

## Dealing with the Stress of Booking Gigs

by Dennis Winge

“To Gig or Not to Gig?” – that is the question. Actually, it goes more like this: “How do you get a musician to complain?” “Get him a gig.”

My more advanced students tell me the same thing I also experience; that booking gigs can be stressful. Common complaints are:

- Venue owners or managers don't get back to you
- The staff changes at a venue you play frequently and suddenly you're treated as if you've never played there before
- They double-book on a night you're scheduled to play and cancel you, with or without warning
- They don't pay what they said they would or fail to fulfill their obligations in other ways

After all the time musicians spend honing their craft and developing a good set list, to be treated this way can certainly be frustrating. Yet, gigs are what musicians do. Unless you are strictly a songwriter or studio musician, performing is an integral part of being a musician. So what to do?

It may sound trite, but the only way is to look for ways to keep yourself grounded and centered. Find ways to keep yourself sane, such as meditation, yoga, good books, affirmations, therapy, exercise, sleep, diet. Beyond that, here are some other practical ideas for dealing with gig-booking frustration:

### 1. Detach from the results

As a performer, you know that you do what you do, and people will either like it, not like it, or be indifferent to it. Audience response is out of your control. So it is with venues. Some artists are more ideal of certain venues than others, and there is nothing wrong with that. Some artists may have a certain vibe that fits in with the atmosphere of a particular venue better than others. Some artists may, better than others, attract more clientele or at least the type of clientele that is more ideal for the venue.

This doesn't mean you should alter who you are and what you do best artistically to try and please every venue. Perhaps working more frequently at fewer venues is better than trying to work at a large number of venues.

There is another possibility, however. It could simply be that some artists (or their management) have a better relationship with people who do the booking at certain venues. Simply try to be one of them by: a) keeping regular but not annoyingly-frequent follow-ups; b) thank them in writing after they give you a performance opportunity, and again after you do the gig; c) look for ways you can offer them value

in your correspondence or messages, such as an article you forward or anything that you think could be useful to them, which doesn't have to be about you or your band.

In short, perfect your 'act' as best you can musically, and cultivate relationships as best you can, and let the results of these efforts be as they may. They will improve over time, as you improve over time. The only way to make real improvement over the long-term, though, is to remain unaffected by short-term results.

## 2. Visualize

Spend some time, either daily, weekly, or whenever you feel frustrated, visualizing yourself playing at the perfect venues, and having them recognize how valuable you are, and having all the details before, after, and during the gig go very smoothly. Visualize yourself getting more and more of these types of gigs. Visualize yourself having a complete stress-free and easy time with the entire business of booking gigs.

## 3. Think outside the box

Practically every musician and artist world-wide feels some sort of struggle between the 'art' side and the 'business' side of their craft, even wildly successful ones. Yet, we are all connected, and there is always a wide array of resources to help you, be they online or right in your own neighborhood. Perhaps if you feel frustrated about booking gigs, it might be time to think about ways to cultivate your own opportunities.

These might be contacting a community center and hosting your own event. Perhaps you could even book other bands as well and now suddenly, you appear to all your musician friends as the one with the gigs! Perhaps just reaching out to other musicians on a regular basis by email can make you feel more connected and potentially lead to some opportunities. In short, the more proactive you can be, the better.