

Secrets To Great Song Demo's

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Contents

Basics To Song Demos

- Intro
- Title, length and style
- The first 30 seconds
- Types of Demos
- Just what is a great song anyways?
- Lyrics that work
- Song structures that move

The Recording Process

- Recording basics
- Who are you recording for?
- How much production do I actually need?
- Do I need different versions?
- How much should a demo cost?

How To Pitch Your Demo

- Pitching basics
- Who do I pitch my demo to?
- Pitching to A&R Directors
- Pitching to Artists directly
- Pitching to publishers
- What do I include in my demo package?

Maintaining Your Songwriting As A Business

- Develop contacts with meticulous follow-up
- Develop a website
- Develop alternate avenues to pitch your songs
- When enough is enough

Closing comments....

Basics To Song Demos

Intro

Thank you again for purchasing this informative guide to song writing. Understand that this is intended as a quick start guide with no frills attached. We have mentioned the key points with not a lot of extra verbiage, so you are not bogged down in wordy jargon and needless redundant material. We have compiled the information with an assumed intermediate knowledge base of the industry already in place, while at the same time attempting to explain most concepts on multiple plains of understanding.

Title, Length and Style

With all of the writing on this topic alone, producing multitudes of ideas and volumes of information, we will concentrate on the most important issues surrounding song writers today. After all, you did not purchase this ebook to spend hours reading, but to gain relevant information in a quick formatted way to get going recording and writing great song demos. The title is one of the most important elements after the core of the song has been written. Some writers will think of the title first and then write the entire song around it. A short and succinct title is most often better than a long wordy title. For instance, we could have entitled our song to be aired on the CBS soap *The Guiding Light*, "If I Could Only Tell My Heart, but instead we chose "Who To Love." Short titles are easier to remember and easier to be said over and over again on radio or off. There are many books available on this topic and so much more could be said. Just remember to keep it simple, to the point, keep it short, rememberable, honest to what your songs are about and catchy.

Most every writer is familiar with song length and ideas concerning radio airplay and so forth. May we just remind you that airplay equals money to radio stations. You're 4 ½ minute song is hard to justify playing over a song that is 3 ½ minutes long. Unless there is good reason, it's difficult to justify airing the longer tune. Try to keep your songs under 4 minutes as a general rule and shorter if possible. Shorter song lengths are easier to pitch to acts as well, not that the length is the golden standard, but just a good rule of thumb and every act that is business savvy wants airtime.

Style is unique to every writer. Most of us growing up were influenced by the artists and writers we dug while dating our high school sweethearts. Keep in mind today's music style versus the style you either grew up with or still think is cool. Nothing wrong with digging the acts a few years back, and there's nothing inherently wrong with those styles influencing your music today as long as your music is a reflection of the style going on today and not just remakes of yesterdays music.

The First 20 – 30 Seconds

This is an easy point to make, but hard for a lot of writers to follow, but you must learn this golden rule if you are to succeed in your songwriting abilities or to make it as an act. The first 20 – 30 seconds has to capture the attention of the A&R director – it just has to. Of all the tapes they listen to, do you really think they are going to make it to the “cool” bridge if you haven't captured their attention within the first 30 seconds? It won't happen. Their ears are trained to pitch the right songs to the right acts because their jobs are at stake here. Remember that it's a doggy dog world out there and the record companies look at the A&R people asking what have you done for me lately or what hit song or act have you found for me lately. So they're not going to waste too much time on your song demo or artist package if it doesn't catch their attention right from the get go. Get their attention!

Types Of Demos

There are a host of types of demos and individuals to pitch your song demos or artist packages to. From the demo for the club owner or the demo for the A&R department looking for a record deal, your demo has got to be more than a “demo.” It has to sound like a master quality finished demo. There are too many individuals out there sending in demos that are more than polished, and are worthy of airplay, so make sure no matter what type of demo you are looking at, that your ultimate product shines. Many think that they can get away with a “rougher” sounding demo for club owners, etc, and perhaps they're right, but do you really want to make the mistake of sending out a demo that is second rate and not getting the gig over the other act that just plain has a better sounding demo even though they in fact are not as good a band as yours? Happens everyday.

Just What Is A Great Song Anyways?

A great song is difficult for anyone to put into words, because it's the emotion that is captured when a great song is played that captivates the hearts of the listeners. So much so that they will listen to their favorite radio station keeping an ear out for it, will go to their favorite store and purchase the CD and will buy tickets to this act. That's a great song. And it's different for each act and for each listener, but that common thread of actions is usually involved with a great song no matter what genre of music. Now on the unsigned side, a great song is listened to past the first 30 seconds, many times with a call or email requesting more material, and undoubtedly turns the heads and ears of the listeners. This writer or act will be looked at for a potential record deal and/or publishing deal with great promise. Great songs have a way of hanging around longer. They tend to surpass the time factor of not being just a quick fleeting flame of the frying pan, but instead are regarded years later as "man that was a good song" and continue to make that artist/act and original writers royalty money.

Lyrics That Work

Lyrics that work are regarded by many to be the ultimate in song creation as the pivotal point. It's one thing to have a great musical hook and production and another when coupled with great lyrics. There's a synergistic effect when great lyrics and music are married together. Great lyrics start with a simplicity that can be related to, sung to and felt by the listener. Lyrics that work are more than simply creating a few rhyming patterns and calling them verse and chorus. Great lyrics are honed usually with years of experience and with wisdom to know how to say the same thing that's been said myriads of times over in such a new way that the listener says, "How did you know I felt that way," or "How did you get inside my head." Some great lyrics though as we are all aware, just have a feel good thing going on – they're just plain fun to sing and listen to. If you are contemplating your lyric writing abilities, don't fret, just continue to practice and think of the key title line as your guide. Listen to great songs with great lyrics, but don't just rehash old ideas as many do and you'll be well on your way. There are many good books out on the market for the up and coming lyricist with many being exhaustive on the topic. We recommend buying one or two of these books and soaking up the information in an attempt to improve your writing skills. Always remember, no matter how good your lyrics will become, that someone, somewhere will

just have to show you how much they know and try to convince you to change them. Sometimes the changes are definitely needed, sometimes though it's an ego that needs to be stroked.

Song Structures That Move

We all know that most song structures are created by verse, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, chorus, chorus end. And that tried and true blue print usually works quite well. Don't be afraid however, to move beyond that structure as long as the lyric and emotion of the song warrant your proposed altered structure – keeping in mind overall time of the song and emotional awareness of the listener. Structure is crucial to the timing and therefore passion of the song which either breaks or makes for a great song in general. Song structure creates a known blueprint to the listener and therefore it must coincide with what the listener believes to be inherently true in regards to the credibility of the song. In other words, the structure better make sense to the listener and feel right to the listener no matter how cool you think the original idea is or was. We do encourage you to write in different styles and song structures to not only vary your song writing, but to enhance and build character in your song writing abilities.

The Recording Process

Recording Basics

Most everyone is familiar with the very basics to recording so we won't bore you with unneeded known details and concepts. What we do want you to be aware of are some of the less known or concentrated on ideas such as – Just because it seems everyone has a computer, hard disk recorder or some way to record, doesn't necessarily mean you have your ticket to a great sounding demo. You will have to make sure that the equipment is quiet, that the individual engineering the project is capable of taking care of basic recording business, such as punching in and out without leaving a multitude of breath sounds or recording artifact. You will want to make sure that individuals involved in your recording be they engineers, musicians, friends don't influence your judgment of what the demo is all about. But at the same time recognize really good musicians often times have some really good ideas musically that you should probably roll with even if you make a turn in the road in your original song concept as long as you stay honest with

the music and song. While we don't necessarily want to get involved with recording instruction, make sure your music is not so compressed that the life is taken out of it. Watch the levels of your reverb, delays, effects, etc – do they add to the music or clutter the music. You will want your vocal to be at different levels depending on the type of demo. Higher for publishers, lower for A&R but they still need to recognize the lyrics. Some A&R will keep a lyric sheet in hand, while others just listen – make sure they can understand the lyrics.

Who Are You Recording For?

As we just mentioned, you will want your vocals, while still audible, at different levels depending on the type of demo. You have 3 main types of demos. The publishing demo – you're pitching your music with the intent of the publishing company picking up your song or song catalog in hopes they will either sign you with their publishing company or at least represent you on a song per song basis with some or all of your song catalog. The level of your vocal, as previously mentioned, needs to be very audible and understood. You're pitching the song idea, not the artist idea. Next is what we'll call the booking agent/club owner demo. This demo is obvious and not much need to be said. Just make sure, as we have said all along, that your music, artist press kits, etc are above the rest in professionalism and that your vocal while still audible is slightly lower than the publisher demo vocal. The A&R demo is your business approach in trying to secure a record deal with a major record label. This demo has got to sing with the vocals audible, but set appropriately into the mix. These different types of demos all have different goals, and as such, will have different approaches musically and with your initial business pitch.

How Much Production Do I Actually Need?

The age old question of how much production. Some depends on the style. Country music, while much of it very commercialized, still lends itself to guitar/piano vocal demos especially with country ballads. Pop music on the other hand really needs to be a master quality demo and in some cases the demo is actually used in the final production recording. The production element is really dependent on the song and your analysis of the production will be the final verdict. Make sure no matter how much or little your production, that the production underscores the songs strengths rather than makes it weaker. You probably have heard all of the arguments one

way of the other in regards to extent of production. With all of the differing opinions and honestly it's difficult to say what's exactly the right opinion, we suggest researching your intended audience and individuals involved and see how much production they like. This is not easy and if you intend to send your reel to a number of individuals you won't please all anyways. We suggest that when in doubt, create the picture musically and produce in an array of colors so that the musical picture is fully seen. Most individuals really have to be spoon fed so why not give them the picture and not just a portion.

Do I Need different Versions?

If you intend to pitch your song to a multitude of artists, it's always a good idea to have a male and female version of your song. If time and money constrains you to one version, obviously pick the gender most likely to cut it or at least your idea of who has the greatest likelihood to record it. You may want to record different styles of the song as well if you see it going into multiple of genres of music. One neat thing about different versions, is oftentimes, the version you least expected to be the "cool" version, turns out to be the best take. Different versions tend to stretch musical ideas and grow writers musically – so don't be afraid to experiment in a different musical genre.

How Much Should A Demo Cost?

If you research the web at all, you will find prices ranging from \$50 on up well past a thousand dollars per song demo. While it's hard to justify anyone's expenses and so we won't, we will, however, offer some general guidelines. We at ReelMusician.com are probably lower priced than we should be for the quality of music produced, but we also don't go broke and we also offer great sounding demos that individuals keep coming back for. As a general rule of thumb, we would suggest that the \$50 demo is just that, a \$50 demo, but that the \$1,500 demo is not always worth the \$1,500. We don't suggest paying anyone more than \$750 per song for a true song demo. Record production and instances where the time element drastically changes to requiring more time and energy will definitely up the cost – and that's going to be more specific to the producer/engineer's perceived value and actual time involved. You should, but not always, receive a cost reduction based upon number of songs recorded. Try to negotiate this up front. Many production houses will charge for various extras – find out what they are and

how much. If you are using a local studio and will be singing the vocals, find out how much time is allotted for each song and extra charges per hour – try to negotiate this as well without coming across cheap. No one likes to work with someone cheap.

How To Pitch Your Demo

Pitching Basics

Most everyone has heard the word pitch or in other words to mail, call, send a demo, etc. Pitching your material the right way is crucial in landing any type of success within this industry. Pitching is fairly involved and time consuming and with as many writers and acts that are out there, you will have to be very visible. It's really not enough even after you have landed a publishing deal to just allow the publisher to make all of the calls and do all the pitching. Most seasoned writers who are on staff with major publishers will show up at clubs, signings and other visible events to shake the hands of the artists that they are trying to pitch their material to. You would hope that the publisher does this, but not always and they certainly can't be everywhere at one time either. So just know in advance, that you will be going to clubs listening to up and coming acts and shows put on by the labels, in an attempt to get your music cut. Pitching is all about being out there shaking hands, being at the artists showcases as well as mailing material and making the calls.

Who Do I Pitch My Demo To?

There are a host of individuals who might want to take a listen to your reel, but really there are three categories of industry personnel that we will mention. First is the A&R director from the major labels and subsidiary labels (most major labels will have a host of smaller sister labels under their umbrella). Second is the publisher. There are a number of different types of publishers out there, but for the sake of time we will discuss the music publisher. Third is the artist or act and we will include the manager and road manager in this part of the discussion. There really are a host of individuals to pitch your material to, but these are the three main types of individuals and categories that we will address.

Pitching To A&R Directors

Pitching your material to the A&R Director is usually the first choice of musicians and writers starting out. Let us say in advance, while its harder in some ways to get to the artist or act manager, that your odds of not only getting listened to are greater, but your chance of further act relations in terms of your music is greater. A&R directors pride themselves in finding the right music or right act, when in reality, they miss many a hit song or could be successful artist/acts. Many, mind you, are very gifted with their listening ears, while there are quite a few who just happen to land the job because of politics or what have. We suggest, by all means, to pitch your music and artist press kits to the A&R Directors, but with the before mentioned being present in the back of your mind. So don't get discouraged if you get a no or no response at all. When pitching to the A&R Director, you will want name of the song with your contact information not only on the CD but on the artwork for the casing as well. Lyric sheet should be included. For the sake of time and efficiency, we suggest folding lyric sheets and rubber banding them around the CD case for ease of having everything present for the listener. Include no more than 3 songs as a rule and only one if the other 2 are so-so. Give the record label ample time to get back with you, usually a rejection letter via mail and a phone call or email if they like what they hear and want to hear more of it.

Pitching To Artists

Pitching to Artists is a whole different ballgame. You might want to purchase a guide of management listings if you are to try and pitch to established artists – there are a number of them out there, just do a general search on artist management listings. If you are doing the grin and grip locally and have been attending artist showcases, then you will have your connection established to hand them a CD of your material. When mailing you material to an artist manager, make your pitch short and to the point and try not to act like an amateur just starting out. Take time to craft a short and to the point letter with no extras. Something like: **Mr. Smith, enclosed is the song, (title of song), that I promised to send you for the (act). Let me know your thoughts and if you would like to hear something else in our catalog. I know you are busy, so I only sent a couple of tunes that sounded like it would be a great fit for the (act), so just let me know if you would like to hear anything else. Look forward to hearing from you. Warmest regards.** Now if, in fact, you have more solid songs, you

might be a little more savvy, and make the last line a little more open like, **I'll give you some time to digest these songs and get with the (act) and perhaps, if time allows and it's alright with you, I'll send a couple of more songs that warrant a listening as well**, knowing that you are indeed going to send the manager more material. Give the manager ample time to follow up and then follow up with him/her if you don't hear anything from them in the next few weeks.

Pitching To Publishers

Pitching to publishers is fairly straight forward. You might increase your odds with the publisher by saying in your initial cover letter sent with your premium and master quality songs, that you don't need a financial draw and are more than willing to write without being a "full-time staffer" with the financial draws. Most writer/publisher contracts that allow for draws are drawn out of future monies received from airplay and sales, so it's not an addition to, but just a help in paying the rent while the songs are being written, pitched and hopefully landed with a major recording act. Send only your best material, limiting it to your best three. If the publisher is impressed enough, they will ask for more material. At this point, go ahead and press for a one song or two song publishing deal if you feel that they will represent your material well. It's all about visibility, so if they don't pitch your material, it's up to you to pitch it, which you should be doing in addition to the publishing company anyways, or the songs sit silently on the shelf. Getting a publishing deal, especially with a luke-warm publisher, is not always a good thing. Do your research and find out which publishing companies are really moving their catalogues and then submit to those publishing companies only.

What Do I Include In My Demo Package?

With all three of the aforementioned music industry personnel that we have mentioned, you will want to make contact with them before sending any material if possible, and then include the following: CD/cassette whatever has been advised – usually CD and send CD if in doubt, and a cover letter which is to the point and non-amateurish. Do not send anything else unless you are pitching yourself as an artist/act. Then you will send a bio, picture, and your cover letter which will be more inclusive of other information. See Artist Development Strategies under Artist Logos & Press Kits of the home page of ReelMusician.com for more information on

pitching as an artist/act. With the material being sent, namely the CD and cover letter, make sure and include all relevant contact information on both CD and cover letter. As mentioned previously, you will include no more than 3 songs, unless otherwise directed to do so, and only 1 or 2 if your song catalog does not represent master quality sounding songs in demo form. No need to include a picture or any other extras. They don't care what you look like as a writer, unless they are looking at you as a viable act, then we're back to Artist Development Strategies, info can be obtained as just previously mentioned.

Maintaining Your Songwriting As A business

Develop Contacts With Meticulous Follow-up

While developing contacts may come naturally for many in the business, most are not as detailed in their follow-up as they could or certainly should be. Developing contacts speaks for itself and we have covered this topic in one way or another, so we will not spend any additional time discussing contact development. We will suggest that you either use a rolodex type program in your current computer or that you buy one and there are many out there, or buy a true hard bound rolodex contact booklet of some type. You must treat each and every professional music business contact like it's your only one and follow-up accordingly. Keep track of when contacted, last contacted, general conversation and when to contact next. Depending on your musical business venture, you may have different categories. You will want to stay on top of your data entries – once behind, it's hard to get caught up again. A thorough rolodex of your conversations will not only keep you on top of past conversations, but will give you an outlook on your music business in general and food for thought in terms of any potential shifts in business strategies that need to occur.

Develop A Website

Developing a website can be one of the best tools you can use to showcase your songs, act and abilities. It speaks of credibility while giving you an avenue to allow visitors a sample of your music as well as upcoming gigs, contact information and a way to sell your CD's. Don't spend a lot of money and don't make it so busy that it doesn't work on a multitude of platforms with different load times, etc. Website content will be dictated by

your desired outcome and business in general. Are you a songwriter, artist/act, want to develop other business opportunities that coincide with the music business etc. We at ReelMusician.com are dedicated to great looking websites at affordable prices. Visit our website design page at ReelMusician.com for more info.

Develop Alternative Avenues To Pitch Your Songs

You will want to consider additional avenues when pitching your music. You might look at songs for film scoring, commercial audio books, custom IDs for TV and radio, TV made for movies, documentary specials, music for businesses that would like a custom jingle to be used in their promo material and in-house production pieces. There are a whole host of other musical outlets that most individuals, quite honestly, never look at or even considered. Don't let these and other potential musical ventures sit or be swept aside without some consideration.

When Enough Is Enough

There comes a time when enough is enough and either the song isn't right, the production doesn't stand out or the raw talent isn't there. Most of us are our worst critic and therefore do not need any more criticism. Just be honest about your work, the production and reflect on the creative elements in the song and make sure you're not spinning your wheels on a tune that will most likely never go anywhere. On the other hand, there have been multitudes of songs or acts, etc that were never given the chance with great promise and musical ability, and, as we all know, acts and songs that have made it with who knows why. Some great songs sit for years without any attention, while other B side songs, if that, are recorded from the get go. In this business there are no rhyme or reasons sometimes. Just be honest, and if it's a great song, just keep on plugging.

Closing comments

We have tried our best to make this ebook as succinct and packed full of useful information as possible. We suggest that you keep on keeping on and continue to make steps forward in your attempts in getting your songs recorded. It's easy to get bogged down and frustrated as you put so much effort into your songwriting career. Keep looking forward at your goal and make sure that you are treating your songwriting like a business. You will

have a difficult time succeeding if you are not dedicated and tenacious in your approach to the music business. Please feel free to email us at ReelMusician.com to let us know of your success stories. Good luck!