

## **Becoming a Self-Effulgent Musician**

by Dennis Winge

Whether you're wildly successful with your music, or you are feeling less than completely satisfied with your current level of success, it could benefit you to reflect on what becoming "self-effulgent" might mean for you in relation to your music-making. In order to establish any lasting success, you must cultivate an internal environment in which you feel safe, proud and happy.

Think about all the one-hit wonders of the world, of which there are many, but since they are mostly long-forgotten now in the media, we may have trouble remembering them. At one time, they were on top of the world, music-career-wise. They may have had tons of money, fame, and opportunities; yet only a few short years later they were back to being nobodies.

There are plenty of musicians who were very successful and sold lots of albums, only to be dropped by their record label shortly thereafter because that level of success was short-lived. Or what about musicians who go on tour with a national or international act, and play for thousands of people every night for weeks on end, only to come home and find it difficult to adjust to everyday life in their hometown? Beyond that, even, there are the famous examples of musicians who made it very, very big, and squandered their riches and fame into self-destruction and died way too young.

In all of these cases, and in yours as well, there is a common theme: in order to retain long-term success in music, you must become self-effulgent. The word effulgent means 'radiant.' This doesn't necessarily mean you have to be happy all the time; no one ever is. It doesn't mean you have to pretend you are happy either. It does mean that you have to find internal motivation that is not dependent on outward success.

It's good to be business-minded and have financial goals. It's also good to remain objective about your efforts and detach from the ups and downs of life. This advice can apply to any profession, but is particularly applicable in the music business, which, for any individual artist, remains very volatile.

Musicians who enjoy long-term success are the ones who are always changing and adapting, not to what they think will make them successful, but to their own inner vision. Yes they are practical, but also are devoted to their sense of what is musically valid and meaningful to them as an artist.

A particular example from music history that comes to mind is the band Rush whose record label, in the band's early years, was giving them severe pressure to make something more commercial. They decided, rationally, that their artistic vision was more important than anything and that if they had to return to their old jobs and way of life, so be it. They made "2112" which was even more in line with their vision and further away from what the record company wanted. It was a huge success, and after that the record company let them do what they wanted. The point here is that they

made a rational choice based on their own integrity and were willing to suffer negative consequences of that choice if necessary.

Long-term success in music also requires self-discipline. Just as it takes years to master one's primary instrument, it also requires years, in most cases, to achieve the recognition one feels one deserves. In the rare cases where the rise to fame is rapid, then self-discipline is required to sustain it. Part of being 'radiant' is being focused on the long-term, yet consistently active towards those goals. So, make your long-term plan, and take action every day if possible.

Every successful musician has horror stories. The difference between them and others is that they simply didn't quit. Besides having an inner vision and being self-disciplined, success in the music industry requires an inner calm, which I will refer to as "centeredness." When you are centered, you are not significantly emotionally affected by how well or poorly your gigs go, or how many albums you sell, downloads you get or 'likes' your posts on social media receive. You have a self-confidence that comes from within and is therefore strong. Accordingly, you always act in integrity, and are determined to succeed, so you persevere.

To sum up, being a self-fulfilling musician means to a) cultivate an inner creative vision from which artistic decisions can be made b) self-discipline and c) an inner centeredness from which self-confidence, integrity, determination, resilience, and perseverance all spring. Best of luck to you; shine on.