

Get Gig, Play Gig, Fly.

So, you're a musician and you wanna get out there and show the world your songs? Having trouble getting gigs and have questions about how to and what to do when you get there? Well, lets try this on for size...

Now, there's 5 things you are going to need to get into your head before you even start - and these are probably the most important things you should strive to master from the very beginning....

Preparation - Punctuality - Friendliness - Humility - Thankfulness

Yes, these are all what you could call 'personality' traits, but having the right personality and approach will be more effective in getting, succeeding at, and being asked back for gigs. This is more important than having the right image, the perfect songs or great recordings. If people don't like you - they wont book you! But lets go through them one by one so you know why these 5 seemingly simple things get overlooked so often. Lets go.

Preparation:

Preparation is made up of two parts really, the first half is about being prepared to GET the gig:

First of all, you're going to need demos. These don't have to be studio-quality super songs or anything expensive, just something for the venue or promoter to hear how you sound. There's no point emailing a venue asking for a gig with just a description of your band, no-ones going to put you on without hearing you first. Have you got a smartphone or video camera (or a friend you can borrow from)? I thought so - there's a demoing tool right there! Get your band together in a room and perform your best song to it, stick it on youtube and use that as your demo. It's free, it's easy, and with modern technology you can get pretty decent results. If you're a solo or acoustic artist, get on the internet and find a local 'Open Mic' night where you can just turn up and play a song or two. Not only is this good practice, but again you can get someone to record it on something and use that as a demo.

Make sure you've also taken the time to set up your online profile too, on Facebook, YouTube, whatever. Social networking is fast becoming the most popular way for people to

book bands and contact them if they need to. Be prepared and have it all ready.

Part 2 is, once you have secured a show, making sure you're ready for it. Know your songs! You need to have practiced them so much you know them back to front, know your cues, your chords and your lyrics. Also, make sure all your equipment is in working order and present. Things can always go wrong, but if you've checked you don't have a dead cable or amp or similar beforehand, there will be less chance of a nasty surprise when it's too late to fix it.

At gigs, often there is 'kit share' to save time between bands. This is where various bands or artists share equipment. Normally it's a drumkit but it often includes amps or speaker cabinets. Make sure you have checked well in advance about this. Never turn up expecting things to be waiting for you, it's polite to ask before the night and saves an embarrassing "No" leaving you stranded and unable to play. If you use someone else's gear, treat it with respect and others will do the same to yours.

If you're lucky enough to be old enough to drink, try to resist the temptation to calm your nerves by drinking too much. It rarely makes things better, and more often makes things more likely to go wrong... wait until after you've played!

Punctuality:

Don't be late! I repeat, DO NOT BE LATE!! If you can, be early, have you, your stuff and/or bandmates in the right place at the right time. First impressions are so important in the gigging world that you don't want to annoy the venue, promoter or sound tech before you even get there. Traffic jams and late trains happen, and it's not the end of the world as long as you deal with it the right way. Now, if you'd taken time on your **Preparation**, you probably will have already found out where the venue is located and have some form of contact details for it or the promoter or one of the other bands... no? Well how are you going to let them know that you may be late? Exactly. Each important thing connects to each other which is why all of them are important.

Friendliness:

People involved in music like friendly people, people they can talk to, laugh with, share the experience with. Being mopey, quiet or 'mysterious' has no place in up and coming music. You can only really get away with that once people need you rather than you need them. When you're looking to get on someones stage it helps if you know the stage and the person

beforehand. If you have somewhere in mind, get down there to a show, talk to the staff and, if possible, the person who runs it. Be extra friendly and show an interest in the place and it's current 'scene'. Once you've met someone and made a good impression, when you send them that demo they can put a face to the name and if they like YOU there's more chance they'll listen to your music and possibly like it and put you on.

If you've got the gig and got there at the right time, make sure you make the effort to meet all the other people you'll be playing with that night, show an interest in what they do, watch them soundcheck and show positivity about their stuff. Everyone likes compliments as it boosts confidence and builds bonds. One great thing about making friends in other bands or other artists is that you can help each other get more gigs together and can help each other out if something goes wrong.

BE NICE TO THE SOUND GUY!...

Humility:

...BE NICE TO THE SOUND GUY! So, you've got great tunes, you want them to sound their best obviously? The single best way to ruin your sound is to get the Sound Tech angry or annoyed. He or she is not going to put in the extra effort to make you sound the best if you've been awkward or demanding at soundcheck time. Be humble and accept that they, almost certainly, know a lot more than you do. They know how to set things up, how loud it should be and the way things sound in that particular venue. If you have a particular vibe you want to go for, by all means suggest it, but, politely and respectfully. Please and thank you apply here and helps a lot in getting them on your side. Your request may not be possible so be prepared for them to possibly say no, but respect that from them, as the chance is there's a solid reason why.

Thankfulness:

This is linked to all of the previous points as people like to feel appreciated for the work they have done for you. The promoter, the venue owner, the sound tech, the bar staff, the other bands...they all put time and effort into making your time on stage possible and as smooth as they could. Take the time after the show to thank everyone involved personally before you leave. Shake hands, smile, be genuinely thankful. Live music takes effort and late nights and commitment - often for no financial gain and just for the love of music. Gratitude is what keeps people like this doing it the way they do. Had a great time? Tell them you had a great time! If they did a good job, let them know!

The Bottom Line:

So, that all said - hopefully it all makes sense - once you've got all that logged in your head it's time to go out and try and get started. If you're struggling to find places to play then get searching and asking around. Start in your hometown, with the venues you know that have live music or, if you don't know any, get on Google and search for it. If you have a local paper (free or otherwise) get your hands on it and look for music listings and where they are. Talking to your friends or family might help too.

You can do so much yourself if you try, make your own flyers for your gigs, record your own demos, get arty friends to do things to package your music or edit your recordings/videos. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money.

It's important that you make sure you have fun doing it all and enjoying the experience of learning how it all works! Playing music live to people who enjoy it is a fantastic and priceless experience that affects and changes people's lives and you can play your part if you do it right. Start small and start right... and everything else will fall into place.

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Forward 4 Wiz Trust

Johnny Somerset is a gigging musician who has played for over 17 years all around the UK in many bands and to many different crowds. He spent a few years as a promoter, worked in a recording studio and also occasionally works as a live sound technician when he gets the chance. He has a passion for DIY music and musicians that dare to give it a go and openly enjoy it. He currently plays for Aldershot-based band "Moper".