

Welcome To The Music Industry

You Can't Forget That It's A Business

by Marc Dicciani

If someone were to ask you, “Would you rather have a career in the music industry or a career as a drummer?” what would you answer? Most young musicians might say something like, “I don’t want to work in the music industry. I want to *play* music.”

That answer might have been appropriate thirty or forty years ago, when things were very different. But today, all of us—pro performers, garage band players, teachers, arrangers, programmers, songwriters, product reps, magazine publishers, record producers, and managers—are part of the “music industry,” whether we like it or not. If you are now (or you plan on) making any money in music as a professional, amateur, or hobbyist, you are already *in* the music business.

snare drum sound. The young emerging band that composes their own music had better understand what rights they are giving away as they contemplate signing a contract with a music publisher or a record company. And their drummer needs to know whether he has any rights to the songs that the guitarist and lead singer write during band rehearsals.

Anyone who dreams of a career as a drummer owes it to him or herself to learn what the “music industry” truly is and how it works. In addition, there is a whole range of ethical, moral, procedural, and practical issues that successful professionals must deal with almost every day. It’s not just about protecting your rights and respecting the rights of others. It’s also about creatively and personally combining all of these elements in a way that will ensure a successful and fulfilling career with countless exciting opportunities.

Musicians are, and forever will be, inextricably linked in a vast network with professionals in many different fields. Our careers are dependent on effective interaction with these individuals, knowledge of what they do, and an ability to identify and take advantage of real opportunities where and when they exist. Every successful musician I know of is multi-faceted, finding satisfaction and rewards in doing different things in many areas of music. For example, I know a drummer who teaches music classes at a college, plays with a local wedding band, writes music for intermediate-level percussion ensembles and sells it on the Internet, teaches private students using materials and books that he created and self-published, and writes articles once a year for a national percussion journal. He describes himself as successful and happy.

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What Does That Mean?

Here are some examples of how we are all “in the business.” A jazz drummer must know if he owns the copyright to his improvisations or to the transcriptions of his four-bar breaks. The show drummer should understand every word of the labor agreement she, or her contractor, signs with the theater management. The high-school band director needs to know within what limitations he may write a new arrangement of a pop/rock standard for his ensemble. The drum programmer should know if it is illegal to sample Phil Collins’ recorded

Recipe For Success

A full-time, diversified music career is within your reach. It requires the same recipe for success as in any other field: creative thinking, hard work, and smart preparation and planning. Let's take a closer look at each of these.

Creative thinking. As musicians and artists, we all possess the ability to think creatively, although sometimes it may need to be encouraged and nurtured. A popular phrase to describe this is "thinking outside the box." This means to not just look at things the way they are and accept them, but to challenge assumptions, re-invent "tradition," and take rational yet imaginative career risks. This can also be called "critical thinking," which includes reasoning and analysis.

Hard work. To my way of thinking, this is the most important ingredient in the recipe for success. You can't get there without it! But since you've already demonstrated dedication in practicing to develop your drumming skills, are furthering your knowledge by reading *Modern Drummer*, and have a keen interest in a music career because you're reading this article, then it's likely that you possess the passion and commitment required.

Preparation and planning. Education, information, and resources are the building blocks of knowledge. Most colleges now have courses in music business, or that focus on careers in music. In addition to offering these classes to their full- and part-time students, many schools offer them during the evenings or weekends to anyone. I advise you to take one of these classes. In a very real-world, practical way, they uncover many of the inner workings and myths of the music industry. They explain the often-confusing world of copyrights and contracts, and highlight many additional career opportunities for musicians.

In addition to classes, there are workshops and seminars on industry-related topics, presented by hundreds of local and national organizations. These groups also distribute information about careers in the industry. Most notable among them is the National Academy Of Recording Arts And Sciences (NARAS). Although the Recording Academy is most recognized for

its annual Grammy awards, these folks are also advocates of music, music education, and issues that affect intellectual property and the welfare of creative artists. You can contact them online and locate the names and numbers of people at the branch or chapter nearest you. They'll be happy to send you information, including schedules of educational programs and networking opportunities. Also ask them to send you their very informative publication, *The Recording Industry Career Handbook*.

The final direction that I can point you in is toward your nearest bookstore and the Internet. There are many books and Web sites that contain a wealth of information about every conceivable aspect of the music industry, including the business, legal, and financial components, as well as the creative ones.

Whether you're interested in touring with Shania Twain, producing records, booking your own acid-jazz quartet, writing tunes with your ska band, programming drums for film scores, engineering your group's demo sessions, becoming an internationally renowned recording artist and clinician, writing drum instructional books, teaching general music in elementary school, or playing drums at the local club, your success is interwoven into a large and interdependent tapestry of people who want the same thing as you. Understanding what each of these individuals does, and working together with them towards your mutual goals, will help to ensure that you spend your life involved in what you love: drums and music.

Marc Dicciani is the director of The School Of Music at The University Of The Arts in Philadelphia, where he teaches drumset and courses in the music business. He records and tours with jazz guitarist Jimmy Bruno, and has performed with Diane Schuur, Clark Terry, Joe Beck, Stanley Clarke, Doc Severinsen, Snooky Young, James Moody, Ray Parker Jr., and Lee Ritenour. Marc is an artist/clinician for Sabian cymbals, Regal Tip drumsticks, and Remo drumheads. Questions or comments can be emailed to mdicciani@uarts.edu.

