoughts.

Alliteration – Using the same word sounds over again.

Onomatopoeia – A word that sounds similar to the word it represents, such as BANG. These words imitate sounds.

Assonance – The repetition of vowel sounds.

Take all of the above definitions and really think about where they can be used within the writing process. They are extremely helpful in allowing you to express your emotions in a creative way that the listening audience can appreciate. While the above terms sound very fancy, they are things that we say everyday. Practice is the only real way to engrain them in your mind. The application is much more exciting than the talk that precedes it.

Step 9: How to Construct Melodies

One could easily assume that creating melodies is as simple as picking a key in addition to a scale that fits the feel of the music and BAM you're all done! If only life were that simple, we would not need creativity!

Here is something that many of your musical friends probably don't realize: good melodies use a variety of notes, not all of which fit within one particular key signature.

If we allow the melody to be dedicated within the constraints of a certain scale, you exclude the possibility for other notes to add color and contrast.

Playing the scale, regardless of type, doesn't sound very appealing when played consecutively. Nevertheless,



practice and learn as many scales as possible on your guitar.

Why?

The answer is quite simple, you extend your musical vocabulary to allow for the growth of your lyrical vocabulary. Using the notes found within a key signature in conjunction with some cool scales and perhaps the odd accidental will really make a melody pop out at you. This is important because the sound need to be distinct from the rest of the band, regardless of whether or not the melody is being played or sung.

With the theory aspect of melodies set aside, other considerations need to be addressed. As we previously eluded to, the verse melody is different from the chorus melody.

Pick out the notes in the verse that are relatively high and low in pitch. Now go do the same for the chorus. The rule of thumb is that your chorus should be higher in pitch than your verse. If you can't read music (see how handy this skill is becoming?) try listening for those sounds.

If the melody of your verse seems to mimic that of the chorus, all hope is not lost.

What you need to do in order to compensate is really build the chorus instrumentally and make it sound a lot fuller than the verse. If you master how to use a lower pitched verse and higher pitched chorus in unison with a great instrumental build leading into your chorus you have a fantastic song on your hands. Take Lifehouse's latest hit "First Time" for the perfect example of using a higher pitched chorus backed by powerful instrumental support.

When you insert a higher pitched note, it signals to the listening audience that there is an emotional intensity to that particular part of the song. It also illustrates the priority of issues that you want to send through in your story. In other words, the high notes are telling people to listen up because this part of the song is important to you.

The last point you should work on remembering is that the key note of your song should be reserved for the chorus. In other words, if your song is in G, use chords other than G in the verses and emphasize the G chord in the chorus. That's not to say you can't reuse some chords you used in the verse but the Chorus is the heart of the song just like the tonic, or key note, is the heart of a key. You'll find that remembering that simple step will really enhance your sound.

Step 10: Sharing Your Music with The World

Looking back to our childhoods, we have all dreamt of becoming a world famous guitarist and selling millions of records at some point in our lives. However, when we were old enough to understand that it wasn't as simple as we originally thought, many of us gave up.

While creating music for personal use is highly beneficial and a lot of fun, there are some of you who have a desire to take it further. This does not mean that those of us who choose not to hit the recording studio are not talented in our respective crafts, it merely means that some prefer the stage over the couch. That doesn't always equate to more talent, I've seen a lot of very talented musicians keep their personal writings private.

Writing music presents a new spin on an old trick. You are not simply a band trying to get famous, you are a person trying to connect with other human beings through your individual experiences.

That's a powerful concept to grasp. That emotional attachment can lead to some pretty severe disappointment and anger for those who are not chosen to make the headlines. Prepare yourself for the reality that you might not be able to quit your day job for a while.

It's true, record companies aren't particularly nice and they do tend to hurt people's feelings. It's a dog eat dog world out there and sometimes it's not what you know rather who you know. Don't lose all hope; there are plenty of guiding principals for you to follow. First off, keep these four things in mind:

If making money is your objective, then you need to reevaluate your motives before you decide to pursue a record contract because it might be a little while before you see any of the green stuff.



Are you made of the right stuff?

Not every musician is suited for this industry. There are plenty of other options such as home recording or renting studio time. You may want to run your own show and contracts with larger labels restrict what you can and cannot do.

Do not think that you're the best in the world. They can survive without you on their roster.

The truth is, these labels literally see thousands of bands and people like yourself every year. Coming across as confident and well put together will be the selling point to the executives who take a look at you. Arrogance will be a one-way ticket to playing local battle of the bands for the rest of your life.

Talent is a key point that you will want to focus on and I can't emphasize it enough. Take the time to perfect your songs and make them flawless. Whether you're a soloist or in a band, you need to know what you are doing.

Just because you don't sound that great now doesn't mean you won't in a few years time but it certainly means that you shouldn't be knocking on the door of EMI records asking them for a deal.

You don't want to make a fool of yourself this early in the game because at some point when you're truly are ready for the public eye, they'll look at your previous history and write you off.

When you put together a band, or start playing an instrument for that matter, you don't practice in your garage or living room for two years and then go to a record label, get signed and head out on tour in five months. What you need to do is practice in your garage or living room for those two years, while simultaneously getting a reputation in your community.

The smaller stuff is where you lay your foundation and it can determine your future success. Once you have your act down, head out into your local community.

Play wherever you can get access to. Local charity fundraisers, battle of the bands, clubs, bars, dances, and coffee houses are all great places to start. It provides valuable feedback for the new writer and can help you improve your material and feel out what sets the audience enjoys most from your repertoire. It also builds much needed self-esteem and confidence.

If you live in a bigger city where there are tonnes of bands around every corner, collaborate with them and see if some of the more experienced bands would be interested in letting you open up a show for them.

Plus, the more you can be exposed to writers and composers who are better than you, the shorter your learning curve will become.

When you really start to get a strong local fan base, they're going to want to hear your music more and more. This would be a good time to rent a recording studio and record a demo CD. A demo CD has roughly 3 songs on it and is used for promotional purposes. It's a great tool to feed your hungry fans with your music. It also shows record executives what you're all about.

The next step for your band will be getting a manager. Your purpose is to entertain and worry about building a repertoire, not having to book gigs. A good manager will take over the task of finding you great places to play, looking into getting a hold of the right record labels, as well as building your reputation.

As with everything else in the music business, managers cost money too. Their commission will vary from person to person. The more successful bands they have under their belt, the more they tend to charge.

In these cases, you're going to want to go with the manager who has the best track record and the most successful bands. Reputation and character is key when it comes to your manager's track resume.

Getting a manager can be tricky. In many cases, they will come to you. If they don't, you can always ask musical institutions in your area or consult the phone books for agencies that will hook you up with the right person.

Many bands decide to go out on their own without a manager because money is too tight... which is understandable. Some of them have done quite well and made it big.

However, you need to be cautious because record labels are more likely to respond and at least take a look at you if they see that someone is managing your band. Basically, it can be seen as a sign of professionalism.



Hopefully by this point, you have received some cool press attention from your local paper or news station. You'll want to document this because you're going to want to add that to your press kit. This is what you will finally end up sending to record labels.

Press not only proves what you have been up to but also shows that you can get attention on your own, without fancy marketing. This is vital for a record company who really doesn't want to spend more money than necessary convincing people to check out your music.

While we're on the topic of press kits, now would be a good time to tell you what you should include in this package. This is essentially your chance to shine. Here's a list of the best things to include:

Your demo CD with approximately 3 songs. Do not send a tape! Some reps will listen to tapes but some choose not to. You do not want to take that chance.

A photo of your band. Take the time to get something decent done. The best bang for your buck is tapping into your local community college and ask for a student photographer.

You set the price for a certain number of photos. You will normally get near professional results at a quarter of the price. Basically, it beats the heck out of Wal*Mart or your Mom's camera. A black and white 8 x 10 will be sufficient for your package.

A one page resume that lists the places you've played, what you are capable of and some cool details of your band (perhaps you have a python that travels with you or you're all related.)

This page needs to be extremely well laid out. Make it concise and an easy read. You want to sell yourselves and make the band sound interesting,

don't bore them! This is your resume at its finest. You will want your lyrics attached as well.

Press clippings from newspaper. If you have a great news story you taped from a T.V. station, you can send that along as well. It would be best if you could get it onto DVD as the reps would be more inclined to take a look at something that isn't bulky.

All of the pertinent contact information of the person sending this and your manager's business card.

Now comes the time where you contact a record label. You will want to research which labels you send your press kit to. If you're a hardcore rock band, you won't want to be going to a label that is primarily known for producing pop acts. The people in charge of finding the talent and getting them the record deal are called A&R reps.

A&R is an acronym for "Artist and Repertoire." They will review your package and see if there's potential. These reps work hard for their money and end up receiving thousands of packages each year. What that means is that it doesn't take much for your package to get rejected so be picky.

The general consensus amongst A&R reps is that you won't go to them, they'll go to you. I still advise that you send the kit along. Even feel free to call their office and follow up a few months later if you haven't heard anything by that point in time.

If there are new developments in your career, let them know. If you're playing a gig that's close to their location, then send them passes to get in and see you play.

The key is to hit labels that are interested in your type of music and try to send off a kit to a number of different labels. Hopefully after all of this hard work you are offered a contract.

This is where an art turns into a science. I highly advise that you hire an entertainment attorney to accompany your band to your meetings with the record executives. The contracts are quite lengthy and complex but the bottom line is that you don't want to get ripped off. If the deal isn't right for you, then don't take it.

You may be thinking "This is my only chance!" Never fear, this is the point where you go to the competition. Money can be a complicated thing in the recording business so you want to make sure that you get your fair share.

Your original material is like gold and those lyrics must be guarded. With the quick signing of a deal, you could lose rights to your songs, and never really "own" them again. Like mentioned before, it truly does differ from company to company but the bottom line is to protect you.

Lastly, it is extremely important for you to realize that there is a huge market for writers who are willing to sell their songs.

Lyrics are the hottest commodity on the market seeing as the vast majority of bands will not write their own music.

The beauty of this is sustainable income due to royalties and licensing agreements. Every record sold gives you a percentage of profit for your song.

There is also a vast array of other deals where you sell all your rights to the song for a lump sum, which can be an attractive option if it is being sold to a popular band that will net a higher selling price.

Nashville has been the origin of dreams for many writers, so doing a few Google searches on this topic could be of use for you if you don't like the limelight but love sharing your music.

If you want to protect your music from plagiarism and you aren't already engaged in a record or publishing deal, get your material copyrighted. This should be done from the beginning anyhow, seeing as it can be amended if you chose to sell your material.

This is a topic reserved for a lawyer office due to the varying regulations around the world. A copyright has the same meaning universally, but the policy that gets you there may differ.

In conclusion, we hope that this booklet has gotten you thinking about the benefits of writing and producing your own music. While only scratching the surface of what there is to cover, you now have the resources to start writing and get your feet off of the ground.

Best of luck in your future musical endeavors and never give up. Keep practicing and learning, you'll never regret the knowledge that you acquire!