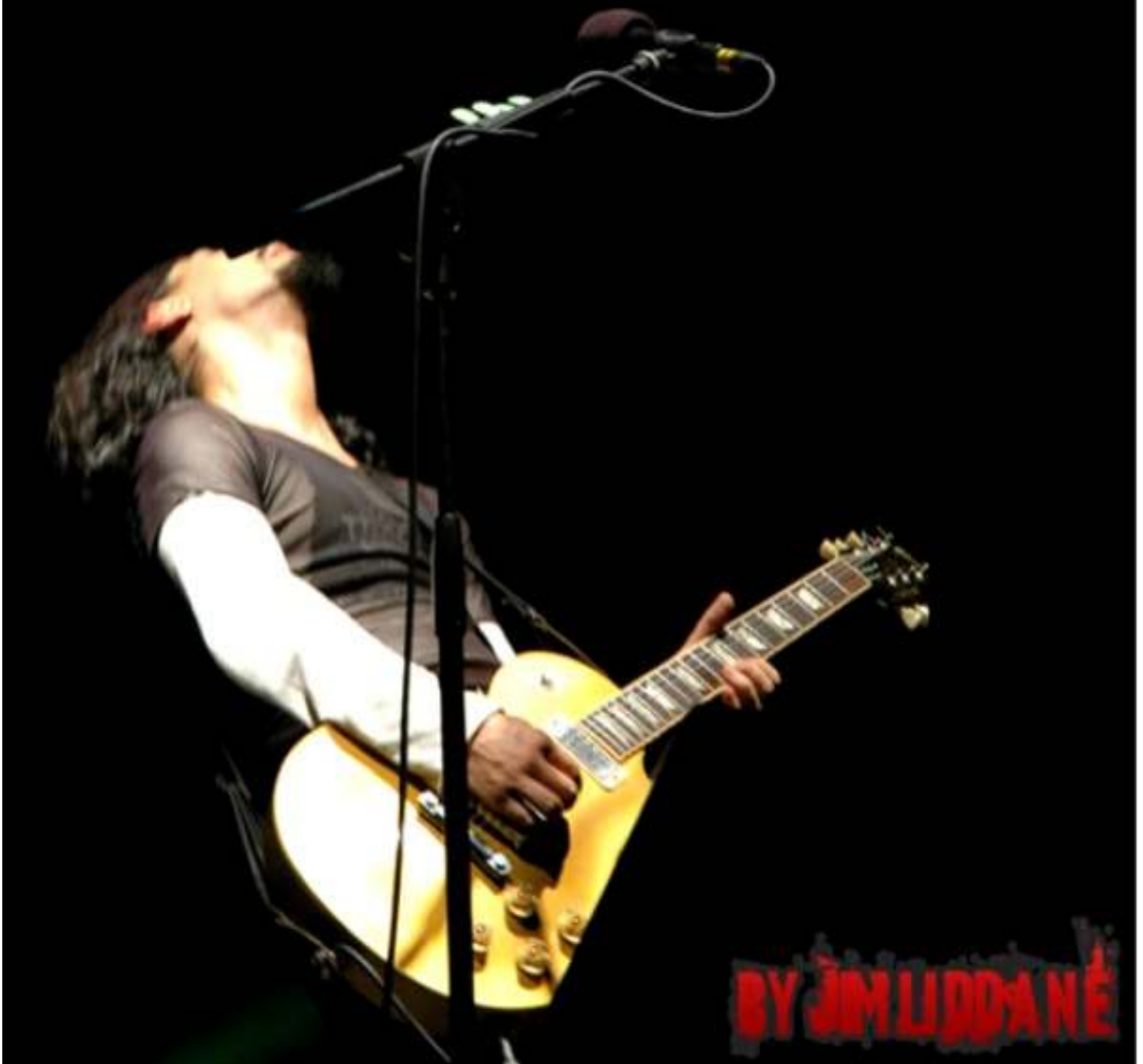


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# SELLING YOUR SONGS

INTERNATIONAL SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION



BY JIM LIDDANE



**The International Songwriter's Association Course For Songwriters**

# **SELLING YOUR SONGS**

**Compiled from interviews and articles written by various authors, which appeared in Songwriter Magazine, published by the International Songwriters Association Ltd.**

**Edited by Jim Liddane, Chairman International Songwriters Association**

**Produced and distributed to songwriters worldwide,  
by the International Songwriters Association**

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This book is a basic guide only. It will introduce you to the world of songwriting. It will explain business terms and help you understand the business concepts that you should be familiar with. It will enable you to ask more intelligent questions when you meet with your accountant/CPA or solicitor/lawyer.

This book is not meant to be a replacement for professional advice.

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**No steps should be taken without seeking competent professional advice!**

## **A Word From Jim Liddane**

I put together this little opus to answer some of the basic questions posed by songwriters.

However, any opinions offered are either mine, or those of any contributor to Songwriter Magazine whose work is included here, and as the oft-quoted (but cleaned-up) jokes goes:

“Opinions are like certain parts of the anatomy - everybody’s got one”

Our opinions too, should be taken with a grain of salt. As a famous songwriter once put it - “The most important rule in songwriting, is that there are no rules”, so keep that in mind also when you read our advice, or indeed anybody else’s for that matter!

Secondly, some people take up songwriting primarily because they see it as a way to make money fast.

I have been privileged to talk with some wonderful songwriters, and I honestly believe that the great songwriters wrote firstly for the love of writing, and secondly, in the hope of eventually being able to make a living out of what they loved doing anyway.

And not the other way around.

Throughout this book, I have tried to make it clear that songwriting is not a fast way to make money, but in saying this, I do hope I do not succeed in persuading you to give up your dream before even embarking on it.

What I am trying to say is that if you write songs because you love writing songs, you will have a better chance of eventual success, than the person who takes up songwriting simply to become an overnight success.

To give you a better idea of the road which may have to be travelled, I have included interviews which I conducted with two of the best songwriters I have known, and whose work, opinions, and indeed character, I have admired for many years - Gene Pitney and Sonny Curtis.

Enjoy!

Jim Liddane

Limerick City, Ireland

# Lesson 1 - Twenty Songwriting Questions Answered

## Introduction

*In 1972, International Songwriters Association started to publish the twenty most-asked questions put by songwriters (and the answers provided by the ISA). This is taken from the 2009 or 37th edition.*

*If you know the basics, simply ignore this section, and move to Lesson 2.*

### **What is a song?**

A song is a musical composition, comprising the melody (the tune) and the lyrics (the words). A "song" is not just the tune, nor is it just the words - the music industry needs "songs" - not just lyrics, and not just melodies.

### **What is a songwriter?**

Obviously, the man (or woman) who writes songs is a songwriter, but since a lot of lyric writers (lyricists) write words, in collaboration with melody writers (composers) who write tunes, both call themselves songwriters.

### **I do not write complete songs: I need a collaborator. How do I go about getting one?**

If an ISA subscriber, send for our Leaflet 101, which explains Songwriter Magazine's services for subscribers trying to locate collaborators. There are plenty of ads also in each issue of "Songwriter Magazine" from lyric writers and melody writers seeking partners. Remember, people who can write great words are always in demand.

### **Can you teach me how to write hit songs, and if so, what are my chances of success?**

No, we cannot teach you how to write hit songs nor can anybody else. If you have talent, you can profit from good advice and good contacts, both of which we can offer, but we cannot give you that talent.

As regards the chances of making it as a songwriter, do remember that top songwriters earn millions and the competition at any level in the music business, is very keen. If you have talent, original ideas and a willingness to work against the odds, then your chances are somewhat better than those of the average hopeful, but even so, it is a highly unpredictable business. Very few indeed

### **There are plenty of melody writers, offering to put music to lyrics for cash. They advertise in a lot of the music papers. Why not use one of these?**

For one very good reason - namely that these people (referred to as "sharks") have written literally hundreds of thousands of melodies for lyric writers over the past fifty years, and none of these 'melodies for cash' merchants has ever produced one minor hit.

They are not songwriters - they are simply businessmen who make a profit out of lyric writers. Many of them write the exact same tune to each song lyric they receive, so that if by any accident, they ever did have a hit - you would be sued by about another ten thousand songwriters!

Many of them disguise themselves as so-called "music publishers" or "record companies" (called "sharks" by the trade - see below), but they can be easily recognised - they want money from you, whereas genuine publishers pay you (not you them!) while genuine songwriters collaborate with each other on a 50-50 split of royalties, and not cash fees.

**How can I protect my ideas from been stolen before they are published?**

Copyright exists from the moment one writes a song. The problem is to prove that you wrote the song in the first place, and since this is not usually possible unless you can produce witnesses who stood around watching you write it, you must prove ownership by showing that on a certain date, you were in possession of the disputed song.

If this date is the date prior to publication by the music publishers, (which it would have to be if you wrote the song in the first place), then the publisher is faced with the task of showing how you could be in personal possession of a song which he claims you did not write, on a date prior to its publication.

The best methods of protecting copyright are to assign your song to a solicitor (attorney), or to a bank manager, ensuring that they date and seal the item in your presence, or to enclose the song in an official registered envelope (obtainable from the Post Office), post it to yourself but leave it unopened when it arrives so that it may be opened in court.

Alternatively, you could use the various copyright services available, including the ISA Service, which is free of charge.

**Are cases of song-theft very common in the music business?**

Although a lot of songwriters do worry about copyright, genuine cases of copyright infringement are rare indeed, and you will have very little to worry about if you deal with a respectable and established music publishing firm and copyright your material.

**Once I have my song written, and protected, what do I do then?**

Once the songwriter has completed his song, the problem of promotion begins: (and again, remember that publishers are only interested in songs comprising words and music, not in words alone or music alone).

Normally, the writer will send his song to a music publisher, usually by post. Most publishers require a demonstration recording (called a demo) with a copy of the lyrics written out. A manuscript is a useful extra but is not essential.

Demos can be made at home if the writer has the equipment and skill. A simple guitar or piano backing is sufficient (initially anyway) for ballads or folk material. It may be found necessary to have a demo made for more complex material, or for material requiring extra instruments, and the ISA for example, can assist, in these circumstances.

**How can I get a list of Music Publishers?**

The ISA publishes a new list every few months. The magazines "Music Week" and "Billboard" publish directories, which also list the major publishers, while in the UK, the Music Publishers Association publishes a list of its members.

**If the publisher I have chosen, likes my song, what next?**

The publisher may, if he likes the song enough, offer you a contract for that song.

Sometimes, if he likes your style, but not particularly the song you have sent, he may ask you to send him further work so that he can judge your potential. If however, he issues you with a contract, he will be of the opinion that he can get a recording on your song - that is to say, that he can persuade some singer to record your tune as his next single or perhaps as a track on his next album.

This is why you are sent a contract - the publisher will want to have you signed to him prior to looking for a recording on your song: otherwise, you might sign with another publishing firm having got him to get a recording on your song, and so another publisher would reap the reward of his activity!

**What should I look for in a contract?**

You should never sign any contract without having it examined first. You may know a lawyer or solicitor who is familiar with show-business contracts, who may be able to assist you. Failing this, the ISA will be happy to assist.

Although we do not advise signing a contract without having it checked, we will mention that you should look for a short reversionary clause (one or two years for example - otherwise your song might remain tied for ever to a publisher unable to obtain a recording on it), and ensure that a minimum figure of at least 60% is quoted in all references.

Better still, ignore all the above, and talk to a properly qualified legal advisor.

**What is a "shark" publisher?**

The number of fake or "shark" publishers in the U.S. is over 200 and in the UK almost 20. Since fake publishers or sharks vary their modus-operandi frequently from year to year, it is often difficult to pinpoint them.

The following guidelines may assist.

Since genuine publishers do not deal with lyric writers (only complete songwriters), sharks often advertise looking for lyrics, either in the music press or in popular magazines.

They often describe themselves as music publishers, and usually say that they like your lyrics, but that in order to be able to put them on the market, will have to get a melody written.

This will cost money (anything from £5 - \$5 up to whatever fee they think the market will bear).

Sometimes they stress that the "publishing" will be free which often confuses the newcomer, and that all the publisher needs from then on is "luck" (which never seems to materialise).

**How can I recognise one?**

If you remember that real publishers never look for one penny from a writer, then you will be



able to avoid being caught. However, since our magazine pinpointed these sharks, several of them have now new angles for getting money from you.

They promise free publishing, and free melodies, but ask for a small charge (£5 to £50 - \$5 to \$50) to cover

- (a) fees for arranging or orchestrating the finished work
- (b) fees for recording the work
- (c) fees for accounting or book-keeping
- (d) fees for promotion, postage, copyright etc.

Please remember however that there are many variations on the above themes, but genuine music publishers do not charge you - they pay you.

### **What exactly is the role of the music publisher nowadays?**

In the early days of popular music before records and tapes brought the songwriter's work into millions of homes, the writer depended on royalties from the sales of sheet music, which was "published" (i.e. printed and put on sale) by the Music Publisher.

With the advent of recordings, sales of sheet music declined, and the Music Publisher, in order to compensate himself for the loss in revenue, negotiated a royalty from the song. Performances on radio and TV led to further "royalties", all of which were collected by the publisher, who in turn split all this new income with his writers.

Indeed, nowadays, many publishers see themselves more in the role of a songwriter's agent, promoting his work to singers and record labels, and collecting revenue on his behalf from all sources.

Of course, publishers still "publish" sheet music but basically, the job of the publisher nowadays is to evaluate what he receives from the writer, place it for recording, and then collect and distribute the moneys due, in conjunction with such agencies as the PRS, BMI, ASCAP and SESAC.

Many pundits see the role of the publisher diminishing greatly in the years to come which could in our opinion, be a pity for the new songwriter, as the publisher is closer to the songwriter in his aims and intentions than is the record company.

A good publisher can truly be said to be "the songwriter's friend".

Songwriters often ask if it is possible to circumvent the music publisher, and deal directly with the record company. It is possible, but naturally, a recorded song still has to be "published" as it were, and unless the writer has something going for him, it will be difficult for him in the early stages, to keep the publishing for himself.

However, where he has in fact promoted the song and obtained a recording on it without being asked for the publishing, he should try and keep it, or at least, keep part of it.

**Is there any case where a genuine publisher, or a genuine record company, would**

**require a lyric writer or songwriter, to pay any fee, part with any money. or share in any expense whatsoever?**

Absolutely not.

**Some songwriters have their own publishing companies. Can I set up my own, and if so, how do I go about it?**

You can certainly set up your own company, and we have helped subscribers to establish their own publishing firms. The procedure is quite simple, and we will be happy to send you a leaflet on the subject.

**Suppose that as a songwriter, I am mainly interested in singing my own songs on record, and not just in writing songs for other singers, can this be arranged?**

Yes, if you have the talent, and the material, you stand a better chance of breaking through as a newcomer. SongSeller often prints tips concerning record companies which are seeking singer songwriters and our advice department is always ready to help.

**Will I have to pay taxes on income from songwriting?**

Yes and the amount you will have to pay will depend on the country you live in. In Ireland for example, many songwriters are exempt from taxes, while tax rates in parts of the U.K. (Isle of Man, Jersey, etc.) are somewhat lower than on the mainland.

In the U.S.A. you can only avoid taxes by moving abroad and also changing citizenship, but the entire matter is so complex that you should write to the ISA setting out your particular situation, and we will put you in touch with a tax expert in your own country.

However, we believe there is a moral obligation on writers, as there is on all citizens, to pay their fair share of the tax burden.

**Should a songwriter enter song contests?**

There are hundreds of song contests and festivals throughout the world every year, ranging from small local affairs to large glamorous international contests. The ISA can give you any information you require on the various festivals and competitions.

**How easy it is to make money in songwriting?**

It is not easy - it is very very difficult. The rewards are huge and the sums that can be made are vast. In any profession where the rewards are huge, the competition is intense.

But every day, somebody makes it which is probably what keeps everybody else going.

If you have any queries concerning the above information, send an e-mail to

[jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie](mailto:jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie)

and we will reply to you as soon as possible.

## **Lesson 2 - Basic Course In Songwriting**

*We all have to start somewhere, and if you are not too sure about the basics, then a quick skim through the next twenty or so pages, which have been excerpted from radio interviews with the ISA's Jim Liddane, just might help!*

### **I write lyrics only. Is there any market for lyrics or words on their own, without music?**

There is no certain market for lyrics on their own. Publishers are usually only interested in complete songs - that is to say words and music. They are usually not interested in words on their own, and indeed are very rarely interested in music on its own, although there is a specialised market for good instrumental music.

### **Will the publisher arrange for you to work with a music collaborator, if he likes your lyrics?**

Rarely. It is most unusual for this to happen in real life. The publisher is not in the match-making business. He is not in business to pair you off with suitable partners, nor is he in business to provide you with a melody for your lyrics. Indeed you should be extremely wary of any person calling himself a publisher who offers to provide a melody for your lyrics, as you may find that he will only do so for a fee.

### **What you are saying seems to suggest that lyric writers have very little value in today's music industry.**

No, that's not what I meant. Indeed, I was recently looking at some comments made by various music publishers about songwriting in the nineties, and one of them, Dennis Collopy, one of the most respected music publishers in Britain said that whatever about non-performing songwriters, good lyricists will always find work, and I think that is perfectly true. But the point I am making is that lyrics on their own are not songs, and publishers usually only deal in songs.

### **So what can a lyric writer do if he cannot write music? Surely, he will have to pay somebody to write a melody for him?**

First of all, avoid like the plague, anybody offering to write melodies for cash, irrespective of how the offer is framed. Some of these melody for-cash merchants will write music to the local,-bus timetable, as long as they get £10 or \$20 or whatever, but once they have your cash, you can kiss your chances goodbye. Some of them frame their offers very cleverly, but the simple facts are these... if anybody offers to turn your lyrics into a complete song in return for any payment whatsoever, run-a mile!

### **But some firms offer "free" melodies if you buy a demo recording of the finished song. How about these services?**

You will occasionally see offers of so-called "Free Melodies", if you purchase a demo recording of the song. Naturally, the melody is not "free" - the cost of having it written is simply built into the cost of the demo. Anyway, if you want to see how genuine their offer is, ask them to let you hear the melody **before** you pay for the recording. If they refuse, then you can rest assured that you have saved yourself a lot of money. We do not know of one hit penned by this method. If any operator of a demo service has penned such a hit in the last 50 years, would he like to tell me about it?

**Well if these advertised services are of no value, what am I, as a lyric writer, to do?**

First of all, how about writing a melody yourself? Many lyric writers have a rough tune in their heads, but are put off by their inability to "write down music". In fact very few top songwriters can "write down music" either, but as services exist which will copy down your rough song onto paper for around £20, being able to "write down music" is certainly not an essential pre-requisite to being able to write a song. So initially, why not try and see what you yourself can come up with in the form of a melody, and sing, hum or whistle the results, into a tape recorder.

**Fine, but supposing what you come up with is simply not good enough?**

Then it is time to start looking for a collaborator and most hit songs are written by partnerships anyway. Ideally, you should try and work with somebody you know in your own area. Collaboration is best done on a face-to-face basis. Now, if you don't know another songwriter locally, perhaps you know a local musician? He is bound to know some other musician who writes tunes, if he himself doesn't write. Most musicians would like to be songwriters, but sometimes lack the enthusiasm, or the inspiration, to get started. You can give them both the enthusiasm and the inspiration, and in so doing, start a new songwriting partnership. If that doesn't work out, then you will probably have to seek out some total stranger to work with.

**How about advertising for a partner?**

Again, try a local approach. A small advertisement in your local newspaper might work, but it's a long shot. You would be better off approaching your local musical instrument shop and asking them if you can put a card on their notice board looking for a collaborator. You might also print a small leaflet setting out your requirements, and ask your local music store or record shop to leave it on the counter for you. In particular, pay the closest attention possible to new bands or groups. Many of these find lyric-writing a chore - we know because in the ISA, we get lots of requests from bands looking for lyric writers.

**Suppose you live in an isolated area, what can you do to obtain a collaborator?**

If all your local approaches fail, then you will probably have to turn to postal collaboration, which is harder to operate, although I know of one or two that started out that way alright. For example, back in the sixties, Elton John is supposed to have met Bernie Taupin through an ad in the NME. Pop papers like NME and Rolling Stone often carry ads from musicians seeking lyric writers, but beware of the shark operators who also infest these waters trying to extract money from foolish lyric writers.

**Obviously, members of the International Songwriters Association or similar songwriting associations, do not have to go to all that trouble to find a collaborator?**

No - most songwriting organisations receive collaboration requests and pass these on to their members. For example, there is a section in every Songwriter Magazine devoted to ads from lyric writers and melody writers seeking collaborators. These ads are published free of charge by Songwriter Magazine. Then for lyric writers only, we have a Register Of Composers which lists the names of members who will compose melodies to lyrics. In fact, there are usually slightly more ISA composers looking for lyric writers than vice versa.

**In any event, the message seems to be -if you write lyrics, then you have to start thinking in terms of the complete song.**

Yes. Writing your own melody, or collaborating with somebody to produce a complete song is not just an exciting and fulfilling experience, it is also quite simple. However, may I again remind lyric writers of the cardinal rule of the music business....never pay out money for a melody to be written to your lyrics, nor pay out money for a demo recording which includes a so-called "free" melody. Hit melodies to hit lyrics are written by composers, not by songwriting services. Indeed, in the fifty years that these services have been busy writing perhaps two million so-called "free" melodies, we have never heard of one of those melodies becoming even a minor hit.

**Of course, there are lyric writers who can think up melodies in their own heads, but who cannot write music down on paper.**

Actually, very few professional songwriters can write music down on paper either - which comes as a surprise to most people raised on a diet of Hollywood musicals where the songwriter sees this girl in a restaurant, grabs the back of a menu card, and writes an immaculate hit song in ten seconds flat. Not only is he able to write music down, but the girl is able to read music also, and without any rehearsal, she sings it back to him, accompanied by a large orchestra which is obviously hiding in the toilets. As they say -"That's Hollywood"! However, in real life, most writers cannot write music, but of course, people exist who can write out manuscripts or lead sheets for you, from a rough tape recording

**Before you continue, what is the difference between an arrangement, a manuscript and a lead sheet?**

Well technically, an arrangement is the term given to the parts played by all the musical instruments on the recording... a manuscript is the vocal part with full piano accompaniment, while a lead sheet is simply the vocal part plus the accompanying chords. Most writers mix these up in conversation, so that what they call manuscripts are often only lead sheets, and vice versa.

**You also referred to people who can write out lead sheets from rough tapes. How expensive is this service?**

How long is a ball of string? You can pay anything from £10/\$20 upwards -usually it costs in the region of £30 per song - but of course a lead sheet is not essential for anything nowadays, except perhaps some song contests, because all promotion is done via demos - which are demonstration recordings of the song. Nobody uses manuscripts, and very few publishers will consider one. Songwriters use lead sheets or manuscripts to have demos made of their rough songs, or else they use them for entering song contests, some of which still require lead sheets as part of their rules. But nowadays, the demo reigns supreme.

**Right, well we'll talk about demos later on, but first, I would like to turn to a more general subject. Forty years ago, very few recording artists wrote their own songs. Nowadays, most of them do. Is there any future for the songwriter who is not also a recording artist?**

Absolutely. Actually, I find those type of statistics somewhat bewildering, because I've been hearing the exact same thing all my life - and that goes back well before even I was born!

For example, back in the late 1940's when country music started becoming popular in the

United States, people pointed to Hank Williams and Marty Robbins and Hank Snow and singers like those, who wrote some of their own songs, and said -well that's the end of the line for the non-performing songwriters. They were dead wrong - nowadays, country music uses more songs written by pure songwriters than it ever did.

Similarly, when rock and roll started in the fifties, all we heard was that since Fats Domino and Little Richard and Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison and Del Shannon and Neil Sedaka were all writing their own songs, pure songwriters were as good as dead. Then along came Carole King and Barry Mann and Mike Leiber and Mike Stoller and countless other pure songwriters, and that prediction fell by the wayside.

Then when the Mersey Sound arrived in the mid-sixties,, the prophets of gloom were saying that because the Beatles wrote their own songs, and the Stones wrote their own songs, and the Dave Clark Five wrote their own songs and so on, that pure songwriters were over the hill, and they were wrong because it was during that period that you saw the emergence of writers like Mitch Murray and Tony MacAulay and many more, who wrote songs but certainly never thought of performing them.

**Yes, but wasn't there a singer-songwriter craze in the early seventies when the music business seemed confined to those who could write and perform their own songs?**

Yes, there was a singer-songwriter craze in the early seventies, with people like Carole King and Don McLean and James Taylor, and again the so called experts said - if you don't perform, then you won't be able to sell a song... but that was wrong. After all the fuss died down, it turned out that it was the songs written by non-performers that were the most successful during the 70's.

They said the same thing again when New Wave came along -they said the same thing when disco came along - they've always been saying it. They're still saying it, and if they're not, they'll be saying it this time next week again.

The facts are that for every music trend which seems to suggest that pure songwriters are passé, there is a corresponding trend which suggests the exact opposite. For every Hank Williams who writes all his own songs, there's a Jim Reeves who uses other writers' songs .... for every Buddy Holly who writes hit tunes, there is an Elvis Presley who never writes one... for every Neil Sedaka, there is a Bobby Vee...for every Paul McCartney, there's a Cliff Richard .... for every Don McLean, there is a Tom Jones. . . for every Elton John, there is a Leo Sayer... I could go on and on.

Think back to when self-penned dance tunes were doing big business and when again, non-performing songwriters were supposed to be finished - who were the biggest and most successful dance acts of the period? Those who wrote their own songs? No - it was groups like Five Star, who didn't write one of their own hits, or all those acts produced by Stock Aitken and Waterman, who themselves never sang a note, but wrote perhaps the best dance hits of the era.

**So, what you are saying is that a good song will always triumph in the end?**

There will always be a market for a good song. I don't care if every glamour kid is penning ten songs a day -the facts are that this is first and foremost a business. If a balding, overweight

and totally repulsive-looking songwriter can pen something better - then that balding, overweight and totally repulsive songwriter will have the hit record... the public by and large do not care who writes the songs they buy... they will not buy something simply because the performer wrote it and they will not reject something simply because the performer did not write it - they will buy what they like.

And remember, songwriter-performers do not always write their own best hits.

Buddy Holly is always mentioned as being the first rock star to write his own songs... that's true, but at the, end of the day, his biggest hits were "Oh Boy", "It Doesn't Matter Anymore" and "Rave On" - and he didn't write one of those.

Gene Pitney was a great songwriter before he became a great recording star. He wrote fewer than five of his own thirty hit records.

Don McLean wrote some wonderful songs in the seventies... when he was making a comeback in the early eighties, and was finding it hard to get a hit -he used other people's material, and scored with two huge hits -neither of which he wrote himself.

**Didn't James Taylor do the same thing?**

That's right, James Taylor did exactly the same thing with "Up On The Roof" and "Wonderful World". Garth Brooks wrote great songs, but when he was looking for a hit single, he listened to everything, and usually picked something not written by himself.

If the performer can write a better song than the pure songwriter - then of course he deserves to record it. He would be a fool not to. But if the pure songwriter can write a better song, I don't know of any established star who would turn down a hit.

**So you would not be too worried about the predictions then?**

Don't worry about the prophecies that songwriters are dead... they've been dying since they were born, and there are more of them around right now, making more money than their predecessors ever did in the glory days of Tin Pan Alley, when no recording star wrote his own songs.

Forget the prophets of doom and gloom... write a good song first, and then, you'll find you've absolutely nothing to worry about.

**Another question that comes up quite a lot - is songwriting and the music business in general, a "closed shop"? Some writers say that their songs are not listened to, and that it is all a fix -it's who you know.**

It always helps to know somebody - in any business I suppose.

If a good friend of mine wrote a fairly ordinary song that he wanted on a record which - let's say - I was producing, I should be able to persuade a singer (a fairly stupid singer anyway), to slip it onto an album or put it on a "B" side... but I could not - no matter how friendly I was with that writer - make the song a hit.

I mean knowing people helps. The writer knows me, so I help the writer. I know a singer and

so the singer helps me, but at the end of the day, none of us know one million record buyers who will do us the favour of buying the bloody thing, so the operation is pointless, and the singer and the singer's management will have my guts if the thing flops, and never trust my judgement again, so that my little favour for my friend would earn nobody any money anyway, and the only result might be that I could end up spending the rest of my life on the dole.

In any event, whereas I might be able to get my friend's song onto a record being recorded by somebody unknown, (which means that it's even less likely to be a hit), I am extremely unlikely to have enough influence to be able to persuade a star to throw away his career in order to do my friend a favour. I mean, I might force Joe Bloggs to record rubbish, but who in the world is in a position to force somebody like Madonna or Michael Jackson to record something they themselves do not like? The answer is nobody.

I have no reason to lie when I say this... name me one song in the history of rock and roll that did not deserve to be a hit... and that was simply issued as a favour to somebody. You can control lots of people, but at the end of the day, you cannot hope to control one million record buyers

**If that's the case, why do people say that it's all pull in the record business?**

Sour grapes has a lot to do with those type of stories. Did you ever hear anybody admit that they didn't get the job because the other guy was better? Of course not, he must have had pull.

Did the other team deserve to win the match? Of course not - the referee was prejudiced... it's the same old story.

Your songs are perfect - it's obvious that Elton John and Paul McCartney are simply prejudiced against you and jealous of your talent.

I have no time for that sort of rubbish. Write a good song, and you may have a hit. Write a bad song and you won't be able to give it away. It just could be that you are a lousy songwriter - there are lousy songwriters... I even know a few who have managed to get their stuff on record... but I don't know one lousy songwriter who has managed to get a hit... you might be able to fool the manager or the singer or even the record label... but you can't fool a million record buyers, and at the end of the day, it's the fans who really count.

**Right, well we've established that the industry is not a closed shop, if you have talent, so let's get back to writing that hit song. Which is the most important part of the song -the words or the tune?**

That's one of the old chestnuts, but I have developed a very cute answer for that. The most important part of any song is the hook -the part of the song that you remember more than anything else, the part that sticks in your mind when the record is over, the part that makes you want to buy that record and play it over and over again.

Now that hook could well be a catchy melodic segment, or a brilliant title, or a great phrase - but it's got to be there. If for example, you were to think of any particular song in the charts right now, you would probably find that you could not remember all of it from start to finish,



but there would be one particular part of the song which you could probably remember better than any other part, and this would be what we call the hook.

Now professional songwriters try to aim for one great hook in every song. Publishers listen out for it, and buyers buy it, for without this hook, it may not matter how pretty your melody is, or how intellectual your words are, you may have a great song, but you will not have a hit song.

### **So what is a hit song?**

If you can produce a hook by combining a great song title with a catchy melodic phrase, you are half way towards writing a hit song... in fact some hit songs have been nothing but great hooks - songs like "Louie Louie" for example, where the title is repeated throughout the tune - that is basically one continuous hook - and nothing but a hook.

### **Should the new writer aim for something simple, or will publishers want something more complicated from the newcomer - something very original and unique?**

Frankly, you should try and keep it simple. New songwriters do not get long auditions - most publishers will only play a demo once, so if it does not hit them the first time, then it will never hit them. Try and aim for simple straightforward catchy material - nothing too intellectual - nothing too complicated. Apart from the initial problems that new writers have getting their work published, it is good training to keep things simple from the start.

Anyway, you are aiming for the Top 40, and most Top 40 hits are simple, particularly Top 40 hits by new acts. There is a good commercial reason for this - new records by new acts get very limited airplay, unless they start to sell fairly quickly. You need a song which will start to sell after a few national plays - otherwise the radio stations will drop it from their playlists - so you need something which is simple, straightforward, and instantly catchy. More complex songs may be suitable for albums, or for singles by already-established artists, but for a newcomer, it is almost impossible to have material considered for albums, and even more difficult to have material considered for an established artist.

### **Some books on songwriting advise writers to ignore the charts, and to aim for originality. Others virtually say you should copy what is in the charts. What do you think?**

Well no professional writer ignores the charts and since that is the case, no newcomer can afford to ignore them either. The professionals are your competitors, and the charts contain their songs. In order for you to make it, you will have to replace one of those chart songs with your own tune.

Now you might feel that that the best chance of doing this is with something completely original, something which is so unique that it has to make the charts, but this is unfortunately not what usually happens.

Ninety percent of the chart is not very original - in fact you will realise that follow-ups to hit records invariably sound like the original hit, so there is very little room for really unique or original material, particularly by newcomers.

The key is radio airplay.

Complex material, or really original material that stretches the listener too much, is not much liked by radio stations, because they feel that it can be a tuneout factor, in other words, a factor which causes listeners to switch stations. For that reason, you have to listen to the charts - that's what's making it right now, and that's what you should be writing. Above all, it's the first thing a publisher will think of when he opens your demo - could he place this, and could it get airplay. He is more likely to think he could place it, and get airplay, if it sounds like something which is getting airplay right now, rather than something totally different.

**So charts are essential reading for the new songwriter?**

Yes - they are essential reading (and listening) material for not just the new songwriter, but for all songwriters. Indeed, studying the charts can be an eye-opener. We all know about the Top 40 or Hot 100 listings, which tell you what is selling across the board, but there are also charts for country music, MOR music, black music, Latin American music, dance music etc., areas where songwriters are placing songs outside of the mainstream of rock music, and making good money doing it too. So, don't ignore the charts, and do not presume that the entire songwriting business revolves around the Top 40 - there are plenty of writers who make a lot of money without ever reaching the Top 40, because there are plenty of very lucrative markets out there in other styles of music too.

**How many hours per day or per week should you spend actually writing songs?**

Well, the professional songwriters who had offices in the Brill Building in New York were proud to boast that they worked regular office hours, writing songs every day of the week from 9am until 5pm. The Hollywood version of the songwriting business portrays a genius who spends about fifteen minutes a week writing songs, and the rest of the time pursuing beautiful blondes around the swimming pool. I think that the former job description, the 9 to 5 one, might be slightly more accurate! Songwriting is a business, and has to be treated as one would treat any other business.

**If that is the case, surely the amateur is up against it?**

I thought that would be obvious to most people already!

Professional songwriters treat the game as a business, which is why they are professional songwriters. The amateur songwriter faces many problems. First of all, he is up against professionals who are always going to have better contacts than he has. Secondly, he is up against professionals who can spend their entire day working on the craft of writing a hit song, whereas the amateur may be trying to squeeze it into a few hours at the weekend. Thirdly, he is up against the pro who knows just how hard it is to write a hit song.

It often amuses professional writers when they hear some amateur sounding off about the dozens of songs he writes every month. The professional will be the first to tell you that he can only complete perhaps one song per week, or even per month, and yet there are amateurs who claim to be producing hundreds of songs in that same period! You see, the amateur can write a song in ten minutes - which of course is why he's an amateur. The professional knows it takes time, and he is willing to give it the time it takes.

Finally, the professional is confident. He knows he can write a hit song- he's already done it. The amateur deep down, is not that sure of his talent. Somebody said once that many good

amateurs could write albums full of hit songs, if only they could come up with the first hit. That's very true. If you had a song, in the charts right now, and the singer came in that door looking for a follow-up, do you believe you could not write it? Of course not - your self-confidence to write it, would be enormous.

The professional already has that self-confidence. The amateur has to develop it.

**Would it help the amateur to have some sort of timetable, or plan?**

Pressure is the great incentive. If you have a hit song on the charts, and you're told that you must have a follow-up ready by 4pm Thursday, you will have it ready. And, it will be good.

If you are not under any pressure at all - there is not the same incentive, and therefore, no hurry, which usually means, no song. So why not put yourself under some sort of artificial pressure?

Decide that you are going to write a song for a specific artist, and that you will have it in the post to him by a specific date. Then work out a timetable to meet that scenario. So many hours per week working on new material, so many hours revising and polishing finished material, so many hours promoting your material.

Don't forget to put in some time listening to the radio and checking trends, as well as examining the charts, particularly the new entries.

However, make sure of one thing. Do not spend too much time on the supplementary activities - writing songs is the main task. There is no point in promoting songs that are no good, and of course, you cannot even start to promote songs you haven't yet written, so the main aim must be to write songs.

**All of this sounds very clinical. Surely writing a hit song should be mainly down to inspiration?**

Well you've heard the old cliché about success being 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration, and I think that applies to songwriting as much as any other business. Might I reminisce? Back in the sixties, a new vocal group, made up mainly of previously successful songwriters, released their first record on the American market. The song was called "Bermuda". You never heard of that one, and the reason you didn't was that it flopped.

Well afterwards, the songwriters in the band got together - they analysed every hit song of the period, picked out its most prominent feature, and came up with a number of interesting factors. The biggest hits had an unusual title or else a girl's name as the title: they had a wide-ranging melody, utilising both falsetto and bass voices prominently: they had a medium-paced beat with drums and handclaps prominent.

So with this information, the boys then sat down to write a song to this formula, and they promptly came up with a tune called "Sherry" which went to Number 1 in 35 countries, and made the Four Seasons the most successful vocal group of the sixties. Now it may sound like an unromantic way of writing a hit, but who cares... it was not only a hit - it was also a fabulous song. This is a business. Get the product right first. Worry about marketing it later.

### **Right, so how do I write that hit ?**

First off, nobody can teach you how to write a hit song. Certainly, there are songwriters who have attended classes in music theory etc., but nobody has ever claimed to have taught a songwriter how to write a hit song.

If they could teach somebody else how to do it - they would be doing it themselves,

However, you can be taught the technicalities of songwriting, but yet many technically competent songwriters never pen a hit tune, while many technically incompetent writers do.

But leaving all that aside, let's take a brief look at the basics of lyric writing, and the basics of melody - but before we do either, let's look at basic idea itself - the thing that inspires you to get started at all.

Buddy Holly once came out of a movie house repeating to himself the catch-phrase uttered by John Wayne in John Ford's movie, *The Searchers*, and turned it into his first hit - "That'll Be The Day", while Roger Miller took two signs "Rooms To Let 50 Cents" and "Trailers For Sale Or Rent" - reversed them, and penned "King Of The Road".

Otis Blackwell, facing a drunk who kept shaking a coke bottle until it blew while shouting - "write a song about that", penned the hit "All Shook Up", while Lionel Bart took some lines from *The Godfather*, to come up with "Gonna Make You An Offer You Can't Refuse". (The same writer penned his biggest hit for Cliff Richard, after seeing a Christmas toy advertisement in the *Daily Mirror* for a "living doll", and based the entire hit musical "Oliver" on his favourite childhood book - *Oliver Twist*).

Bob Gaudio was going out one evening, when a friend rang and asked him to turn on the TV for a news item. He hit the wrong button, only to hear Telly Savalas utter the phrase "Who loves you baby" in the detective series, *Kojak*. It went on to become one of the biggest seventies hits for the 4 Seasons.

Johnny Mercer took a one line suggestion from a fan named Sadie Vimmerstedt

*I wanna be around to pick up the pieces When somebody breaks your heart*

to come up with the Tony Bennett smash "I Wanna Be Around". He even gave her a song credit - the only song she ever "wrote"!

Professional songwriters are only too happy to explain where the idea came from. Boudleux Bryant once told me that his hit song "Let's Think About Living" was inspired by two things - a clergyman at a funeral asking people to come to terms with the death of their friend, and a speech by Claudius in Act 1 of *Hamlet* - adding "God and Shakespeare - what better inspiration could you have?".

In his magnificent song "Old Dogs, Children And Watermelon Wine", Tom T Hall tells the (possibly apocryphal) story of how the title of that song came from the lips of a black janitor in a Miami bar - adding

*"When he moved away I found my pen  
And copied down that line,  
About old dogs and children,  
And watermelon wine"*

and in an interview with us some years ago, he told us that when he hit a dry patch, he would get into his car and drive around for a few weeks, stopping in small towns, beer joints, cafes and roadside motels. He would take just a notebook, and a tape recorder, and listen to what people were talking about. From those trips came several albums, including his classic "In Search Of A Song".

Yet if you ask any amateur songwriter where they got the inspiration for any of their songs - they will indignantly tell you that the whole thing came from their own heads - and sadly, they are too often telling the truth.

Casual conversations, catch-phrases heard on the street, lines and plots from TV soaps, newspaper headlines, book titles, and snatches from movies, have all proved a fertile field for songwriters - and indeed the work of other writers. (Didn't George Bernard Shaw once joke that Shakespeare was the best person to tell a story - as long as somebody else had told it to him first - referring to the fact that the great Bard adapted and borrowed ideas from others, to create his own masterpieces).

Some inspirations from the world of literature are obvious. No great marks for spotting that Andrew Lloyd Webber's masterpiece "Cats" is based on T S Eliot's "Old Possums Book Of Practical Cats", or that David Bowie's "1984" was inspired by George Orwell's book of the same name.

Again, Elton John didn't hide his regard for Ernest Hemingway when he wrote the song "All Quiet On The Western Front", and Elliott Murphy's "Like A Great Gatsby" is proud to advertise the great work of the novelist Scott Fitzgerald.

Some are not quite as obvious perhaps. "Fool On The Hill" by Lennon & McCartney owes more than a little to Henry Fielding's novel "Tom Jones", while John's "I Am The Warlus" was obviously inspired by Lewis Carroll's "Alice In Wonderland".

Again, John's "Tomorrow Never Knows" borrows from the "Tibetan Book Of The Dead", while Paul's "Golden Slumbers" obviously owes something to Thomas Dekker's "Golden Slumbers Kiss Your Eyes".

Some poets seem to ensure songwriters more than others. William Blake (1757-1827), who lived in near poverty and died unrecognised, inspired Billy Bragg's "Blake's Jerusalem", as well as Bob Dylan's "Every Grain Of Sand", Bruce Dickinson's "Chemical Wedding" and Carly Simon's "Let The River Run". Not bad for a poet virtually unknown in his own lifetime!

Edwin Arlington's "Richard Cory" was source of Paul Simon's song of the same name, while John Donne's poem "No Man Is An Island" was the inspiration for Paul's "I Am A Rock, I Am An Island". (Van Morrison was so impressed with the poet that he penned "Rave

On John Donne"!).

Sting's "Sister Moon" was influenced by a Shakespeare's Sonnet 130, with a hint of Nabokov's "Lolita" being present in his smash "Don't Stand So Close To Me", while Bono must have enjoyed his schoolboy study of William Golding's "Lord Of The Flies" ("Shadows And Tall Trees") and the U2 frontman is obviously a Salman Rushdie fan - witness "The Ground Beneath Her Feet".

**But if I did something like that - wouldn't I be just copying?**

Of course not. To be inspired by something does not mean you copy it. You merely use one great idea to create another great idea. As comedians will tell you - there are only seven different jokes. All others are variations of these seven, and when it comes to story lines for movies, novels or songs, much the same is true.

Don't take note - take notes, and build up a library of ideas. Of course, you too will come up with your own 100% original idea in the future - and hopefully, someday, somebody else will be inspired enough by your idea to create their own great work.

**OK - so I have the basic idea, possibly even the title. Now what?**

Here is where things have to get a little more personal.

Some writers start with a basic idea - or a catch phrase, and then try to work a melody around it - in other words, create what is usually referred to as "the hook", and then write the song.

Others decide to write the entire lyric, and only when that is finished, pen a melody.

Others decided to pen the entire melody, and then put the lyric to it.

Any more than I could not tell you which sock to put on first, I can give no advice on what is the best way of going about things, except to say that that the best way of going about things is to go about things in the way that works best for you.

**So, any tips if I decided I want to start off with the lyrics?**

First, ask yourself which audience are you aiming it at.

Every audience, pre-teen, teen, late-teen, early 20's etc., has its own language, and its own way of expressing itself. Mix these factors up and you have a song fit for no audience. If you cannot get inside the mind of a teenager, what makes you think you can write songs for them?

Incidentally, if you want to know how kids talk and think - watch TV shows written specially for them, or read the type of magazines they buy.

That is an education in itself, even if you never write a song!

Then start writing down your basic idea.

Song lyrics do not have to be be mini-stories, with a beginning, middle and end, but we need

a theme, which is credible, but at the same time, not too ordinary or mundane. Is it boy-likes-girl, but girl-hates-boy, or is it girl-likes-boy but he is her best pal's boyfriend - or what?

There should be some twist - something slightly out of the ordinary. I mean, who wants to hear another story about something perfectly ordinary - even if it is sweet?

Do not worry about rhyme or rhythm at the start - just get the theme or story right. (Incidentally one way of practising this part of the craft is to take an existing hit song's lyrics, and see can you write the story-line which the songwriters penned before they wrote the final lyric).

Also, take an episode from one of those teen TV shows, and write it into your own three minute lyric.

Phil Spector called his songs, "little three minute symphonies for the kids" and if you can perhaps adapt that to "little three minute soap operas for the kids", you are more than half-way there.

If you really do have problems writing lyrics, then you should read a good book on the subject.

The following books are either available at, or obtainable by, any good public library. or from Amazon.com

The Craft of Lyric Writing by Sheila Davis

The Songwriters Idea Book: 40 Strategies to Excite Your Imagination, Help You Design Distinctive Songs, and Keep Your Creative Flow by Sheila Davis

Successful Lyric Writing: A Step-By-Step Course & Workbook by Sheila Davis

Melody in Songwriting: Tools and Techniques for Writing Hit Songs (Berklee Guide) by Jack Perricone

Writing Better Lyrics by Pat Pattison

**How about source books for people who wish to write melodies?**

The books I would recommend reading, (again obtainable from libraries or Amazon.com) would include

Melody: How to Write Great Tunes (Paperback) by Rikky Rooksby

Melody in Songwriting: Tools and Techniques for Writing Hit Songs (Berklee Guide) by Jack Perricone

The Songwriter's Workshop: Harmony by Jimmy Kachulis

The Songwriting Sourcebook: How to Turn Chords Into Great Songs by Rikky Rooksby

How to Write Songs on Guitar: A Guitar-Playing and Songwriting Course by Rikky Rooksby

**Are there any books which cover lyric writing, melody writing and making demos?**

I can strongly recommend the books written by International Songwriters Association's contributing editor, Harvey Rachlin - again usually available from libraries or from Amazon.com.

These include

The Encyclopaedia of the Music Business by Harvey Rachlin

The Songwriter's and Musician's Guide to Making Successful Demos by Harvey Rachlin

The Songwriter's Handbook by Harvey Rachlin

The Songwriter's Workshop by Harvey Rachlin

**OK - so you've put in the ninety percent perspiration, finished the song, and you think you have a hit on your hands. What can you do about protecting your copyright?**

First of all - try not get too paranoiac about being ripped off. Cases of songwriters being ripped off in the sense of having their entire song stolen are extremely rare in the music business. You are far more likely to have your royalties fiddled, or even not paid at all, than you are of having somebody do something as blatant as putting their name on your song .... but of course, it pays to protect yourself, and you should do so.

Before outlining different methods, let me make one thing clear. Once you write a song, it is yours. You do not **have** to copyright it for it to be yours. It is yours because you wrote it.

Of course, the question is, can you prove you wrote it?

There are three methods by which you can effect some sort of protection. First of all, there is what is known as the "Do-It-Yourself" method, which involves putting your song into an official Post Office Registered Envelope, and posting it to yourself.

People selling copyright services, often insist that this is not a valid form of copyright, but in fact, it may or may not be. In the end, it is a question of credibility - in other words, who the judge believes.

The main thing to remember if you do down this route is to always use an official Post Office envelope - and you should also make sure that you do not open it when you get it (it must remain sealed).

It also helps if you stick the registration certificate or receipt onto the envelope when you get it, so that you can match the relevant receipt with the relevant envelope.



**You stress not opening the envelope. Is this really so important?**

Yes - there is a much-quoted though possibly apocryphal story about the songwriter who had protected his song in this manner, and alleged that another composer working for a music publishing company had stolen his tune. The story goes that the company invited him to turn up with his proof. He did so. They asked him to open the envelope to verify that it was the same song. He did, believe it or not, thus destroying his proof. Seems hard to believe that anybody could be so stupid.

Incidentally, it is a good idea to write the title of the song on the outside of the envelope before posting it. After a couple of years, you might have dozens of envelopes with dozens of songs inside, and if a dispute arises, the court will hardly be too impressed to see you arriving with a sackful of registered envelopes, one of which should contain the song in question, if only you knew which one.

**You mentioned three methods in all. What are the others.**

Well most other methods are simply variations of the same general principle. What you did in the first case was to use the post office to verify a date - a date on which you were obviously in possession of a certain song. Quite clearly, if that date is prior to the date on which the song was published, then the publisher will have a lot of explaining to do to show how he could claim to own a song which the Post Office demonstrates was clearly in your possession prior to it ever being published. So, barring that he claims you stole it, then the only way you could be in possession of it is if you had written it.

So, with that principle in mind, and ignoring the Post Office, approach somebody of repute, for example a bank manager, a lawyer, a clergyman, or whoever, and have them play the role of the Post Office. In other words, get them to take the song from you, and to give you some sort of receipt for it to show that they took the sang from you on such a date, and kept it since then in their possession as proof of your authorship prior to that date.

**You mentioned several possible witnesses - who would you recommend?**

The Archbishop of Canterbury, if available. Seriously, who you approach is a matter for yourself - technically you could ask anyone to act for you -it all depends on how much weight a court would give to their evidence if the matter should come to trial. Most people use lawyers, but I myself favour bank managers. Lawyers are mortal, and pass on to that great Courtroom In The Sky, but banks are (hopefully) eternal institutions whose managers may change, but who otherwise remain there through thick and thin. Banks by the way, may make a small charge - some may not since a few banks offer a certain amount of deposit facilities free of charge, but a lawyer will most certainly charge. In any event, it is going to cost more than using the Post Office facility.

**Suppose you do not have a lawyer, or even a bank account?**

Well, there are a number of commercial services available to you. In the USA for example, it is essential to file your songs with the Copyright Office in the Library of Congress. This costs around \$40 per song. In Britain, there is an organisation known as Stationers Hall, quite romantic really as I believe that the legend has it that Shakespeare's work is lodged there. Apart from these, there are a number of commercial services provided in the USA by organisations like the SRS (that is the Songwriters Resource Services of California), or the ASF (that is the American Song Festival). Our own International Songwriters Association

provides a service similar to the above, except that ours is free of charge to members.

Really, it is unusual for an entire song to be stolen. What can happen, is that the best bits and pieces are stolen, and that unfortunately, is harder to prove.

**So what happens if somebody steals my song?**

Well I do presume that you have taken the trouble of copyrighting the song or lyric in advance, in which case, you simply need a good lawyer. Of course, the chances are that it will not be as simple as that - nothing is. First off, you must prove that a similarity exists between your work and the work you claim is an imitation of your composition. If you (and your lawyer) are both satisfied that there is a clear case to answer, you must then examine the question of access.

**What exactly do you mean by "access"?**

This is a term which often baffles songwriters who presume that if they have copyrighted an item, and can prove the date on which they wrote it, that the courts will automatically award damages if a song written subsequently by somebody else, is very similar. However, this is not necessarily the case, unless the songwriter making the claim can also prove access. In other words, if you want to get substantial damages, you may have to show not only that the songs are similar, but that the person who allegedly copied your song, could have gotten hold of it. It is not enough to show similarity - after all the similarities could have been coincidental - there aren't all that many different notes on a piano!

**But how can you prove that the person who copied your song actually heard it, apart from it being obvious that he must have?**

Clearly, if your song has already been published, then it is obvious how this could have happened - the other writer has simply heard it on the radio, or bought a recording of it, or whatever.

**Yes, but how can you prove that another writer had access to your song, if your song has never been published?**

Well of course, if you have promoted the song, you can always prove access if you have kept some acceptable record of where you have sent the demo. Now many songwriters ask us why is it that on the ISA Song Promotion Sheets, there are Certificates of Posting printed on each sheet. They point out that the Post Office does not compensate you for any item lost in the post if all you have is a Certificate of Posting. The answer is that we do not print those Certificates of Posting for compensation purposes but for purposes of protection. Take a situation where you send your song to the Rip-off Music Company who reject it, but three years later, publish a song very similar to yours. Then if you can show that the similarity exists between their song and a song copyrighted by you some years earlier, and if you can produce your Certificate of Posting to prove that you sent them that song on a date some years prior to the plagiarism, then you certainly have a good case because you can prove both similarity and access. In other words, always obtain proof of posting, or proof of delivery, and keep the evidence. You never know when you will need it.

**But surely if the songs are very similar, the courts will presume that there must have been access, even if you cannot prove it?**

Yes -possibly, but not necessarily - after all they may think that the similarities are pure

coincidence, admittedly coincidence of a bizarre nature - but coincidence for all that, and it is then up to you to show that the similarities are too great to be just coincidence. But without being able to show access, similarities on their own may not be enough.

**What happens if you have not copyrighted your own song?**

Tough luck. If somebody has stolen your song, then you are going to have a hard job proving it, since thieves like these are professionals, and anybody who has taken the trouble to steal your song will certainly have taken the trouble to cover up all his tracks.

**OK - let's look at the other side of the coin. Suppose I accidentally copy part of somebody else's song, or use part of an old classical tune in my own melody, what will happen to me?**

These are two different questions actually. First of all, if you accidentally or intentionally copy a song which is already published, then you will be in some trouble, the amount depending on just how much you have copied. Sometimes, you will lose half the royalties which would have accrued to you, the logic being that whereas you thought there was only one song on the record in dispute, there are in fact two distinct songs on the record - yours, and the one you copied, and so the royalties may simply be divided between the two "versions". If the plagiarism is particularly blatant, then you may lose a lot more than 50% of the royalties - indeed you may lose everything.

**But suppose it is purely accidental?**

Of course, it is impossible to avoid accidental similarities, and the courts will take this into account, and determine the extent and also the significance of the similarities. However, do beware of so-called experts who tell you that a similarity lasting let's say, four bars, or let's say, ten seconds is acceptable, because that is not the law.

Indeed, the law has never laid down that a particular length of similarity is permissible.

What courts have considered is the significance of what is similar. Therefore, if you copied a particularly unusual melodic phrase, lasting just one bar, it could be judged as very significant, whereas if the song you copied had an eight bar passage comprising the scale of "C" in ascending order, your similarity might well be judged to be insignificant. It is not so much the quantity of the similarity as the quality - it is more the significance of what you copied in relation to its importance in both your own song, and the song you copied it from, that really counts.

**How about copying classical music pieces?**

For a start, if the piece is out of copyright -which usually (but not always) means that it was written by somebody who died more than fifty years ago, then you can probably use it without any difficulty. However, do make sure that it is out of copyright. A song could be written 100 years ago, and still be in copyright. For example, if a songwriter aged 20 wrote a song in 1920, and then he lived to be 90, dying in 2010, the song, even though it had been penned more than one hundred years ago, could still be in copyright well into 2060. Now that is an extreme and somewhat unlikely case, but you must make sure that the music is actually out of copyright before you use it. Saying to yourself that it is a very old song, does not automatically make it out of copyright.

Also, remember to make sure that all of the people who wrote the song are dead more than fifty years. If a writer aged 65 had co-written a song with a 20 year old partner, then the copyright would not run out until fifty years had elapsed after the death of both partners, and that could conceivably be one hundred years after the death of the older of the two writers.

I mean we have all sung "Happy Birthday To You" - but few of us have realised that it is still in copyright and that technically, every time we perform it in public, we should be paying royalties to Warner Chappell Music.

**OK -so suppose I have found a very very old song, and was written at least 200 years ago. Now am I safe to copy it?**

Even if you know that the song is out of copyright, for example, you are talking about a melody written two hundred years ago, it is only the original melody that is necessarily out of copyright, and not any specific arrangement of the tune. For example, although legend has it that Henry V111 wrote "Greensleeves" about 480 years ago, there could be any number of arrangements of that tune which are still copyright, and you cannot simply copy one of those. Adaptations or arrangements of tunes, as well as tunes themselves, can be copyrighted. Therefore, when a copyright on a tune is about to expire, I can easily change a few of the chords, or alter some lyrics, and copyright that new version. Very frequently, people singing songs that they think go back several . decades before their own childhood, might be surprised to learn that the particular version they are singing dates only from their own youth, and that the version they know is still in copyright.

Songs like "Tom Dooley", or "The Battle Of New Orleans" or "The Streets Of Laredo" or "La Bamba", may all have been written well over one hundred years ago, but in many cases, the versions which people sing nowadays are relatively recent versions of those songs, copyrighted by singers very much still alive.

**Is there any way of checking out a tune, to see if it is free of all copyright?**

If you wish to check out the position, you can obtain a book called "Songs In Public Domain", or perhaps approach your local Performing Rights Society to check out any particular tune you have in mind, to make sure that it is not in fact, under copyright.

**Well I think we have exhausted the subject of copyright. Now the next question is - how do I make some money out of my composition?**

Well now of course, you have to get your song onto the market, on record, as it is not going to make any money for you until it is on record, and might I say that when I say on record, I simply mean on some form of recording available to the public. Usually, songwriters tend to approach a music publisher, as he is traditionally the person who publishes songs, gets a record label to put them on record, collects the royalties, and sends you a large fat cheque every so often.

**So how exactly do you approach this music publisher?**

In the good old days, or so the Hollywood movies suggest, the writer just dropped into his friendly neighbourhood publisher, who wheeled out the piano, so that the hero could play his latest smash hit for the suitably amazed executive.

Nowadays, if there is a piano on the premises, it is probably a drinks cabinet, and hasn't been

played since it was installed.

So today, you need a recording of your song, or demo recording as it is called. Now a demo is just that - a recording of your song for demonstration purposes, so you can make a demo yourself using a domestic tape machine with your own voice and nothing else, or of course you can hire the London Philharmonic Orchestra plus Abbey Road Studios.

**Obviously, you would not advise songwriters to make their own demos.**

Wrong - actually if you have the equipment and the ability, then you should produce your own demos.

Nowadays, tape machines and instruments are very advanced, and sounds are possible right now which would have required the London Philharmonic only ten years ago.

If you do not have the recording equipment, or the musical ability, then you can hire both. Most towns have recording studios, and musicians are easily (if not necessarily cheaply) come by. The important thing about making a demo yourself is that you are in control of the final product and you can produce the best version which you believe possible - or at least a version that satisfies you. It will not be all that cheap perhaps, but if you rehearse carefully, and if the musicians know what they are doing, it may not work out too expensive.

**What about the mail-order demo firms?**

Yes -you can use one of the mail-order demo services. The main advantage here is that these will usually work out cheaper. The disadvantage is that you are not in control - it depends on the interpretation put on your song by some arranger you have never met. Most mail order demo services are able to charge comparatively little because they work with the same tight group of musicians and singers, but often this means that they only have one or two vocalists available, and if your song does not quite suit their style of singing, you may not be too happy with the results. My advice is to ask for a sample tape, make one demo, and if you are happy with that, stick to that particular firm.

Actually, it is hard to be definitive about the best method of producing a demo since a lot depends on circumstances, but in my opinion, you are better off making the demo yourself, unless of course you find a firm which is capable of doing a better job than you yourself can.

**How good does a demo have to be to impress a music publisher?**

Well if every publisher was also a musician, then I would say not to worry about the demo, because a musician would recognise a good song no matter how badly performed it was. However, a lot of publishers started life as lawyers, accountants, managers or whatever - anything except musicians, and despite what they tell you, a good demo does impress them. They do not have the necessary imagination in many cases, to work out what your song might sound like if it had been properly recorded in the first place.

Smaller publishers also like well-made demos, because they can use a good demo to promote the song to labels or performers without having to re-record the material, saving both money and time.

**Sometimes you hear about demos which are good enough to use as masters. Should you go that far?**

Well it all depends on what type of song it is, and who it is destined for. Obviously, if you are hoping to have the song released by the latest heart-throb, there is no point in recording it to master standard. All you need is a good demo. On the other hand, if you have a local band or singer whose version of your song is really great, and if you can make a master-quality recording of the song using that act, then you can think in terms of not just selling the song to a publisher, but of selling the entire package of recording, song and act, to a major label.

Nowadays, most new product makes its way onto the market in this fashion. To a great extent, the days of the songwriter sending in a rough demo to the publisher, who then makes a better version, and sends it on to a label, who in turn persuades a star to record it, are gone. Nowadays, the package deal is more common...the writer writes a song, finds a band, records the band, and furnishes the label with a finished product

**In other words, songwriters nowadays are basically record producers?**

Not all of them by any means - there are plenty of "pure songwriters" about, but of course, with more acts writing their own material, outlets for the pure songwriter are reduced, so more and more writers are thinking in terms of the entire product - from the song to the record - and not just the song itself.

In reality, a lot of this comes about by chance. A writer decides to make a demo in a local studio, and instead of paying musicians, seeks out a local band, and offers them a chance to work in a studio free of charge, recording his song as a demo. If the recording works out better than expected, then the writer thinks in terms of selling the entire package as a master - if not, then he thinks only in terms of selling the song, while the band use the tape to try and get themselves a deal. If either succeeds, then both may be lucky. The publisher who likes the song may also be able to place the act -while if a label likes the act, they may also take the song.

**Of course, if a writer produces a master, he is dealing with a record label, and by-passing the music publisher?**

Usually that is so, and of course the writer will then think of trying to keep the publishing himself, or keeping at least some of it. On the other hand, I know quite a few writers who produced a master, and instead of going to a label with it, went to a publisher, and used the publisher's expertise and skill to get them a record release on the master.

**Which brings us back neatly to the role of the music publisher. There seem to be a lot of them about nowadays -how do you know which one to send your particular songs to?**

Well you can always purchase a list of music publishers, and start posting your tapes to the names on that list, but that is just a list of names and addresses and it won't tell you very much about each one. Of course, if you also have an idea what type of act has been published by each publisher, then you can be more specific in your promotion. To do this, you will need to make up a listing of acts, and the publisher used by each act. No list of this sort is commercially available so you usually have to make up your own.

**It seems strange that you should suggest sending a song to the publisher who has published a similar song. Surely he will be looking for something really different next time out?**

Oddly enough, publishers tend to regard with enthusiasm songs similar in style to the type of material they have had hits with - I suppose it is a psychological thing - but there is also some hard business logic behind it. If a publisher has had a hit with a particular type of song, he knows the ropes on placing that type of number, and that is half the battle.

Sometimes, it so happens that he will try and place the song with the singer whose previous hit he published, so that the whole thing becomes a Catch 22 situation. The publisher recalls a hit published by him - and now finds you have sent him a similar song. He contacts the act or record label concerned.

They would like to stick to the hit publisher who gave them their previous hit - he would like to stick to the hit formula which gave him that hit - and all of a sudden, the singer's follow-up sounds suspiciously like his previous record and frequently ends up missing the charts, which was hardly the point of the exercise in the first place, but it does often happen.

**I have heard that there are a number of Tip Sheets available which tell you where to send songs. Are these any good?**

Some are - some are not! I hate to recommend any as each issue is only as good as the tips in it, and who knows how good next month's issue might be. However two I do like are BandIt and SongLink, and they are relatively inexpensive (between £70 - \$140 and £300 - \$600 per year).

Some tipsheets are not good value, printing simply lists of names and addresses of producers, labels executives etc., with no guarantee that any of them are looking for songs at that moment.

Remember with all tip sheets, they are usually trying to obtain and publish information which most of the firms concerned would rather they did not. They usually get it right, but the company listed as wanting a particular type of song may still not have authorised that information to be published, and may not be happy that it has.

However, as some publishers dread being flooded by song submissions, getting confirmation that a song requirement is still valid, can be next to impossible.

Frankly, you are better off trying to build up your own contacts in the music industry, and when you have something worth playing to them, to contact them with your song. Tip Sheets are the next best thing if you do not have sufficient contacts.

**Is it true to say that most publishers are basically the same and that it makes no real difference which publisher you deal with?**

I would not agree there. There are some good publishers and some not so good publishers, and some downright bad publishers around. Now, very few songwriters today would sign a contract without having it first vetted by a good music business lawyer. In any event, many publishers now use stock or standard contracts, (the BACS, ISA or AGAC contracts for example), which are generally fair to both writer and publisher. For that reason, most

complaints which we receive deal not with the contract itself, but with the subsequent behaviour of the music publishing company offering that contract in the first place.

Wonderful promises are freely made in pre-contractual discussions, and generous contracts are often entered into, but in spite of this, the songwriter emerges years later, hurt and bewildered.

**So what is the songwriter to do?**

In most cases, the writer could have saved himself a lot of heartache by asking a number of basic questions -the sort of questions you might ask somebody who was offering to sell something on your behalf, collect the money, and send it on to you later on, after deducting their own cut -which after all is basically what publishing is all about.

**Obviously, you would want to be handled by a successful publisher, but isn't it true to say that a successful publisher has plenty of good songs and songwriters already, and is not likely to be interested in yours?**

Some writers are convinced that it is easier to get contracts for less commercial material from less successful publishers.. Our experience actually shows otherwise. The less successful publisher has fewer contacts, and so fewer outlets for songs signed, plus less money for demos and promotion (not to mention advances!), and frequently, though not always, less experience.

Accordingly, I think you are better off with publishers who have had at least one British or American Top 40 hit in the last twelve months. Forget about publishers who tell you about their hit in Scotland or Massachusetts, unless of course your material is suitable only for regional markets, and remember, if your publisher has been unable to get a hit for himself in the last twelve months, why should his track record now suddenly improve just because you are giving him your songs?

In any event, an unsuccessful music publisher is probably not as financially sound as you would like him to be.

**Yes but does this really matter to you?**

Well, as the publisher will be receiving your royalties, and putting them in his bank account before (hopefully) sending them on to you, you must be fairly happy about his financial position. In this respect, you should always ignore the obvious - things like large offices, flashy furniture, and the Porsche outside the door. It is funny but often when a writer is talking to us about a publisher, and we tell him that the firm in question has not had a hit in years, he will usually get very defensive, and tell us about the large offices, or the expensive furniture he has seen, or how the publisher drives a Mercedes. Most songwriters seem never to have heard of contract leasing.

**So you should ignore the outward signs?**

Not so much ignore the outward signs as concentrate on checkable facts. If you are self-employed, or if you have a friend in your firm's accounts department, you can have a credit check run on the music publisher by one of the many trade protection societies. Alternatively, a word with your friendly neighbourhood bank manager will elicit the information required.



Obviously, if you discover that the publisher is having trouble paying his own bills, you will certainly have to think twice about handing over your songs. Although overdue telephone bills should be paid by somebody, you hardly wrote your songs so that the royalties could be used to bring a smile to the face of somebody at British Telecom.

**Well, obviously therefore, you will want your publisher to have been successful, and to be financially sound -these things do go hand in hand, but suppose you are dealing with a new publisher -somebody who has not had the time to build up a track record or a huge bank balance, but who has exciting ideas. Surely you have to take a risk somewhere along the line.**

I agree, and if a publisher is just starting out, well he will be full of enthusiasm, and therefore more likely than most to push your work. But make sure that he does know something about the music publishing business.

Some years ago, I went with an ISA member to visit a publisher new to the business. We played him some demos, and the publisher expressed some interest in the songs, although he was a bit worried about the vocals on the demo. I had recognised this already, and so quickly explained that the songs had been performed by the writer in the style of the country legend Tex Ritter, simply because our member was a long-time fan of that singer, and was an expert at imitating the well-known nasal twang. However, we explained, the songs would readily suit most country singers, in particular Randy Travis.

But our publisher was having none of it... "No he said, the demos are fine. The songs are excellent and Tex Ritter's career needs to be resurrected anyway. I'll send them right on to him".

Gently we broke the news to our publishing expert that more than !fir. Ritter's career would have to be resurrected, the veteran singer having been dead for a very long time. To be honest, he was genuinely sorry about the star's demise, but needless to say, he didn't get the songs.

**It seems incredible.**

Well that was a minor, and somewhat humorous escapade, but over the years, we have had to explain to publishers the precise meaning of clauses in contracts which they themselves were offering. We have had to give publishers the correct contact addresses for stars whom they themselves had offered to contact with the songs they were signing... and we have even had to attempt to sing songs from lead sheet manuscripts, for music publishers who cheerfully admitted that they could not read one note of music -even though they published it!

After a few meetings, you will have some ideas yourself about the efficiency and expertise of your chosen publisher. If you are not impressed by what you see, but are still tempted to sign, remember that ignorant publishers will give you bad advice, fail to promote your songs effectively or at all, and in some cases, may not adequately protect your rights (or indeed even their own), in subsequent negotiations. Luckily, most ignorant publishers fail after the first year or two, but a few seem to lead a charmed life -so beware!

**The one area you have not touched upon is dishonesty -yet most songwriters think in terms of getting ripped off by dishonest music publishers. How real is that fear?**

Believe it or not, most people in the world are honest, and in spite of what many songwriters may think, so are most music publishers. In more than 25 years in this business, I can honestly say that I have found comparatively few dishonest publishers around.

Having said that, there do exist publishers who do not make the demos they promised when the song was first being assigned. There are publishers who fail to promote the song at all, having signed it, but never tell you this.

There are publishers who consistently fail to reply to letters from writers they have signed. There are publishers who make false claims of earlier successes. There are publishers who arrange sub-publishing deals to their own advantage and to your detriment, but all of these people are not necessarily crooked -just a little bent.

**Are there no really crooked publishers?**

Of course, there are crooked publishers, but they are a tiny minority who should be, and someday probably will be, in jail.

Before signing with any publisher, try and speak with somebody who has dealt with that publisher, and ask him about his own experiences. If you cannot locate a writer who has dealt with that publisher, try us. Over the last 40 years or more, we have heard from members who have had dealings with almost every music publishing company, and indeed almost every music publishing executive in existence, and we can usually give you some idea of what to expect.

Having said that, it is my opinion that in 90% of all cases, such precautions are superfluous, as I do genuinely believe that 90% of all publishers are relatively honest. They are not necessarily relatively efficient, or successful - but they are, by and large, usually honest.

**If they are, as you claim, usually honest, what then is meant when somebody refers to a publisher as a "shark publisher"?**

I never refer to one of these people as a "shark publisher" - simply as a shark.

Basically, a shark is a self-styled publisher who does not publish. The most basic form of shark is the gent who preys on lyric writers. As you know, when you approach a music publisher, he is only interested in hearing a complete song -and not just words. If he likes your song, he pays you a small advance, and starts trying to turn your song into a hit. In other words, the point I'm making is that a genuine music publisher publishes complete songs of lyrics and music, and that he pays you - not you him.

Now the shark works the other way around. He will express enthusiasm for anything you give him... words on their own, music on its own, pieces of toilet paper on its own, song titles on their own, anything you like - as long as you are willing to pay him to write melodies, write lyrics, write entire songs, and publish the results. The main point is that it will cost you money, and that you will never see one penny of that money again.

**I think most songwriters would run a mile if a publisher started asking for money to publish their songs.**

Possibly, but it's not always that clearcut. Since the ISA started pinpointing these people some years ago, they have got cuter. Nowadays, some of them say that the publishing is free, but that the writer will have to pay for copyright, or else for accounting fees, or else for promotion, or whatever. All of this is rubbish, and if you remember that the real publisher pays you, but that you pay the shark publisher, you will not go far wrong.

**OK, so I'm going to avoid shark publishers like the plague, and concentrate on the good guys. Now, how many songs to I send to the good guys at any one time?**

Not more than two or three, putting the best one first. The publisher is at least going to listen to the first one, although I have known publishers who rejected demos without playing them, simply because they didn't like the look of the lyrics. Indeed, I heard of one publisher who allegedly used to throw out about 80% of the demos purely on their appearance! If they didn't look nice and neat, he threw them out'. He always claimed that he had never rejected a hit song by using this method, but frankly I have my doubts! Anyway, how did he know?

I like to put the best song first because at least the publisher is going to listen to the first one. There is a theory that you should always keep the best until last, but in most cases, publishers will only listen to the first song anyway, and there is a strong possibility that unless the best one is first, he will never get to hear it.

In any event, never put more than three songs on any demo. Publishers get demo with 27 songs on them, and this annoys them no end - it looks so amateurish.

**When you say demo, do you mean CD?**

Oh yes - some publishers still play cassettes, but for demos, I always advise CDs. It's hard to imagine that when the ISA started, and for many years after, acetate discs were used for demos! There was no such thing as a cassette tape - it had not yet been invented - and as for a CD - the mind boggles!

**What about the letter to the publisher?**

Well, first off, make sure that you enclose the lyrics, neatly typed out, and most definitely not handwritten. Then you should enclose a brief letter, preferably on a professional-looking letterheading, saying simply that you are enclosing some songs, and hope that he finds them of interest. There is not much point in saying anything else. Indeed, anything else will probably be somewhat of an anti-climax - unless you really have had some major hits he knows nothing about, and so my advice is -stick to the facts and let the songs speak for themselves.

**How about a self-addressed envelope?**

Well, you will usually not get your tape back unless you enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and it is fair to say that even if you do, you may still not get your tape back. In any event, my advice is to use a Number 4 size jiffy for the package to the publisher, with a Number 3 size self-addressed stamped jiffy inside, for return of the tape to you. Make sure that you put sufficient postage on both jiffy bags - there is nothing more likely to put a publisher in a negative frame of mind than being asked by the postman to pay excess postage on your demo.

**What about demos being sent to the United States or Europe? How are you going to**

**enclose stamps for return postage?**

Well conventional wisdom suggests buying IRC's - International Reply Coupons, but frankly I think these are a waste of money. First off, they cost a hell of a lot, and secondly, most Americans have never heard of them, and do not realise that they can be exchanged for stamps.

Anyway, can you imagine the head of Warner Brothers trotting off to the post office with your IRC in hand looking for stamps? What I do is -I write to the Head Post Office in a small town in the relevant country, enclose cash, and ask them to send me stamps of that country, and I then use them for reply purposes.

In some cases where I have a relative or friend living in that country, I ask him to buy some for me. I have actually bought mint stamps from stamp dealers, but that works out slightly dearer than I would wish for. If all else fails, I go to the bank and get some banknotes of the country in question, equal to the cost of return postage of my package, and I staple these to my letter.

However, to be honest - I do not expect to get the package back if they do not like the song.

**I presume you send the whole thing off by registered post?**

Well I would not bother. I would always try to get a certificate of posting from the post office, but as a lot of publishers in the USA refuse all registered post, I would not bother with it myself.

**Is it true that American publishers often refuse unsolicited material, not just registered post material?**

Yes - that's true enough. Actually, European songwriters who complain about publishers not returning their demos inside a month, amuse me. In America, many publishers refuse point blank to even open unsolicited material, and European writers have it comparatively easy. I think it will eventually happen here too, because some British publishers are getting tired of putting up with abuse from songwriters about missing demos or delays in returning demos, which technically speaking, the publisher didn't have to accept in the first place, and never asked for in the second.

**I have often seen song promotion schemes or song plugging schemes advertised. What are these and are they any good?**

Well, promotion schemes basically offer to promote your songs in return for a fixed fee, rather than a percentage of any income. Although many firms are vague as to how they do the actual promotion, our experience is that most of them duplicate your song onto a CD, along with other songs, and then post it out to publishers or to labels on their list. The writer benefits, because the cost of duplicating, let's say, fifty CDs, and posting them to fifty publishers, would be greater than the cost of using the service provided.

Now you might ask how the companies show a profit. Well, they show a profit because some of them are putting as many as twenty songs on each disc, and so collecting twenty fees.

Some claim to personally visit publishers and labels with your demo, but frankly I would really want some proof that they are really doing that.

**Would it not be true to say that most of these plugging companies would have better contacts than most songwriters?**

Well, some of the companies do claim to have good contacts, but do remember that no number of good contacts can sell a bad song, and on the other hand, if the song is good, you could probably sell it yourself just as easily. Again, remember that if your song is being promoted say nineteenth, on a CD of twenty songs, I would lay any money that it will never get heard by any publisher even if the disc does land on his desk. Finally, don't forget that if the promotion company does not make a real effort to screen the songs, your song may end up on a CD with nineteen very poor songs, or even downright bad songs, and that won't help your chances either.

**Quite clearly, you do not think too much of song promotion schemes?**

Not really, although if a company was offering to promote on a fixed percentage of any subsequent income (say 10%), like a writer's agent would, then I might go ahead, simply because I'd have nothing to lose. But most want cash up front, and as I say, they could be putting 20 songs or more on each CD. In any event, if you are interested, ask the company to tell them just how many songs will be on each CD and insist that they send you a copy of the final promotion CD before you agree to it.

Alternatively, you should ask them for the name and address of one of their successes and check it out with him. Unfortunately, the modus operandi of promotion schemes lends itself to dishonest practices, as there is never any visual proof of promotion per-se. Indeed sometimes there is no proof that it has ever even commenced.

**OK, you've picked out a publisher, and you've sent him your song. What happens if he likes it?**

Well, if the publisher likes the song he may contact you and ask to meet you. The reason he may want to meet you is because the publisher is going to spend a lot of money on you and he will probably want to make sure that you are the sort of person who will be able to produce songs on a regular basis, in other words to make sure that you are a person who has the potential to become a prolific songwriter.

He is also going to have to deal with you on a regular basis, you are going to have to trust him and he's also going to have to trust you, so that's another reason why he will probably request a person-to-person meeting.

**So, you will not wake up some morning and simply find a contract in your letterbox?**

In fact that may also happen - he may just send you a contract in the post, and ask you to sign that on a one-off basis, and of course that will give you plenty of time to examine it and decide if you want to.

On the other hand, he may of course like your songs and not send you a contract, nor an invitation, he might simply ask for more songs. Many publishers do this because this is one way of checking if you are really in the business of writing songs or simply an amateur who has come up with one good idea, and will never come up with another.

**Supposing I am lucky and get sent a contract. What should I look for in this document?**

Well, you yourself should not look for anything in a contract, because under no condition

should you examine a contract on your own. A contract is a binding legal document, and once signed, it is very difficult to break it, so take care.

**But surely if I insist on having the contract checked, the publisher may get a bit annoyed, and drop me altogether?**

First of all, publishers do not get annoyed if you ask for time to have the contract checked. Some publishers, in fact, insist that you take the contract away and take legal advice on it before signing it. In recent times I've seen lots of contracts which actually have a clause written into them saying that you confirm that you have taken legal advice before signing.

Songwriters sometimes think that publishers will give them just one hour to read over and sign the contract, but that's Hollywood rubbish. Songwriters who believe this often have no idea how long it's going to take for their song to get put on disc, but take it from me, it'll probably take months, so you're not doing any damage or any harm by holding onto the contract for one or two weeks. If the songs are really good and the publisher's really interested, he will sign them no matter how long you take to examine the contract. There are no time limits in songwriting.

**OK - so you should have the contract checked out, but who do you get to do this for you?**

You can get your contracts checked through a lawyer, but it's very important that you get a lawyer who knows something about the music business. Any lawyer can look at a contract, and any lawyer can tell you if the contract is watertight, and you can take it from me that most of them will be anyway.

But what you need is a lawyer or a solicitor who knows what the normal percentages on offer in the business are. You see, if you went to a criminal lawyer tomorrow morning and said you'd got a publishing contract offering you let's say, thirty percent, well, he would possibly not know whether thirty percent was good, bad, or indifferent. All he'd be able to tell you is if the contract would be legally watertight... whether it would oblige you to stick with the publisher, and what else it might force you to do - that's about all he might be able to tell you. If he expressed any opinions on the percentage, it might well relate to his knowledge of book publishing, where a normal deal can be as low as 10% to the writer, and accordingly, he might well feel that the 30% on offer to you appeared to be a great deal, whereas as every songwriter knows, the minimum percentage which a songwriter ought to be getting, is 50%.

**So you would advise looking for a music business lawyer?**

You're better off to get a music business lawyer, a lawyer who's familiar with music business contracts, but not a lawyer, by the way, recommended by the music publishing company. Sometimes the company will suggest that their lawyer will advise you free of charge. But what you save really, is only a matter of perhaps twenty five or fifty pounds on a songwriting contract, and it's always better to use your own lawyer. Incidentally, my advice is to use your own people in all areas; use your own accountant, your own lawyer, and your own agent.

Another tip I would give is to beware of any company that seems to be very critical of your advisors. That's a bad sign, because normally people in the same industry don't criticise each other openly, and if they start criticising one of your advisors, it may very well be that they are afraid of this particular person; perhaps this particular lawyer or accountant or whoever,

has caught them out before.

**You mentioned 50% as the minimum percentage due to a writer, so I wonder if you could explain the terms normally offered to writers in songwriting contracts.**

Well, I think I already said you shouldn't really examine a contract on your own, because you really should be getting a lawyer to do so. But if you have decided that you are going to examine it on your own before going to a lawyer to do the full examination, then my advice is to look for the following points.

Somewhere in the contract there should be an advance payment, no matter how nominal, because that is the whole principle of the thing. The publisher is going to be paying you; you're not going to be paying him, and in return for this payment, which might be 5p or £5.00 or £500.00, you will be giving the publisher the rights to promote your songs for a fixed period of time, after which you get them back, which brings neatly enough to the second thing that there ought to be in your contract - namely a short reversionary clause of some type or other.

**By a reversionary clause, I presume you mean a clause which gives the song back to you after a certain period of time has elapsed?**

Exactly. Ideally, there should be two reversionary clauses in the contract. There should be, first of all a reversionary clause which will give you back the material if the publisher is unable to place it. That's obvious enough. In other words, if the publisher can't get a recording of your material, you will get it back within a specified time. This could be so many months, or years, but certainly it should be no more than two years, whereby the publisher agrees that if he is unable to get the songs on record, the songs will revert to your ownership, and you will be free to try elsewhere with them, and (what's more important), keep the advance which was paid you.

Now, the normal term for such a clause is two years. You can suggest to your publisher that he should make it one year, and he'll probably laugh at you, but a lot of professional songwriters wouldn't even give him one year; they'd give him perhaps a one-month option on the song before they took it elsewhere. Now the chances are that you are not a professional songwriter, but I've seen contracts drawn up even for newcomers where the reversionary clause came into effect after only six months.

**You also mentioned a second reversionary clause. What does this do?**

This is a reversionary clause which comes into effect even if the song has been published and recorded. In other words, a reversionary clause which stipulates that the publisher should give you back the rights to your song after a certain number of years, even if he's been successful with it. Now you can argue the number of years with him; some writers will insist on ten years, or fifteen, and all that is a matter for bargaining, but again the principle should be insisted upon, that the publisher will not own the material for life even if he has been successful with it, and in any event, will not ever get to keep it if he has failed to get a recording of the song onto the market.

**What about the percentages mentioned earlier? How do you work out if the ones on offer to you are normal?**

Well the worst possible contract a newcomer would get would show one percentage of 10%

and a whole load of 50s. If you see any figures lower than 10 and 50, well, there's something seriously wrong anyway. But these are minimal, and I wouldn't say that just because those figures were in the contract, that it was a good contract, but in order to explain the significance of percentages in general, I'll use those minimums as a guideline.

The lower figure (the 10%) usually applies to all sheet music sales, and the higher figure (the 50% or upwards) usually applies to everything else - in other words, all performance royalties, mechanical royalties, recording royalties or any other royalty which comes in.

**Can we start with the figure you refer to as the "ten percent figure"?**

The figure which I referred to as the ten percent figure, applies normally to sheet music sales. Now if you don't find any reference to sheet music royalties, and you query this, the publisher may well say that there's nothing in the contract about sheet music sales because nowadays nobody buys sheet music. This is spurious, and you should demand a percentage of all sheet music sales. Now, we all accept that whereas your song may become a success, it may not, of course become another "Strangers In The Night", but even so, the sheet music sales on any best-seller can be very substantial, particularly on tuneful, melodic, middle-of-the-road type songs.

Now, of course your publisher is telling the truth if he says that sheet music doesn't sell as well as it used to, but what still sells quite well is the compilation album of sheet music. These still sell and at very high prices: indeed you often see these in shops at £6.00, £7.00, even £10.00 each. You know the sort of thing I am referring to - books like "The Elvis Presley SongBook" etc.

You must get paid on these lines, because such books can sell two hundred and three hundred thousand copies each, and if they are selling at £10.00, and you're not getting your lox of it, that's a hell of a lot of money to be missing out on.

**Right, so the ten percent figure, or in any event, the lower figure, refers to sheet music sales. How about the fifty percent or higher figure? Does that refer to record sales?**

Yes, the fifty percent, or (preferably) higher royalty figure refers usually to all other income, from whatever source, including performance and mechanical royalties.

**What exactly are performance royalties?**

Most songwriters know that if a record sells, they get paid for every copy sold over the counter. Such royalties are usually referred to as mechanicals. Many writers know as well, that in fact most of their money comes not from these royalties but from performance royalties - in other words royalties paid each time your song is performed. Those royalties are very important, because they could mean that if your record never sold at all in any real quantity, it might still earn some money if it were played on radio or on television, or in a dance hall, or a disco, or indeed, in fact, if it were sung on stage live by a group or whatever.

Now, payments in this area can range from perhaps just a pound or two if it's a local English station at 7 a m in the morning to hundreds of pounds if your song is played on peak time television. And of course, if you're ever lucky enough to have your song chosen as a signature tune for a popular television show, well then the sky's the limit. So make sure that this percentage is as high as you can get. I myself would never accept anything under 60% in



this area, and if possible, I'd be trying for 70% or 75%.

**What then are the mechanical? I presume these are the royalties from record sales?**

Exactly. If a record is sold over the counter, so much of the money paid by the record buyer goes back to the record company. The record company then pays the music publisher a percentage of the retail price of the record, and the publisher then pays you a percentage of this (at least 50% of it) or whatever figure has been agreed in the contract. Again, I'd be thinking in terms of looking for 60% to 70% as a minimum, given that the legal minimum in this area is 50%.

**What about other sources of income -for example if your song is used in an advertising jingle?**

Well if your song is used in a film, or if it's used as an advertising jingle, then you will also receive a percentage of that income. Again, there is a 50% minimum, but again, I'd be thinking in terms of asking for 60% or 70%. Usually, the percentages throughout the contract, are identical anyway. In other words, if the publisher has offered 60% for one of the sources of income, he will be offering 60% for them all.

**How often are you paid your royalties?**

There should be a section in the contract which states when payments will be made. This, of course, will have to be on a regular basis, the maximum period between payments should be no more than six months or so. Beware of a clause which is quite popular in the USA, by the way, which simply state that payments will be made "as soon as possible", because what is soon for you may not be possible for them for years, and you might find yourself waiting for money while they put it in the bank and earn interest on it. Worse than that of course, they might go broke before they pay you, and then you'll get nothing. So make sure that there's a reasonable time limit laid down.

**Are you allowed to check the publisher's books to see if you are being paid in full?**

Yes, in your contract, there should also be a section stating that you may inspect their books at any stage, but make sure that it makes clear that either you or somebody appointed by you, may look at the books, because frankly, it would probably be of little use you looking at the books on your own, unless of course you happen to be an accountant.

**Any final advice on contracts?**

Well, I think that's all I can say about contracts, apart from again stating, as I do every day to people, that if you're given a contract, that's what lawyers are for. Send it to a lawyer or your local association or guild. Do not deal with these things yourself.

**Well, eventually I have got the contract I want. What happens now once I have signed it?**

Well, now the publisher tries to get the song recorded. There is no advantage in his keeping it in a desk and not bothering with it even though songwriters often complain that this is what is happening. It can happen, sometimes because between the date the publisher signed the song and the date he starts to work on it, there has been a change of circumstance, or his best contact is no longer with the label or whatever, but you must remember that when the publisher signs you, he is already spending money on you.

He may have only spent a few pounds in signing you up, but of course, you are now part of his overheads. You are part of his telephone bill, his legal fees, his rent. So every time he sits down in his plush chair, you are probably paying a portion of the leasing cost of it, or at least you would be if you were earning any money for him.

So from being one of his assets (which is the way he thought of you when he signed you), you have now become one of his liabilities, but you could yet become one of his assets, so he does try and promote your songs. Indeed, a lot of publishers won't sign you up at all unless they are already pretty sure they can sell the song. Accordingly, in spite of what writers often think, there aren't that many publishers nowadays who just put the song on the shelf and forget about it.

**In reality therefore, it would seem that getting your song accepted by a publisher is only half the battle? He must now get it accepted by a record label or a recording artist?**

Precisely. Now, this is a completely different type of business from the business of songwriting, so there's not much point in going into it in detail. But basically, your publisher will be contacting record companies, record producers and singers, and this activity will hopefully lead within the next few months to you getting a letter in the post, saying that the song is about to be recorded by somebody or other. Now, remember, the publisher makes no money until then, and so, there is no point in ringing him up every week and pestering him to know who is recording it, because, I can assure you, if there's any good news at all, he'll be the first to know and you'll be a close second.

**So, the publisher finally secures a cover on my song. What now?**

The publisher's first task, even before the song is out on the market is to ensure that it is copyrighted properly around the world. Your own home copyright which we talked about earlier, is sufficient for an unpublished song but naturally, of course, copyright for a published song is much more complicated, and the first thing the publisher must do is to make sure that the copyrights are protected in every small, out-of-the-way country in the world, as well, of course, as in all the large ones. Some of these countries will have different copyright laws, so the whole matter is relatively complex.

**Having secured the copyright, is the publisher's involvement finished when the song finally comes out on record?**

No, in fact when the song finally emerges on record, the publisher will continue promotion. Although the record label will now be promoting the record itself, a good publisher will also be involved in pushing the record as well, either by contributing to the promotion budget, or even by having his own pluggers going round the radio stations trying to push the song, and he will also be trying to get other people to do cover versions of it.

He will still be approaching other record labels and producers, trying to get the song put on other artist's albums, included in compilations, used in films and in advertising jingles, etc. and if he's a good publisher, and hopefully he will be, then five years from now, he'll still be pushing that song.

**So that is why years later, so many old songs make a comeback on the charts?**

Yes, somewhere, some good publisher is still pushing! You know, songwriters often

complain that the charts are too full of old songs and that it's unfair to songwriters. But of course it's not unfair to songwriters. Whether they're old songs or new songs, some songwriter is making money out of them, and I can assure you that the songwriter who has written the old song now back in the charts, is very pleased that his publisher is still managing to get a recording of it, because that's how the income mounts up -not just from the first hit, but from the subsequent versions of it.

**A hit song is sort of like a pension for life then?**

Exactly. A publisher told me once that his income ratio was one to one; in other words the first hit recording only brought in half the amount of what the song would make in later non-hit versions by other artists.

**Your read that nowadays, the internet is the way to go for the songwriter - that he should put his music up there and wait for it to be discovered. What do you think?**

The internet has made it so much easier for anybody, songwriter or performer, to get the music directly to the people that really matter - the audience, but at the end of the day, we are back to one factor - if you can write a good song, the internet is your world. If you cannot - it does not help.

However, where the internet really comes into its own is when a songwriter-performer is involved. Here you can bypass the record label (and indeed the music publisher) and do the whole job yourself. (And of course, keep the entire income yourself!)

So, if having dealt with a label and a publisher, you end up earning 10% of the proceeds of your first album, how much nicer to bypass these people, and go directly to your audience on the internet. Here you can afford to drop your sales by half, and still increase your income five times over!

**How long should it take for me to break through as a songwriter?**

I wish I could tell you, but it is like asking, "how long is a piece of string".

Victor Vickers came from Edmonton, and he was 72 when he had his first song recorded. He dropped me a line immediately to say that he had been writing for twenty years, without success, and had only been told about the ISA a few months earlier, when he had mentioned to a friend that he was thinking of packing in the songwriting.

Vance Freeman, was from New Romney, and had been a subscriber for just over ten years before he got a song released on record. Even before he had his first song accepted, he had set up his own studio and publishing firm - but it still took ten years for him to make it work. And both of them were as pleased as punch - even though they had had to work at their craft for one or two decades, before anybody even noticed.

You see, in spite of the popular perception that all stars are overnight successes - it ain't necessarily so (to coin a phrase). In fact, it ain't so - period. Carole King was writing for nine years before having her first success. Her partner Gerry Goffin remembers writing 150 songs before a publisher took the first one. And these are just two examples of the thousands of million-selling songwriters whose path to the top was anything but smooth.

Some years ago, a radio producer phoned to ask if we could give him the name of a songwriter who had taken up songwriting and produced a hit song within one year. We told him that if we could go back to the 1960 we were sure we could - just to leave it with us. But we couldn't. Even the teen stars back in the sixties that we were sure had been quickest of the mark, turned out to have been writing songs for several years, before producing their first hit.

But successful songwriters did have two things in common. They were very determined, and they wrote songs - lots and lots of songs - before making it.

Take Neil Sedaka for example. Neil was an accomplished classical pianist, who decided that the only way to learn songwriting was the same way he had learned the piano - by practising. And the only way to practise songwriting, in his view, was to write one new song every single day for as long as it took. He started - and stuck to this task for 361 days! Not one of those songs was ever recorded afterwards - but that was not the point of the exercise. He had succeeded in doing what he set out to do - he had learned his craft.

And learning the craft, any craft, does take practice - unfortunately. I remember asking an English teacher in school why I had to write an essay every weekend. I mean, I knew what I was going to write about - so all I needed to know was how to paragraph, and a few other tricks of the trade, and I could learn all that in one class. I didn't have to actually write a new one each week - I could just be told how to do it, and when exam time came, just go in and do it. What was I wasting my time practising for?

He agreed. In fact, he suggested that I should try out my theory in other fields of endeavour also - particularly football (my real passion). If I wanted to become a football pro (and I certainly did), then according to my theory, all I had to do was watch a few football games, and when I saw what it was the top pros do - copy them. There was no need for me to be rushing down to the pitch each day after school to train for hours - now was there?

Of course, the old fool didn't understand. I mean - how could I explain to a man who must have been nearly forty, that I actually enjoyed training each afternoon? OK, it was always hard - it was often boring - but I could feel myself getting better at it each day, and I knew if I kept at it, I would make the team. And I did. I can still recall the first game I played. I was great - my mom told me so.

But suppose that afternoon, I had gone on the field without every having kicked a ball - simply watched it on TV?

Can you recall the first song you wrote? It was absolutely brilliant - wasn't it? Your family, your friends, your dog - they all liked it - particularly the dog.

Can you bear to listen to it nowadays? I thought so. How did you ever write something so trite - so amateurish - so childish? "You see, practice really does makes perfect" my dumb English teacher used to tell me.

Perhaps the old fool had a sort of a point after all.

**OK - so what are the odds of making making as fortune in songwriting?**

Frankly, I would rather put my money on a healthy horse! But then, I am not as talented as I would like to be - but even with talent, and the perfect song - you still need a lot of luck.

**So you do not subscribe to the theory that you can make your own luck?**

Actually I do. A few years ago, I was lucky enough to meet a legendary songwriter, a man who has had more hits than I have had hot dinners as the saying goes, but a man who has kept his feet firmly on the ground during what has been a lucrative, if tempestuous career.

To get started, I quoted him part of Patricia Knapton's interview in our own Songwriter Magazine with ISA member Don Woods in which Don had said - "There are a lot of talented songwriters who just don't get the lucky breaks, so, sometimes in life you've got to make your own luck."

My interviewee totally agreed. "Writing songs for a living" he said " means two things - making the songs and then making the luck".

Once for example, he placed a song with a major publisher whom he "accidentally" ran into in a restaurant. How accidental that was can be gauged from the fact that he had spent three days watching the front door of the publisher's office, hoping to see him go to lunch on his own. On the third day, he "got lucky", and quite literally, "bumped" into the executive as they both entered the restaurant. To this day, that publisher apparently still thinks the meeting was accidental, and tells people how lucky it was that - having started talking about sport - they both "discovered" that each was involved in the music business!

On another occasion while on holiday, my interviewee was part of a group of tourists visiting a movie set as part of a package tour. While there, he got talking with a director of a show which was being taped at that moment, a show which my interviewee admitted to me, he had never seen.

However, he just "happened" to mention that he was a songwriter, and had written a song some time earlier specially for the series.

Naturally, the director politely suggested he might like to send it in to the TV company's office - but my friend demurred, saying that he was sure they had many fine writers available to them - whereas he had written the song purely from a dedicated fan's point of view.

This intrigued the director even more, and the upshot was that he ended up getting the great man's home address, coupled with an invitation to drop over with the tape as soon as he could. At this point, he admitted, panic set in, but grabbing some of the show's publicity sheets from the main desk, he rushed back to his hotel, and using simply some of the character descriptions from the blurb - he wrote the song in a matter of hours, demoed it in a piano-vocal fashion in a small two-track studio attached to a local radio station, and phoned his newly-found director friend.

The result? Not only a song in the series itself, but an invitation to write a number of songs for both that show, and for other shows the company was producing. As he said to me - "being able to make your own luck is better than being lucky. Luck runs out eventually - but

your ability to create your own opportunities doesn't".

But my favourite story came from a man who made his own luck - and became a songwriter because he had to.

When TV chiefs originally saw the pilot for "Gilligan's Island", they turned it down saying that every week the story of how these particular men just happened to be on this island, would have to be explained all over again for new viewers tuning in - and that this would create too long an introduction to each programme.

So Sherwood Schwartz who had created the show, asked the moguls for 24 hours to think up a solution - eventually coming up with the idea of encapsulating the explanatory introduction into a theme song.

Then, Schwartz was forced to stay up all night penning the song, before performing it live - without backing - to the network executives next morning. They bought the show on the strength of his performance - and the real kicker was - up to that moment, Sherwood Schwartz had never written a song in his life!

Come to think of it, I should have given that radio producer Sherwood's name - he was definitely the only songwriter I ever met whose first song was a hit!

## **Lesson 3 - Copyright Or Face The Consequences**

Do you always copyright your songs before promoting them and do you always obtain a certificate or proof of posting, before sending out your demos? No bluffing now! I see - just as I thought - like me, you think lightning never strikes you - it always clobbers the other guy. Well, recently it struck a guy we know, and let me tell you, it has not turned out to be the most pleasant of experiences.

John (that's as good a name as any) writes prolifically. Obviously, most of what he writes gets discarded, but what survives is generally very good, and John has had some near misses.

He does not however, have a current publishing agreement so when it comes to promotion, he is on his own. Of course, when it comes to protecting his copyright, he is also on his own, but usually, he gets around to it - eventually.

What I mean by "eventually" is that John often saves his songs for a while, and then sends a batch of them to himself using the trusty old registered envelope, but usually, weeks if not months after writing the material. It is an amateur method - admittedly used by countless generations of songwriters,

Anyway, some time back, John penned quite a clever piece, and duly posted it out to all and sundry. There was a flutter of interest from one or two of the contacts and no reply from the others - in other words, par for the course. Some months went by and then one day, John's sister heard part of his song on an album by a singer to whose management John was certain he had sent the demo.

Needless to say, his name was not the one credited on the record, and so John sent the whole package to us.

Now, the similarity was significant, but amounted to less than a third of the new song. John had indeed copyrighted the tune in question, but when we looked at it, the date on his envelope just happened to be some days after the album had been released, even though John was not aware of that album for several weeks, and anyway, knew he had demoed the song six months before getting around to copyrighting it.

And the killer was that although he knew he had posted it to the singer's management company, he had no proof of posting, nor any reply from the firm acknowledging its receipt. Naturally, he phoned the people in question, but they had no recollection of his song, and needless to say, were not terribly interested in listening to his complaint anyway.

It is not totally hopeless. A musician who worked on the backing to the demo, does recall recording it, but cannot really pinpoint when, and in any event, he admits that he never got to hear the full vocal. And while John's sister recalls hearing the song long before she heard the album, she also cannot pinpoint the date. One of the people who expressed some interest, remembers John, but not the song, and of course, nobody apart from John himself, can back his claim that he ever posted it to the company concerned in the first place.

In other words - it has the makings of a very expensive and probably unsuccessful legal

shambles.

It is not, to put it mildly, a satisfactory situation, somewhat akin to picking the winning lottery numbers, and then losing the ticket. And it all could have been avoided if the song had been copyrighted at least a week before promotion using two distinct methods (just in case one fails), and (equally important), a certificate of posting on the promotion had been obtained.

I know, it rarely happens, and anyway, when it does, it always to somebody else, but still - if it happened to you, then you might not be quite as pragmatic as John. He says it goes to prove he can write a good song - not that he ever thought it was all that good anyway.

Lovely attitude, but I do not think I would be as calm.

Oh, and in case you think that only people like John fail to take care of business, Billboard Magazine recently checked the US copyright registrations of the Top 100 Albums, and discovered that over a third of them had no copyright registration as sound recordings with the Copyright Office. This included albums by Backstreet Boys, Bob Dylan, the Verve, and even the soundtrack from the most recent "Austin Powers" movie. So John is in good company!

Of course, there is a common misconception that somewhere, there is an international body which will protect your copyright and pursue anybody who infringes on it - a sort of copyright police force.

There is not. You are responsible for protecting it yourself, unless you have assigned your song to a music publisher - whereupon it becomes his problem. As a result of there not being any statutory body willing to pursue wrongdoers on your behalf, various services have grown up which offer to register your work for a fee.

Remember, irrespective of the official-sounding names they may use - these are in general, private businesses and not government or semi-government bodies, and if you ask them, they will tell you that all they will do is take your song, give you a receipt, and cash your cheque. Which is fine - as long as they are still in business in ten years time, when you need them!

Writing a song is like making a piece of furniture. Once you write the song (or make the chair), you own it. You do not need to register it, post it to yourself give it to your local clergyman - or whatever in order to own it - you own it.

Of course, proving that you own it is another matter. At some stage you may be called upon to provide evidence that you wrote that song or made that chair - and that evidence should be such that it will stand up in court.

Producing your mother before the judge to say she saw you write it or make it, may not be quite as good as producing the Archbishop of Canterbury - but at the end of the day, it is a matter of how believable your witness is.

In the UK, two major Copyright Acts, in 1911 and 1956, form the basis on which most of a



songwriter's rights rest.

By various international agreements, notably two events called the Berne Convention and the Universal Copyright Convention, your song, whether written in the UK or elsewhere, is protected to a greater or lesser extent in almost every other country of the world, although there are exceptions.

Most of these countries have also passed various Copyright Acts during this century, updating the law to cover the new discoveries in which music could be used, such as records and tapes, radio, T.V., films etc.

In Britain you don't have to do anything to officially copyright a song. As soon as it actually exists outside your mind in some "tangible form", that is once you have written it down or made a recording whether amateur or professional, then copyright begins from that moment.

However, proving this is another matter, and further down this reply, I will explain a number of methods of trying to protect your copyrights.

It is the same in many other countries, although in the USA, the system has long been more common to "register" songs in the federal copyright office in Washington and to pay a fee of a \$30 dollars.

However, although this is a government-run organisation, do remember that it does not "protect" your copyright, nor does it offer to pursue anybody on your behalf - it simply offers to register your copyright for a fee.

The international symbol of copyright is a 'c' in a circle, and if you are sending or taking around manuscripts or lyrics with tapes of your songs you should write, at the foot of the first page of any manuscript or lyric "(c) copyright by..." (inserting your name and address where the dots are).

In the UK even if you sell your song to a publisher, you are the first owner of the copyright, and in some continental countries you always remain the owner and in effect you only license the publisher to do certain things for you i.e., print, collect royalties etc.

The only time in the UK when you may not be the first owner of a copyright is if you were employed by someone else to create it, as with a newspaper reporter writing an article.

The exact time of creation of each song is not important in the UK, as copyright lasts for the whole of your lifetime and for many years after that. If two of you wrote the song together then copyright continues for fifty years after the death of whoever dies last.

This is not too likely to worry you, but might concern your heirs.

Thanks to the international agreements I mentioned earlier, this applies in the UK to foreign songs as well, and your song will in turn be protected for the same or roughly the same length of time in most other countries too, including (from 1st January 1978) the USA,

where until then the rights only lasted for a total of fifty-six years.

Now for the protection of your copyright.

In the UK, protection of your copyright can be effected by any method which gives you a dated receipt for your material - preferably from a source independent of yourself.

Accordingly, you can effect copyright protection by depositing your material with a bank or solicitor and obtaining from them a dated receipt. Banks rarely die, and although lawyers are not eternal, their legal practices are generally sold on to another lawyer.

Alternatively, you can use the ISA service, which is basically the same as this, or any of the other protection or deposit services.

Remember, providing you with a receipt may not in itself be sufficient. A court may well wish to have some form of evidence from the protection source that what they have in their records, is what you say they should have - which means you may have to call them as witnesses (which in general means paying their expenses).

It has long been the practice that you can post the material to yourself in an official Post Office registered envelope, keeping the envelope unopened in a safe place, along with the registration certificate, until needed. Remember, you should use an official Post Office supplied registered envelope - not an ordinary envelope sent by registered post.

Some of the commercial copyright services sneer at this method, and claim it is not "legal". In fact the question as to whether sending it to yourself is a fireproof method or not, has never been determined. It is likely however that if you post it to yourself, your opponent will claim that having got it back, you tampered with the envelope and changed the contents.

Some writers accordingly, who use this method, post it to a third party - who is willing to accept it.

Again, it all goes back to who the court believes and the reason why it is suggested that you use the official Post Office Registered Envelope is because tampering with them generally leaves some evidence.

In any event, as you may end up with a number of these envelopes, it is a good idea to write the name of the song on the rear of the envelope.

It is also a good idea to put as few songs as possible into each envelope. Although they say that lightning does not strike twice, it would be a shame if separate copyright disputes arose at two different times, over two different songs, which had been copyrighted in the same envelope!

Lyrics can be sent on their own, or (if a melody is also to be protected), a rough tape or manuscript, can be enclosed.

Normally, the letter "C" in a circle, or © followed by the year, is written on any copy.

In America, it has long been the practice to register through the Register of Copyrights, Library Of Congress, Washington DC20599, USA. They will send you a form, called form PA.

There is a fee for each song copyrighted in this manner.

The Library Of Congress Copyright Office is on the web at

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/>

and you can download forms from that site.

Although the Library of Congress is a long-standing method of registration - it is simply that and nothing else. Do not expect them to call in the FBI if somebody steals your song - but the fact that a government organisation is running it, should mean it will not go out of business!

## Lesson 4 - Writing The Hit, What The Pros Do

A selection of quotes from Songwriter Magazine interviews

Can you guess who the speakers are?

“Buddy De Silva once told me that whereas not every writer could be the best, any writer who wanted to could get a reputation for being reliable. Many times, I got songwriting jobs over men with superior talent, but who were undependable”.

*“Songwriting is a craft - it takes time to develop - it involves trial and error, so the chances of writing something brilliant the first time are unlikely. The problem with sending out your early material is that the person reviewing it could probably write just as well themselves!”*

“I think I wrote my first song when I was about 14. It was probably terrible, but I thought it as brilliant! I played it for everybody and they all told me it was brilliant. I did nothing with it, because I did not know what happened next anyway, and after writing a few more, I sort of gave up. I started again when I was 20 - but the first few songs were neither here nor there and I was about to give up again. Then I was in a library one day, and came across a book titled "Old Love In A New Town", and thought it was a nice title. I went home and wrote the song in an afternoon along with my then songwriting partner. We made a rough demo, piano, guitar and two voices - I still have the tape - it was really brutal. I had no idea what to do next, as I knew nothing about songwriting as a business. I saw a sheet music copy with a publisher's address listed on it, so I sent it to him. To my amazement, he wrote a personal letter saying it was good but not quite right - and making one or two suggestions. He also suggested I send him more stuff. Up to then, I only wrote when the mood took me. Now, after that letter, we wrote every spare minute we could. Without that initial interest, we would probably have given up for good”.

*“Randy Newman was one of the first guys that I ever heard talking about getting into a routine, and going down to the office every day - that that helped him get organised and get some work done. And I started going to my office every day as an experiment, just to see could I work there, would ideas come? I found that it's been just a totally enjoyable experience”.*

“I wait until I have a hook - either melodic or lyrical. I do not bother to start a song without the hook - what's the point? When I have the hook, let's say it is the title, then I work on it to get an equally catchy melodic sequence to go with it, and then when I am happy with that, I work on the rest of the song. Usually, I do the melody first, and complete the lyrics at the end. But without the hook - there is no real point in bothering with the rest of the song, because having spent hours or days working on it, you may never come up with a hook anyway, so all your work has been in vain”.

*“The phone rang one night - I don't even remember the name of the guy who called - but I do remember the conversation. I invited him - whoever he was - to come up to the house awhile and he told me, 'No, I just wanted to call and talk to you for awhile. I think I'll just stay here and drink'. Then he hung up. That line struck me as a good idea so I wrote it down and started working on it. The record company had been after me to come up with a fast song. So I decided that "I Think I'll Just Stay Here And Drink" would be the fast song they'd been wanting”.*

“I spent a small fortune on recording equipment, and a piano. I even had a special chair and table for writing songs on. You do need all of that obviously, but the best return on my investment came from the 50 cents I spent on a pocket notebook I bought in Woolworths. Any time I came across a good phrase, or a slogan, or an idea, I jotted it down in that book. I have perhaps five or six hundred ideas there now, most of them not yet used. When I'm stuck for an idea, or just mulling things around in my mind, I go back to that notebook and I am guaranteed to find something there to work on”.

*“I need a title before I can work on the song. For me, the title is half the battle, and once I have that, I am in business”.*

“I was booked into a Toronto, Canada night-club for a week and we were scheduled to do two shows on Saturday. About the middle of the week, I received a letter from a lady who lived about 200 miles away. In her letter, she said she was coming to town for our Saturday show but that she was coming to the night show and not the afternoon show, because she liked soft lights with her country music. That phrase "soft lights and country music" struck me as a good idea and after playing with it awhile, it seemed that a better way to say it was "bright lights and country music" instead of "soft lights". After we did the Saturday night show, I mentioned the idea to Jimmy Gateley and he and I wrote the song standing outside the dressing room at the club. We stood there in the hallway and wrote "Bright Lights And Country Music" while some 50 people waited for our autographs. I guess you could say we wrote that song in front of an audience”.

*“I was looking out of a hotel bedroom one day when I saw two separate signs - "Rooms To Let 50 Cents" and "Trailers For Sale Or Rent". I reversed them round and that was the first line of "King Of The Road".”*

“We'd been to see the John Wayne film "The Searchers" where he keeps saying "That'll Be The Day". We were practising in my bedroom and Buddy said - “let's write a song. And I said that'll be the day" and Buddy said - “That sounds like a great title to me”.”

*“Ideas? I listen to people. I think that a lot of country songs mention bars because a lot of songwriters hang out in bars - not just because they like to drink, but because they like to listen, and where better to listen than in a bar? I have written about marriage, and divorce, problems with kids, and being in jail, but I've never been married, or divorced, nor have I any kids, and to date, I haven't been locked up. So where do you think I got my ideas from? I know they say you can fake it but particularly in country material, that shows through. You have to have been there, done that and bought the t-shirt as it were, and the next best thing is listening to somebody else who has been through the mill.”*

“I was living in El Paso, Texas at the time and was working for KHEY Radio. I turned the TV on late one night and Johnny Carson was coming on. During his opening monologue, he said, "May the bird of paradise lay a golden egg in Skitch Henderson's beard". That line struck me as a good idea for a song. I opened a couple of beers and by the time I finished them, I had also finished the song - in about twenty minutes! I just changed the line about "lay a golden egg" to "fly up your nose" and "May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose" was written!”

*“What I do is I first get a key, then after that I try to find a chord patterns, or some kind of chord pattern that I can write a melody to. Then I write the melody”.*

“TV programmes are often a good source of inspiration lyrically. They give you situations which are ideal for songs - boy meets girl, boy loses girl etc., but usually with a modern slant, so you can develop story-lines for your songs from bang up-to-the-minute scenarios”.

*“Nobody knows what makes a hit. When we wrote "Que Sera", Doris Day didn't want to record it but the studio pressured her. She did it in one take and said - "that's the last you're going to hear of this song"! When we wrote "To Each His Own", the publishers laughed at us. They said "who wants a song with a title like that?".*

“My dad used to talk about this guy who was sent to England to recuperate from injuries he received in Germany in 1944. He met a nurse at the hospital, married her and brought his new bride back home with him. They moved into a little apartment behind our house. He was being treated at the Veterans Hospital and during his treatment he became temporarily paralysed. And during that time, he and his wife Ruby started having problems Ruby got lonesome and just needed more attention so she dressed up and went out looking for it. I was only about twelve years old at the time so I didn't really know what was going on - but I believe she was a really good woman - she just got lonesome and couldn't take it anymore. In the song, I really put the blame on her - but there could have been more to it than that. When I thought about it some twenty years later - I realised there was more to it than I knew back when I was twelve. I changed the time and updated the war. I believe I wrote the whole song in less than an hour. In real life, by the way, the guy finally killed Ruby and then killed himself - but I certainly didn't put that in the song!”

*“I never write a song anymore without knowing who it's for. It seems pointless to me to start work on a song when you have no idea who is going to sing it. I do not sing myself, so I sit down and say - right, this is for Sinatra or Dino or whoever, and then I work from there. Writing in a vacuum is a waste of time I find.”*

“I find that most ideas come when you are not trying. When I sit down at the piano with the intention of writing a song, nothing seems to come, but when I'm driving home from a gig, or on the bus, or in the bath, suddenly, an idea hits me. At one stage, I would lose most of those ideas, but some years ago, I got one of those memo gadgets that record about 60 seconds of anything, and I carry it in my pocket at all times now. It is really worth its weight in gold, and I use it not just to sing tunes into, but also to jot down lyrical ideas which come to me during the day.”

*“One of my songs, "My Generation" came to me from reading a phrase in some magazine - "Our generation wears sandals like the Vietnamese". And I took that one line and built a song out of it”.*

“I'd write a lyric first, or else she'd play a chord progression on the piano and I'd write a melody over it. I can't do that now as melodies are more sophisticated and not as symmetrical”.

*“I was writing for Pamper Music in Nashville at the time and I was living in a trailer house*

*which was only about ten minutes drive from Pamper's office. I had heard the line "It's funny how time slips away" at least a thousand times and for some reason, that line kept coming to my mind one afternoon as I was driving from home to the Pamper Music office. And I started thinking that it was a good idea for a song and I wondered why there had never been a song written from that line. I started working with the line and had the song written by the time I got to the office. The song was a hit and was one of my most financially successful songs and most recorded. For quite a while - someone was recording the song at least once a month!"*

"I sometimes get writer's block. What I do then is quite simple. I sit down and play some music I like and that relaxes me, or else, if it is a lyric I am working on, I read a book or a newspaper, and I find that after a while, I am so relaxed that I can come back with my own ideas no problem. Writers block in my opinion is brought on by tension - tension perhaps that you are not able to think up new ideas or whatever - but tension".

*"I think up my best melodies in my head. I find that when you're at the piano, your hands follow old familiar patterns. If you're away from the piano, you're freer. Your mind gives anywhere you want. I've written better melodies that way."*

"I listen to what people are saying. I find interviews on the TV News or be very useful - you get to hear the way real people are talking, and the buzz words and phrases real people are using. I don't know if anybody really ever thought "moon" and "June" thoughts, but if they did, they sure don't think that way now. You need to know how the people in the street think and speak - they're the people who will make or break your song."

*"All the books tell you not to write clichés, and to be original but I notice that a lot of the lyrics in the charts are cliché- ridden and anything but original. I mentioned this to my publisher once, and he said that singer-songwriters, in other words, acts who pen their own songs, can get away with anything, as they do not have to satisfy a publisher or a label, or an act! The non-performing songwriter has to satisfy everybody".*

"Build up a reputation even before you have earned that reputation! What I mean is - be choosy in what you send out. Many songwriters think of music publishers as being huge conglomerates, but in reality, they are smallish operations in the most cases, and the number of people active in the A&R side is quite small. I met a publisher one evening at a seminar some months before I got my first deal, and to my amazement, when I mentioned my name, he remembered one of my submissions from some months earlier. Luckily, it was not a bad submission, but quite clearly, if it has been terrible, he would have remembered me also. So it pays to be careful with what you send out. It may come back to haunt you".

*"No matter what they tell you - the song is more important than the demo. I mean a Michaelangelo is still a Michaelangelo even if the frame is not top notch. But still, a nice frame helps, particularly when nobody tells you in advance that you are looking at a masterpiece. At one stage, I used to ask the publisher how elaborate a demo he wanted, and usually, the reply would be to keep it simple. I soon discovered that when I sent in the simple demo, they all told me it should have been a bit more elaborate, so nowadays, I do not bother to ask. I do the best demo I can do, and send that in. It saves time, and avoids me getting irritated!"*

“I had worked in a publishing house so I knew from experience that you got about sixty seconds to make your point. They'd put on the demo, play about a minute of it, and if they didn't like it by then, they'd take it off. So, you had to get to the point quickly if you were not well known - if you were well known, they probably listened to all the song, thinking that you must know what you were doing but if you were an unknown, they already presumed you did not know what you were doing, so you were lucky to get get sixty seconds of their time. I always put everything into the first sixty seconds”.



## **Lesson 5 - Don't Get Ripped Off By Your Best Pal**

Most writers contemplate collaboration and most hit songs are written by partnerships anyway. Ideally, you should try and work with somebody you know in your own area. Collaboration is best done on a face-to-face basis. Now, if you don't know another songwriter locally, perhaps you know a local musician? He is bound to know some other musician who writes tunes, if he himself doesn't write. Most musicians would like to be songwriters, but sometimes lack the enthusiasm, or the inspiration, to get started. You can give them both the enthusiasm and the inspiration, and in so doing, start a new songwriting partnership. If that doesn't work out, then you will probably have to seek out some total stranger to work with.

Again, try a local approach. A small advertisement in your local newspaper might work, but it's a long shot. You would be better off approaching your local musical instrument shop and asking them if you can put a card on their notice board looking for a collaborator. You might also print a small leaflet setting out your requirements, and ask your local music store or record shop to leave it on the counter for you. In particular, pay the closest attention possible to new bands or groups. Many of these find lyric-writing a chore - we know because in the USA, we get lots of requests from bands looking for lyric writers.

If all your local approaches fail, then you will probably have to turn to postal collaboration, which is harder to operate, although I know of one or two that started out that way alright. For example, back in the sixties, Elton John is supposed to have met Bernie Taupin through an ad in the NME. Pop papers like NME often carry ads from musicians seeking lyric writers, but beware of the shark operators who also infest these waters trying to extract money from foolish lyric writers.

You should also turn to your songwriting organisation for help.

In the USA for example, there is a section in every Songwriter Magazine devoted to ads from lyric writers and melody writers seeking collaborators. These ads are published free of charge by Songwriter Magazine. Then for lyric writers only, USA has the Register Of Composers, which lists the names of members who will compose melodies to lyrics. In fact, there are more USA composers looking for lyric writers than vice versa.

Usually, collaborators divide their income and expenses on 50-50 basis, but that is not always the case, and any division you both agree to, is acceptable.

The ridiculous brouhaha surrounding Paul McCartney's decision to place his own name before John Lennon's on those songs which Lennon had no hand in, has diverted attention from the far more important financial implications of their songwriting "partnership". Indeed, it is a pity that McCartney did not go the whole hog, and insist that the songs he had solely written should be credited to him, and those that Lennon had penned, should be credited solely to his partner, because although both writers produced work of great quality, it is clear that Paul McCartney was responsible for many of the more commercial (and accordingly more lucrative) Beatles songs.

In spite of that however, he shared all income equally with his partner, due to an agreement

made back in 1963. Of course, ancient agreements notwithstanding, McCartney is a very rich man anyway, so in his case, that decision does not materially affect him all that much, but the general acceptance of this idea of "collective" attribution, did lead other (less wealthy) writers to sign deals they should never have signed, and to credit people they should never have credited.

And it is not a "trivial matter", as a manager told one of our readers recently when the writer objected to the entire band being credited with songs which he had written completely on his own. Songwriting income is never trivial - it is frequently far more important than recording royalties - as one can see from the respective wealths of each of the four Beatles.

Even though all the Fab Four's non-songwriting income had been split equally, by the time the band broke up in 1969, it was estimated that John Lennon and Paul McCartney were each ten times richer than Ringo Starr!

From a songwriter's point of view, it was educational to hear former Rolling Stones bass guitarist Bill Wyman musing on the relative positions of those in a band who write the songs, and those who don't.

Wyman joined the Stones in 1962, and stayed with them until they stopped touring in 1982. You would have thought that after twenty years in the world's top band, each member could look forward to a very comfortable retirement, but it did not quite work out like that. The fact that the band was no longer working did not really affect the lifestyles of Mick Jagger or Keith Richards, the two songwriting members of the band, who kept earning huge amounts of money from the early songs they had written, but as Bill Wyman told Sky's Adam Boulton recently, he had no songwriting income, and after seven years living off his savings, was more than glad to be able to go back to work in 1989 when the band re-formed.

But of course it is not really the superstars who suffer most (they after all have record royalties, merchandising, and public appearances to tide them over). Rather, it is those who perhaps get one or two lucky breaks in their career, and then recede into the background, dependent on that short run of success to sustain them in future years.

Anybody for example, remember the American group the Fireballs? No? Not surprising, but they did have their fifteen minutes of fame back in 1963, with a song called "Sugar Shack" which actually topped the US charts.

Forty years later, the four members of that band still share royalties of a few hundred dollars per annum from that record. Meanwhile, Keith McCormack, who wrote the song, earns \$10,000 per year to this day, from the very same song. However, it could have been \$20,000 per year! Unable to recall the proper name for a type of clothing popular with young girls in the early sixties, he asked a neighbour - and for providing the one word "leotard", he gave her 50% of the royalties - for all time! That act of careless generosity probably cost Keith McCormack a million dollars over the years.

This huge long-term potential from just one hit, helps to explain why a small but very shrewd mid-west studio owner back in the fifties, could offer to record bands and singers free of charge in return for just a small percentage of their songwriting income. Many years later,

and with only a tiny amount of his studio's output actually making it onto vinyl, he was worth \$5 million - although no single individual who recorded there, ever earned anything close to that sum.

Now I accept that it is hard to get too worked up about income which you may never see, or to get too perturbed about whose name is added to the credits on a song which may never even get recorded. Songwriters can often be a little naive in business matters anyway, sometimes handing over a percentage here and a percentage there, in the hope of furthering their careers, or even out of gratitude, or a misplaced loyalty. Occasionally too, they will contribute to other writers' songs without ever bothering to ensure that they will be properly credited - sometimes (believe it or not) from a feeling of embarrassment at the thought of having to broach the subject! Even today, in spite of all that has been written on this matter, incorrect crediting is still one of the most recurring problems we come across, particularly in the case of bands where the sole writer in the group is finding himself under pressure to credit everybody with his songs, to "avoid hassle" - and to "prevent jealousy".

If you are tempted to do this - just remember.

One world-famous band spread the songwriting credits around for just such a reason - the manager promising that when the royalties finally came in, only the actual writers would be paid their correct dues. Without warning, the band split, and the real writers were now told that the income would have to be divided according to the listed, and in some cases, spurious credits.

And it was.

One member, who had co-written a multi-million seller, ended up getting quite literally, nothing at all for his efforts.

I am not advocating a policy of total selfishness - but it can be a jungle out there. Just don't get eaten - that's all I'm saying.

## Lesson 6 - Problem Solving For Songwriters

*Tim Whittset has been in the music business for more than 30 years. In the 1960's, he was an independent songwriter, record producer, and recording artist, in his native United States. Between 1970 and 1976, he was President of the East Memphis Music Corporation, the publishing division of Stax Records Inc.*

*During 1976 and 1977, he was the General Manager of Chrysalis Music in London, and from 1977 to 1981, he was the co-owner of Whitsett Churchill Music, also in London. In 1981, he was Division Manager for Chappell Music in London before setting up two publications, UK Songplugger and UK Chart Facts, which he owned and published until he sold them in 1986.*

*That year, he returned to the USA and nowadays is a respected music publisher, acting also as a consultant to the Music Industry. There are few people more qualified to advise songwriters than Tim Whitsett.*

"My problem is getting someone to record my songs." That's a common refrain struggling songwriters sing. You do have to get your material recorded if you want to reach an audience beyond your immediate circle of family and friends - and achieve critical acclaim and monetary reward. So how do you solve the problem of getting those songs cut?

First, recognise that the real problem is not having your songs turned down. Rejection is the symptom of some other, underlying problem (or problems) which must be solved before you can succeed. You will have to subject yourself to a rigid analysis of everything you do as a songwriter to discover the real reasons you haven't had any "luck" with your work. And when you know the real reasons, the remedies will most likely be self-evident - you will see what to do, step by step.

How and what do you analyse? Start with the process of marketing a song. In a nutshell, marketing is a matching process. You have to match the right product with the right customer at the right time.

When your song is rejected, you have failed to match it properly somewhere along the line. So review the marketing, or matching process, each step of the way then break down each of those steps into sub-steps for further analysis until you uncover the root problem(s)

There are four basic things a songwriter has to do. (Sometimes, of course, step three comes first; you know what market you're aiming at before you write the song).

(1)

Create The Product

**WRITE THE SONG**

(2)

Work Up A Model

**PRODUCE A DEMO**

(3)

Identify The Market

**SELECT THE BEST CONTACTS**

(4)

Market The Product

**GET THE SONG CUT**

### **ANALYSING THE PRODUCT**

All of these steps are vitally important but no matter how competent you are at steps two through four, you won't succeed unless step one - the product - is good. This is also perhaps the most subjective part of the marketing process.

Only the person you submit the song to can decide whether it is right for him. He makes his decision by gut feeling based on his own commercial and aesthetic instincts. Debate won't sway his opinion. But remember: it is only an opinion, not the final judgement on your song. If you have gotten the product right, you will find someone who recognises it if you persevere and have targeted the right market. So make sure your product is good, first of all.

The song can be broken down into these basic components

The Idea

The Lyrics

The Melody

The Structure & Style

If the song is well constructed but the person you submit it to doesn't like it, he will be hard put to articulate the reason why, since his reasoning is based on a "feel." If the song is not well constructed, he can say "bad lyrics, boring melody," or whatever.

If you have gotten specific criticism in your feedback on rejected songs, you have a starting point for correction. If the lyrics caused the most adverse reaction, break them down into their components:

- (1) choice of words used to convey the story;
- (2) rhyme scheme;
- (3) flow of the story from setting the scene to getting to the point;
- (4) cadenced of the syllables matching the melody and beat;
- (5) etc.

If you can't seem to correct the problem here, then your answer is going to be teaming up with a good lyricist. At least you now know how to solve the problem, even if you require outside help.

If the melody is the problem, break it down into sections - verses and hooks. Is one of these sections too repetitious, does it fit the mood of the lyric and story, does it fit the other sections, is it memorable, is the range singable, does it build? After you have done all you can, as objectively as you can, and you still seem stuck, you'll know the remedy is to collaborate with a talented composer.

If you've not gotten specific feedback on why your work is rejected then perhaps you've fallen into the category of writing well constructed songs that somehow lack the magic sparkle that excites the listener. Try to get feedback. Ask for it. Get friends to be honest with you. Better yet, ask enemies.

Again, maybe a co-writer will provide a synergistic effect which will lift the song off the ground. You have to be as ruthless as you can when you analyse your own song. And it's hard to be dispassionate when analysing the attributes of your own baby.

### **ANALYSING THE DEMO**

Sometimes the product is good but the working model doesn't demonstrate it in an attractive manner. Many A&R men and producers claim they can hear a great song even if it's just whistled. Don't believe it.

Your chances will always be improved by an imaginative, well produced demo which features good production ideas.

Try to imagine the old Ben E. King number "Stand By Me" without the distinctive bass line ... or Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction" without the guitar line. Creative instrumental arrangements helped make those songs hits.

Components of the demo

Recording

Vocal

Instrumentation

Arrangement

Pick your demos apart. If you discover failings, you discover, at the same time, what to do about them. Poor vocal? Find a decent singer who will interpret the song as it deserves.

Poor arrangement? Call in some creative help ... get better musicians with improvising skills. Poor recording? You'll have to get access to better equipment or a decent studio.

The more your demo sounds like a hit record, the better chance you have of convincing someone that the song will make a hit record.

The point is this: you work hard creating the song; don't slack up on its presentation. Be professional in every respect - if you want to be a professional.

## **ANALYSING THE MARKET**

Here you have to take stock of your contacts and how you have used them. Contacts are one of your most important assets. Contacts constitute your market. No matter how good your songs are, you must know where and how to present them before you can succeed.

Who is your song for? What other artists do you feel this song would be perfect for? Even if your product is great, it will be rejected if you mismatch it in the market place. If you hear of an artist or producer who is looking for material, don't dash off your latest opus until you have informed yourself about the exact kind of songs needed.

A great song for someone in the Barbra Streisand mould isn't necessarily a great song for an act in the Kool & The Gang vein. Be sure that the song you submit to someone is, indeed, "made for them." If you don't think it is, why should they? You waste your time and everybody else's by shooting in the dark.

If you are weak in the area of contacts, you will have to start building them. Know who's producing whom. know what their preferences are. Know your market Build a card file of contacts, including each artist they look after and the specific styles that each of those artists have.

Cross-index the file by

- (1) Contact;
- (2) Artist;
- (3) Style.

## **DATABASE USE**

Then, when you have a country/rock/ballad with pop-crossover potential, you can use your index to find the most likely candidates for your song, narrowing the market down into segments that best fit the product

Make it a goal to add two new contacts to your database weekly. Where do you find them? Read trade magazines religiously to keep track of executive and address changes at record and publishing companies.

Associate with people who do have contacts; swop names and addresses of contacts with other songwriters. Study the Music Week and Billboard annual directories. Ring up record companies and ask who in the A&R Department looks after the particular artist you are interested in. Be a Sherlock Holmes in tracking down prospects for your product

Does all this sound like a lot of work? It is, but it will be fun work if you're serious about succeeding. Besides, you will only strive to keep up with those artists and producers with whom you feel an affinity.

If you hate Heavy Metal, you won't be writing any of it and won't need to keep up with the people on that side of the business. Choose your niche and be as knowledgeable of it as humanly possible.

## **YOUR MARKETING TECHNIQUE**

After you've analysed and done your best to perfect your product, demo, and market, you're faced with the marketing exercise itself - plugging the product via the demo into the marketplace. This involves:

Packaging  
Timing  
Promotion  
Closing

Determine how you carry out each of these steps; they are all vital elements of the matching process.

**Packaging.** What attracts you to a new product on the shelf? What makes it stand out from similar products, makes it seem interesting, makes you want to try it? **Packaging.**

Attractive packaging won't insure that you'll like the product or that you will even buy it after you've looked it over. But it will give that product an opportunity to sell itself to you. Has packaging been a negative factor in getting your material listened to seriously? Were your cassettes accompanied by a neatly typed letter on a printed letterhead or was your submission crudely wrapped along with a hand-written note on ruled notepaper?

Did you spend all that time writing a hit song, all that money on a good demo, and then not take the trouble and small expense to have some modest letterheads and labels printed?

Producers, A&R men, and managers get dozens of songs every week. Most of these, they know, will be rubbish. But they hope not. They sincerely want to find a gem amongst the dross. They'll be pre-disposed to listen first to those CDs they recognise as coming from pros. Don't let yourself down now. If you want to be given the same consideration as a pro, act like one, look like one, be one.

**Timing.** You zip off a ballad to Sammy Superstar. Later you find out he finished his album last week. He's not cutting again until next year. And, when he does go back into the studio, it will be to record an album of strictly uptempo songs ... a radical departure from his last few records. You have gotten your timing wrong. You had the right song ... last week! It's not right now.

Timing fits in with knowing your market... plugging into your contacts for essential information. Not only do you have to know WHO and WHERE to send songs, you also have to know WHEN. Before you shoot that song over to Sammy Superstar, you call up your contact and find out if now is the time. If it isn't, rethink your market for that song. Who else will it be perfect for? Try them. Even if the product is great, rejection results if the timing is wrong.



**Promotion:** This is your sales effect, which is what you do when you submit a song for consideration. In reality, successful promotion is almost automatic if you've gotten all the preliminary steps right: excellent product, good demo, market correctly targeted, proper timing, and attractive packaging. All that remains is making sure that the person who makes the decision regarding your song gives it a fair listen. And this will happen if you've gotten your contact right and found out how and when he wants to review your material.

The ideal way to pitch material varies from person to person and situation to situation. It's often a plus if you are able to play your songs to someone in a relaxed, convivial atmosphere or right in the studio when the pressure is on to find a song to complete a session. Most of the time, however, it's not going to be possible to present your material in person. (Many producers will only listen if they're alone anyway). You will have to accommodate the whims of the person you are submitting your song to. If you try to force them to do it your way, you are going to encounter built-in sales resistance before you've even gotten to display your wares.

If you have to make your submission by post, enclose a brief, literate letter, typed or neatly written on your printed notepaper, which tells the recipient these essentials: (1) the title(s); (2) for whom the material is to be considered; (3) how to contact you for further information; and (4) thank them for taking time to review it. Be professional; don't waste their time with explanations of how old you are, how the demo would be better with a bassoon on it, etc. (If you have to make excuses for it, don't send it).

**The closing:** This is wrapping up the sale, clinching the deal. Salesmen have pat methods of closing. When they sense a prospect is interested but hasn't yet decided to buy, salesmen will say something like "what colour would you like this in?," or "would you like us to deliver?"

They do this to get the customer to commit - to a colour, to delivery, to something - without coming right out and saying "will you buy this product?"

This sort of closing might not fit the songwriting business, but neither can you use hard-sell and expect to be welcomed back when you have another song to plug. Don't start ringing up daily, asking if your tape was received, what was thought about it, and so forth. Pros don't do that. They are too busy working on new projects. If your song is going to be recorded, you will be contacted. If not, you may or may not get it back with a rejection letter.

Some producers are courteous in this respect, others are too busy and understaffed, or simply too arrogant, to bother. If your follow-up sales efforts have included bugging some one with daily calls, you might consider that as a negative factor, one that will make that person less likely to listen to your next cassette with enthusiasm.

## **SUPER SELLING VERSUS A SUPER SONG**

Remember that no amount of super-selling will overcome weaknesses in the steps you've taken previous to the sales effort or promotion. You're only ready for the promotion and sales effort when you've done all you can to get the preliminary steps right

Use promotion and closing to solidify your contact so that when you plug your next song it

will be easier because

(1) you know more about the preferences and whims of your contact (learn from each sales effort) and

(2) your contact begins to know and respect you as a professional, whether or not he liked your material for this particular project.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

You may think your songs will magically get recorded if and when you can find a publisher who likes your material enough to do all the mundane marketing chores for you.

A publisher will free your time so that you can concentrate on the creative aspects of the trade and not have to involve yourself in the time consuming process of finding producers and A&R personnel who may be looking for your type of material. But to get a publisher interested in your work, you'll have to go through essentially the same process we've been discussing here.

On the one hand, you have to sell the producer or A&R man on the notion that your song will make a hit record for his artist. On the other hand, you have to convince the publisher that your work will translate into hit records so that he can likewise convince his contacts in the record business that your work is hit material.

Either way, you have to market yourself and your work, and, to do this successfully, you have to be able to analyse and understand the root cause(s) of why you may have had difficulty selling your work to date.

As you have seen, analysis isn't hard to do at all, and it is the only way to accurately pinpoint any real problems you may be having so that you can cure the disease and not the symptom. Everything we've discussed here is an on-going process. The various steps may get easier with experience, but they can never be skipped.

## Lesson 7 - How Much Money Can A *Hit* Song Make?

*Before you start reading this section, can I reiterate that it is not easy to make money in songwriting? The above headline says it all - How Much Money Can A **Hit** Song Make? - with the emphasis on the word "hit".*

*Write something other than a hit song, and you may obtain a lot of joy from your creation, but you will not make money from it.*

*And with that in mind, we continue....*

For most of today's top songwriters, their climb to the top of the pop music ladder has been long and hard. Success rarely comes overnight, But, when you've found your own magic formula for writing hits, the financial rewards can be very high indeed.

Let's take a look at just how much you might earn as the writer of a hit song. We're going to trace the 'rags-to-riches' life-story of an imaginary new song ....

Let's imagine you've just finished both the words and music for the latest opus called "Get Back to Yesterday, Jude". (Obviously you're heavily influenced by a certain well-known group!). You send off a demo of the song to a music publisher. The publisher thinks that it has tremendous potential and offers you the standard type of contract - any money earned by the song will be split equally between you and the publisher.

Eventually, your publisher gets that chart-topping 'superstar', Stevie Smoove, to record your song, as the 'A' side of his next single. Suddenly, your dreams are turning into reality ....

As soon as the record is released, Stevie Smoove's loyal fans rush out to buy it. Within a few weeks, Get Back to Yesterday, Jude is already a minor UK hit - having squeezed into the Top 30, with record sales of around 30,000 copies.

Record companies have to pay a royalty (known as the 'mechanical royalty') on each copy of a record sold. In this country, the mechanical royalty rate is a percentage of the normal price for which the record is sold in the shops whether it's a single, or an album. But, since your contract says that your publisher (who collects the mechanical royalties) will keep half, you will only earn about one-half what the publisher collects for each single sold.

With 30,000 copies having been passed over shop counters already, your song has just earned you about £500.

These income figures, and those quoted later, are based purely on earnings from mechanical royalties.

With "Get Back to Yesterday, Jude" now sitting comfortably in the Top 30, many more record shops are beginning to stock copies. All of the important radio stations have started playing it, too. And after Stevie Smoove performs the son on Top of the Pops, it really begins to leap up the charts.

By the time the record reaches the Top Five, your earnings total has shot up to about £2,500 (based on the very poor 50-50 deal you insisted on signing).

Your song is now receiving maximum exposure. Everyone is singing it, or whistling it. And when it finally reaches Number One, it, stays there for several weeks, bringing your total earnings from mechanical royalties alone to about £4,500 so far.

Now things really begin to move. Stevie Smoove rush releases his new album, which includes "Get Back to Yesterday, Jude", of course.

Budget record companies include the song in the Chart Hits compilation albums, and companies which market their albums by heavy TV advertising, decide to include your song on their albums, too.

Despite large record sales, income from budget and 'TV albums' (about £1,200 for a good-sized hit) is relatively small. This is because budget albums sell at a very low price, and the TV-promoted albums always include a large number of songs (the mechanical royalty is split equally between each track on an album).

By the time "Get Back To Yesterday, Jude" is eventually nudged from the number one position, it has already sold enough copies to have earned you, personally, about £10,000.

But the song isn't dead yet. Its chart success attracts the attention of many top British recording stars. They adapt the song to suit their own musical styles, record it, and include in on their albums. A song which is adapted in this way and is recorded again and again by different artists in various musical fields, is called a 'standard'. "Mandy", "My Way" and "Feelings" are just a few examples of recent songs which have already become "standards".

Once your song reaches this kind of status, it's guaranteed to be around for years. It'll be consistently 're-discovered' by recording artists, and the numerous albums on which it is featured may sell well over the years - without actually getting into the album charts! With only minimum effort to exploit the song at this stage, it could still earn you around £5,000 a year, for several years to come.

Performance income from 'standards' is extremely high, too. Plus there's always the chance that the song will be a big hit all over again in a few years' time - just like many song by the Beatles today.

The UK success of "Get Back to Yesterday, Jude" is eventually repeated all over Europe. The mechanical royalty in most European countries is currently eight per cent. Since their record prices are also much higher than ours, you're likely to earn more for each record sold in Germany, for example, than in this country. A very important point to remember is that, outside Britain, your publisher has to involve a second publisher to look after your song on his behalf, in the country in which the record is being sold. This second company, called the 'sub-publisher', may be an overseas branch of your British publisher, or it may be a separate company to which your song has been licensed for several years. Either way, the sub-publisher takes a percentage of the song's earnings from that country (usually at least 15 per cent), and returns the rest to your UK publisher. It's this nett amount which is eventually split

between you and your publisher back home.

"Get Back to Yesterday, Jude" reaches number one in nearly all of the major European countries - selling a cosy one million copies in the process.

These sales earn about a further £15,000 to swell your bank account. So far, with a number one hit throughout Britain and Europe, you've earned about £25,000 purely from record sales.

A good-sized hit in other parts of the world, such as Japan (which has recently emerged as the world's second largest record market), Australasia and South America, can earn you at least £10,000.

With your song rapidly becoming a major international hit, your total earnings have reached about £35,000. Almost delirious you rush out and begin choosing the colour of your Rolls Royce! Within a few weeks of Stevie Smoove flying to the United States for a coast-to-coast tour and appearing on several major US television shows, "Get Back to Yesterday, Jude" crashes into the US charts. It climbs right to the top, and remains in the US Top Ten for nearly a month. Since more records are sold in the US than in any other country in the world, sales of over one and a half million copies are easily notched up.

Despite the US mechanical royalty rate being lower than in many other countries, the huge amount of records Stevie Smoove is able to sell in the States brings in another £15,000.

So far, the total income from your world-wide smash is over £50,000. And "Get Back to Yesterday, Jude" shows signs of going on to become an international 'standard' - the total earnings of which are just impossible to estimate. Wisely . . . your doctor puts you under sedation!

And it is now time to add in the performance royalties.

A successful song can also earn a lot of money from 'performance royalties' - the royalties payable every time your song is played on radio or television, or is sung in a theatre etc. In the past, certain records have been 'turntable hits', with just about every DJ on every radio station in the country having played them. They've earned a lot of performance income, without actually selling many records or getting into the charts.

On the other hand, some records have become hits through consistent "plugging" in discos and clubs - without being played once on the radio! The performance income from a good song which is played a lot on both radio and television, and is also popular in the discos and clubs, can sometimes be as much as the income from record sales. But, since performance royalties are difficult to estimate, we'll leave them for now.

If you think all this sounds like a fairy tale, just look at the real life success story of Eurovision Song Contest winner, "Save Your Kisses For Me". It earned its writers an estimated £100,000 from record royalties alone.

And remember, the income from performance royalties meant as much again!

## **Lesson 8 - Jingle Bells**

One of my readers runs a small recording studio in California, and writes songs to boot. Some years ago, he started getting requests from local traders to pen jingles for them - sometimes for radio advertisements, but more often than not, simply for playing over the sound systems in the store in question. What started as a once-in-a-season opportunity, has now become a full-time business, and nowadays he finds himself writing more jingles, and fewer songs.

He charges \$1,500 per tune, with a royalty to be agreed on for radio or television usage, which strikes us as a very low rate indeed, given that not only does he write the tune, and fit the lyrics to it, but he also performs the jingle, recording it in his own studio. At that price, he has no shortage of takers, which is hardly surprising given the prices quoted by the big agencies, and of course, he has the advantage of being in a position to deal face-to-face with both the local trader, and the local radio station to make sure that both are happy with the finished product.

As a result, the radio outlets often recommend his services to other retailers, while some of his earlier one-store clients have grown, now operating several shops, each with their own jingles. One of the advertising agencies has even started recommending his service to the local shop owner who drops by hoping to get Elvis Presley performing “Blue Suede Shoes” with lyrics suitably altered to accommodate his footwear business, only to find that the King is dead, but that even if he were not, he would be looking at \$250,000 before Elvis would even open his mouth for him, or the agency open their doors.

So he takes the advice given, and sets his sights a little lower. Some day of course, that client will get too big for the little service, and start thinking again of spending that \$250,000 - in which case, he will go back to the agency who gave him the lead in the first place, but meanwhile, everybody is happy.

Now there is a moral to all this.

You probably pen the occasional jingle, but do not know how to proceed beyond that. Perhaps you write something for IBM, or Coca-Cola, or Barclays, not realising that those companies are unlikely to pay too much attention to the work of a newcomer, when you should be listening to local radio, picking up on a non-jingle ad for a local business, and then putting that ad to music.

Once you have the demo ready - take it along to the owner, and play it for him. As long as it has a catchy tune, and his name is prominently featured in that tune, you will find that he is fascinated by the whole idea. And once you're in - you can milk it for all you're worth.

He should have a general jingle - perhaps a Christmas one, not to mention one for the January sales, Easter, Summer, and Autumn. And of course, one to advertise special lines and special promotions. The important thing is - write the jingle first.

Do not just go in offering to write one - arrive with it under your arm, ready to go. The gimmick of somebody coming in the door with the tune in hand, works wonders, and if you

have managed to fit a catchy tune around the client's sales message, then you will be well on your way.

Remember, with this type of advertising - the client is very much motivated not so much by an increase in sales (which is what should really happen), but by one of his customers (or rivals) mentioning that they have just heard the jingle - so catchiness is all important.

And the price?

Well, whatever the market will bear may sound a little but too Thatcherite to many, but do not under-price yourself. And remember, you are not confined to your own area - as long as you can pick up a radio station, you can get leads - but not forgetting that whereas the local Boots or HMV store is not a potential client (their London head office will probably be calling the shots there), but the family butcher may very well be.

I had never written a commercial in my life when a business friend of mine asked how much would it cost to use a sixties hit song to advertise his business?

I hadn't a clue, but given that our city had fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, and he had only one store, I thought that a few hundred dollars would cover the use of the song. And could I re-write the lyrics to include references to his shoe store, and record the entire package for a radio ad? Of course I could - for £500 I could do anything in those days.

Anyway, I went ahead and within a few days, had laid down a very cool 30 second snatch of the song, with a lead vocal which sounded passably close to the original hit recording. And then, disaster. We were not, it seems, talking a few hundred dollars for the rights to use the original song - we were talking telephone numbers, and I could see my £500 going up in smoke before my very eyes, which considering I had the job more or less done, was not a pleasing prospect.

So I took a chance. Would he pay if I wrote a song specially for him, which sounded close enough to the original sound, without getting us all done for plagiarism? We agreed a figure.

I went back to the drawing board, and wrote my first commercial, not because I wanted to, but because I had mentally spent that £500 I had yet to get. He paid up - it got broadcast, and I got into penning the occasional jingle.

Actually, several readers do nothing except radio jingles. They make an excellent full-time living without moving outside their home towns. And they still write songs - thus keeping their hands in while earning their daily bread in the music biz.

Actually any writer can make a living writing jingles for radio and TV ads without moving to New York or London.

He can also write themes for TV shows, and minor movies, not forgetting those hardy people who pen the background music used in computer games, on internet sites, in restaurants and shops.

All are ready markets - all can be broken into - and all are very lucrative - if you know what

you're doing.

So - how do you break into the business?

First off, you have to be able to record your own jingles, and secondly, you have to know your market. And that market? Well, jingles can be sold to advertising agencies representing advertisers. They can be sold to those radio stations and TV stations who prepare packages in-house for their advertisers. And finally, they can be sold to advertisers directly - in other words, those who do not use agencies.

For the first two - you need some sort of track record, and samples of your broadcast work, so if you have neither, the third way is the best way - direct to the client himself.

And how do you find the client? Well the best method is to turn on your local radio station, and listen to the ads which are voice only, with no jingle. Then, using the ad copy contained in the voice-only ad, write and record a demo jingle suitable for the market. It is important of course, that you understand the client, and the client's market.

An upmarket jewellery shop will not want something that sounds like Def Leppard - a night club will not want your pastiche of "Theme From The Titanic". Remember to do a couple of different versions. Many clients may not want just a full sung jingle - most will also want a top and tail (the sung jingle at the start and end with an instrumental break in the middle for a voice-over), and may need different lengths (15 seconds, 30 seconds, and 60 seconds are the most common).

Then, cut it on a CD, and drop in to have a chat with your potential client. No matter how busy he is - he will see you, but remember to take a portable CD player with you! Point out that you can obtain a voice-over artist for the top and tail ads (your local radio talent will be happy to oblige for a fee) or if he prefers, he might like to do this voice-over himself. (Most clients love to hear their own voice on their ads). Leave the CD with him - he will want to play it for his wife, his mother-in-law, the man in the pub, and anybody else who will listen, and if you have done the job properly, you will get the contract. A few deals later, and you will have a track record, and enough samples for a demo to send around the agencies.

However, before making your first sortie, listen carefully to what is already there. Start by taping the existing ads on your local radio station. After a month or two, you will have built up a collection of ad-breaks, and you can now divide this tape into two sections - jingles (which are not likely to be of any interest to you from a sales point of view), and non-jingles (which will comprise your potential market). The first group - the jingles - will show you what is out there already and fix the length of the average ad break. The second group, the non-jingle ads, will be your future clients.

Now obviously, some in this group will have been made by ad agencies on behalf of the local business, so you may be wasting your time approaching those firms, although not always.

Many will be very surprised to have you walk in the door, pointing out that you can do a jingle for their firm for X Pounds - particularly since their ad agency has told them that it is too expensive to even contemplate such an extravagance.



So what do you look for? First off, you should assemble a list of local companies who are advertising their businesses without a sung jingle. In some cases, these will be plain spoken ads - in other cases, there will be a voice over background music. Not all of these firms are necessarily in the market for a sung jingle obviously but many will be, and most will probably be placing their ads directly through the local radio station without recourse to an advertising agency. Accordingly, when you go to speak to the boss of the local store - you will be speaking to the man who can make the decisions.

Having assembled your list of firms, you should choose one or two for your first attempt. Listen carefully to the existing ad. How long is it? If it is just 15 seconds of spoken text, you may think your effort will probably have to be 30 seconds in length - to allow for the full text, and the sung jingle. This may put a client off. He will now have to book much longer slots than heretofore, (although the extra length is not necessarily proportionately more expensive). In fact, you may find that the existing 15 second spoken ad is padded (the message could probably have been told in 7 or 8 seconds, but the minimum slot on that station may well be 15 seconds). If so, you can edit the text, and include a jingle within the 15 second limit anyway.

Remember, timing is important so do a fade-out ending for your basic take rather than an exact 15 second full-stop bed, and then edit the final master to exactly the length required.

Although the jingle is what you will be worried about, it is the text with which the customer is most concerned, so make sure that your sung jingle does not overwhelm the message.

Actually the sung jingle need only comprise a few words - perhaps a slogan. (One of the first ones I did was for a video library called Delight Videos, and having put down a twelve second bed to allow details of this week's new videos, I ended with a simple sung jingle "Stay In Tonight - With Delight"). Most voice-overs work on a three-word-per-second basis, so I had 40 words to play around with (36 actually, but I spoke very slightly faster than normal), and I was able to fit in the entire text, and include the sung jingle, within the original 15 seconds taken by the speech-only ad. Spend a long time working on the outline - the final recording should only be done when you have all the glitches worked out. If you cannot do a professional voice-over yourself, ask a local radio or club DJ to do it for you. And when you are completely satisfied - assemble your CD.

One trick I used was to copy an ad break from the local radio station, and then mix in my own creation right in the middle of it!

Finally, meet the client. In most cases, you will have no trouble getting to see the manager or owner, and when you do so, explain that you need just two minutes of his time. If you have brought a portable CD unit with you - you can demonstrate it there and then, and listen to any suggestions he might have. You can suggest that he can use his own voice on the jingle, and you can also point out that you can do these in different lengths etc., depending on what he wants.

Obviously, the question of cost will come up - and here, it really is a matter of what the market will bear. Certainly, a fee of £500 will be too little (he is probably spending close to that every week just for the ad-time), and you can point out that it is a one-off investment (in

fact there should be repeat business). I know several people charging £2000 per jingle - but you have to judge your market will bear, If you have done your job correctly, he will bite, and you are in the door - and on your way to a very lucrative income. One final piece of advice - make the jingle first - then see the client. The shock value of coming in the door with a jingle, works. And even if he does not take it, you still have a sample for later use.

## Lesson 9 - Putting Your Songs On The Internet

There are three important factors involved in deciding if you need to have your songs on the web - Credibility, Money and Time.

### 1 Credibility

Let's be honest about it - to us, songwriting is an obsession sort of like golf, but to the general public, it is a *lucrative* obsession, where everybody makes money.

Now, if I tell somebody I play golf - they are unlikely to ask if I will be playing in the *British Open* this year. They accept that not everybody who plays golf is necessarily up to Tiger Woods standard.

But if I say I write songs - I will nearly always get the inevitable "well what have you written that I would know?" reply.

How much more effective if I could turn around and say - "I write songs and you can listen to and buy my stuff on [www.jimliddane.com](http://www.jimliddane.com)".

And why? Because even the man on the Clapham omnibus knows that the music industry is increasingly web-orientated, and if Elvis is up there, and Jim Liddane is up there - then Jim Liddane just has to be a serious player. (Even if I'm not).

But ego-tripping apart, it makes sense to be out on the same pitch where all the other stars (and wannabe stars) are to be found.

### 2 Money

People can sell their songs on the web - in fact some people make quite a living doing nothing but that. So if there is money to be made up there - why not grab some of it?

But then the web will also cost something - either to put up your own site, or to press some product to sell on a third party site.

### 3 Time

Being on the web can become an obsession of its own unless you remember what you are there for in the first place.

You are a songwriter - you write songs. Anything which interferes with your writing songs is a no-no, and if running the website becomes such an end in itself that the songwriting part goes clean out of the window, then you are in trouble.

### The Verdict?

So there you have it - some pluses and some minuses - but somebody is going to have to make a call, so I will.

On balance, I think any songwriter planning a long-term career, should be at least examining his/her web options - and given it is getting mighty crowded - sooner rather than later.

## The Solutions?

Now if you have already decided in the negative - read no further while the rest of us look at the options for launching you and your songs into cyberspace.

**(1) Learn HTML** (computer-speak for the language needed to create a site), and produce your own web site.

**(2) Use A Program** which more or less builds the site for you without you having to know anything about HTML.

**(3) Hire An Expert** (hereafter referred to as a "webmaster") to do it all for you.

**(4) Join A Site** which allows the public to listen to your music for free (or to download it for a fee), or else a site which allows people to purchase your CDs from the site, to be delivered through the post.

### Option 1 - Learn HTML

This seems the obvious route to go down, but unless you are a quick learner, it may prove a bridge too far time-wise.

Having said that, a large number of ISA members do it themselves, with varying degrees of success, and we know more than a few ten year olds who have learned enough HTML to launch some pretty impressive sites. (Having said that, they can probably also program VHS machines).

Learning HTML means you can do almost anything you want to - when you want to.

It will be the cheapest option. Also, every time the internet comes up with a new gizmo, you can easily adapt your site.

### Option 2 - Use A Program

This the option which the ISA has chosen for its own site, and it works for us.

It means however, that you will not be able to do everything you might want, as you may be limited by the scope of the programme chosen (although *MS Front Page* for example, more or less allows you to do most of the things you could ever possibly want).

Not all of the site-building programs are cheap, although if you already have a full *Microsoft Office* suite for example, then *MS Publisher* is bundled in there with it and that can produce reasonable websites.

### Option 3 - Hire An Expert

This will usually cost money. The advantage of using a webmaster is speed, and having things more or less as you want them. The downside is that you can pay anything from hundreds to thousands of pounds - unless of course, you have a computer-literate friend who is willing to assist - but then, you will need him close by (initially anyway) every time you need to update the site.

#### **Option 4 - Join A Site**

This will cost less - but your own scope will be limited. Usually you will just get a personal photo, and a picture of your album artwork, plus perhaps a few lines about yourself.

On the other hand, somebody else will be doing all the technical stuff, and as long as you have product to sell (so that the site can earn its percentage), you will be ahead of the game, because usually, just two or three sales will cover all your initial costs.

#### **CdBaby**

Back in 1997, Derek Seivers, a young musician in Woodstock, New York, tried to find somebody to sell his newly recorded CD on the internet - and failed. And thus began one of rock's strangest, and most wonderful inventions - *CD Baby*.

Now, most songwriters would have waited for somebody else to invent the wheel - but not Derek.

Within a year, he had a website up and running, selling not only his own CD, but also recordings made by other bands and writers. Initially, he ran the operation on his own, riding down to the local post office on his bike carrying the day's orders, but by the end of 1998, he had his first employee (John Steup - currently *CD Baby* VP) and one hundred acts available online.

But that was then and this is now (to coin a phrase), and today, *CD Baby* has over 50 staff, operates from a huge warehouse complex in Portland, Oregon (Woodstock apparently being too cold in winter), and with no fewer than 105,000 different artists on its books.

To date, it has sold almost two million CDs - and more importantly, has paid out more than fifteen million dollars to songwriters and musicians worldwide.

Not bad for a hobby which turned into a sideline, and ended up as the largest outlet for independent CDs on the internet.

Since then, there have been imitators - you can offer your CD on *Amazon.com* nowadays for example, (although they will charge you an arm and a leg for the privilege), but *CD Baby* remains unrivalled in its field.

So how does it work? And, more important, how much does it cost?

Well first off, you need to have five copies (at least), of your CD available before going on the site.

The CD does not have to be professionally recorded, but obviously, if it is not up to par, it will simply not sell.

It does not have to be shrink-wrapped, or have a bar-code (although if you have one, *CD Baby* will report your sales figure to SoundScan for chart purposes), nor does the artwork have to be professional (although in our opinion - good artwork will help.)

All you need is a quality product in any style - *CD Baby* has sections devoted to Blues, Classical, Country, Easy Listening, Electronic, Folk, Gospel, Hip Hop/Rap, Jazz, Kids/Family, Latin, Metal, New Age, Pop, Rock, Spoken Word, and Urban/R&B.

But get one thing straight. Much of the product up on *CD Baby* may be by names you have never heard of - but most of it is very very good indeed.

Secondly, you need to decide on a resale price for your offering, keeping in mind that no matter what price you set, *CD Baby* will deduct a flat \$4 per album sold by them. Obviously, prices differ on the site - some people are selling full albums (even doubles), while others are offering four track recordings, but on average, most prices we looked at seemed to be in the \$10-\$12 range.

Then, when you are ready to go, just click on <http://www.cdbaby.com/> and take it from there.

First off, you fill in a form, which asks the usual details, and also requires you give an address to which cheques can be sent. (*CD Baby* pays weekly!).

Once past that page, you get asked about your CD and how you think you would like it promoted.

Finally, you are requested to send a one-off payment of \$35 plus five CDs to Portland.

So what happens next?

Well, when your package arrives at *CD Baby*, they open one CD, and use that to digitise your recording (more about that later), and scan your cover artwork.

Next, they create a web page for your album, which includes sound clips of selected songs, reviews, and any text you would like included. They also include links back to your own site, if you have one.

Then, your album is entered into their onsite search engine (this site remember gets over one million hits a week!), and if somebody likes what they hear, they can order either online, or by phone (*CD Baby* even offers a toll-free number for orders).

Finally, each time an album is sold, *CD Baby* sends you an e-mail telling you who bought it, and whenever you like - they send you a cheque to cover sales to date.

One thing worth remembering is that *CD Baby* is not a label - it is an online record store, so there are no contracts to sign. You give up no rights whatsoever, and the arrangement is strictly non-exclusive, so you can go on to sell on as many other sites as you wish, and sign the album with any record label or music publisher who is willing to sign you up.

Earlier, I mentioned that *CD Baby* digitise each album as it comes in, and if you wish, you can also allow *CD Baby* to try and get your music on such legitimate music services as Apple iTunes, Rhapsody, Napster, MSN Music, MP3tunes, AOL's MusicNet etc.

In return, *CD Baby* gets to keep 9 cents out of every dollar earned by your downloads - while

you get to keep 91 cents! However, as you cannot have multiple digital distributors, this side of the deal has to be exclusive to *CD Baby* for that particular album, and of course, all songs must be yours to distribute. In other words, cover versions are out, unless you can arrange to get the rights to use them on your downloaded album.

Frankly, it is hard to find a downside and we have tried. (God knows, we've tried!).

However, it *will* cost \$35 plus the cost of five albums (\$5), along with the cost of posting them to the US (\$5), to find out if you are going to sell anything or not - and that means the first four albums sold will show little or no profit.

But after that - it is all profit - up to \$10 per CD - and that beats anything you have ever earned from a mainstream label.

We do not recommend too many services, but this one is in our view, OK!

Although *CD Baby* does give you a sort of web presence, it is mainly a method of distributing your product, and not in itself a showcase of everything you can do.

For that, you probably do need your own web site, but before we move away from *CD Baby*, let's have a quick butchers at its offshoot - *Hostbaby* - which you can find at <http://www.hostbaby.com>

## **HOSTBABY**

First off, this is a complete service - and I do mean complete! Everything you could ever need on a web site, including your own e-mail list mailer, a concert calendar, a guest book, a feedback form, auto-streaming audio, and much much more, is provided, and for a ridiculous low monthly price of just \$20 (which equates roughly to just £11.50 sterling every 30 days).

So how does this all work? How simple is it to operate and what does it look like? Well *Hostbaby*, claim that anybody can design and upload their first site in less than an hour, without any knowledge of computers simply by using the Hostbaby Wizard, so I thought I'd give it a try!

The *Hostbaby* Wizard opens a basic layout which starts by asking you some simple questions - such as your name and a slogan or title for your site (let's take "Jim Liddane - The Sound Of Soul" for example).

If "Jim Liddane" has not been registered, then I automatically get to become [www.jimliddane.com](http://www.jimliddane.com) - which is cute.

Following this, you get asked for contact information (e-mail address, phone numbers, postal address etc) so that your fans can contact you, before the Wizard moves on to the next item, the Calendar.

Now obviously, if you are a performer with the occasional booking, this is the chance to advertise your gigs on the web. But if you are not performing live - you can simply omit this feature from your site, and shuffle on to the News/Journal section.

Here you can pen your own daily diary if you so wish, or simply bring your fans up to speed with the latest news about your songwriting and recording.

Next you get to upload your Graphics. These can be cartoons of yourself, the artwork from your CD, your band logo, or whatever.

You do have to have these images on your computer already of course, but uploading them is child's play - simply click a button and your artwork is on the web.

This is followed by your Photo Gallery. Again, you must have the photos on your PC, but once you have, it is just a matter of clicking the button, and there you are for all the world to admire.

Next, you get to show off your Music!

First off, you are asked to name each song, list the performer, and (if you wish) print the lyrics. Then you can upload the song itself.

The recording can be on a WAV, MP3 or FLAC file, and again of course, it has to be already on your computer. It also should be the full-length version but not to worry, because you get to choose exactly how much you wish to make available.

For example, you can simply limit what the visitor can hear of each song you have uploaded by deciding how many seconds he gets to listen to. Not only that, but you can decide which part of the song he gets to hear (e.g. omit the intro - play just the chorus etc).

Alternatively, you can opt for allowing the visitor to listen to (but not download) the whole song on broadband (which is hi-fi) or the whole song on modem or low-fi. (Incidentally, you can also allow the song to be streamed - in other words, to be played continuously - if you so wish). Finally, you can permit the listener to download the whole song if you like.

The important thing to remember is that you are always in complete control of what your visitor can do, and like every other option available - you get it to happen simply by reading a question, and clicking an answer.

Now it is time to write your own biography, and this can be as long or as short as you wish.

Finally, you get to choose the design of your website - in other words the "look".

At this moment, they have about 40 different designs available - *Hostbaby* say they paid top website designers \$25,000 for these templates - and some of them are remarkably good.

As you look through each design, you can click a button allowing you to see what your site would look like if you choose that layout, and you can further vary these layouts by changing such things as the colours, typefaces used etc.

Incidentally, you also get your own e-mail service included, so no need to use *Yahoo*, or *Hotmail* or *AOL* any more, and you get an impressive e-mail address - something like *jim@jimliddane.com*



Eventually (or 50 minutes later on my experiment), you get to click the magic word "Publish", and lo and behold, you are up there for all to admire (or indeed, mock).

Once up, you get a professional webserver logs showing every detail of people visiting your, site - how many hits per day, the most popular pages, what they were searching for at Google when they found you, what they downloaded, and more.

If you want to see some examples of what other writers have done using *Hostbaby*, try

<http://ricksuchow.com>

<http://lindseykelly.com>

<http://chrisrichardsmusic.com>

So, that's the bumf, but how does it rate?

Well, the sites generally look great, and for under £12 a month (which is after all, only 40p a day), this has to be great value.

It is also so simple to get started. As long as you can type - you can generate a web site. Like *CD Baby*, *Hostbaby* has been very thoroughly designed, to do what it says on the box, and do it without too much hassle.

I must say - I was impressed!

## **OTHER SITES**

Up to now, we have looked at putting yourself on the web, selling your CDs through CD Baby, or setting up your own dedicated website via Hostbaby. But of course, there are so many other sites to put your songs on - so - let's surf!

***Soundclick.com*** was established in 1967, and unlike CD Baby, it features both major signed acts such as Janet Jackson and Phil Collins, as well as new unsigned artists. At last count, it offered almost one and a half million songs for download, which makes it a very substantial operation indeed.

Soundclick's free services include

- artist page
- unlimited song uploads
- private message board
- gig calendar

while, if you pay a monthly fee of \$9.95, you get additional features thrown in, such as flash page, ad-free, background radio, 320 kbps mp3 option, 40MB/song uploads, deep-linking etc

Incidentally, they offer an extra service which promotes your site and your music, starting at \$4.95 per month, but the important thing to remember is that if you like - you can simply pay

nothing - upload your music, and take it from there.

Music must be in MP3 format - but not to worry - Soundclick offers free MusicMatch software, which converts your music to MP3 format, and is very simple.

**Upside** It is a well-organised, long-established site. It is also free, and the presence of name acts like Phil Collins and Peter Gabriel should attract more potential buyers than most download operations. It is also simple to get going and with a number of major labels working with the site - then if you get onto the Soundclick charts which are compiled on the number of people who log on to play your song - you may very well get noticed by a big player.

**Downside** It is not so much a commercial as a promotional site, so opportunities for making money directly are more limited although there is a good shop facility.

**Moyst.com** is one of the newer sites which offers downloads for sale in both song and ringtone format.

This site is free to join, and each ringtone or song downloaded (which costs the music fan £1.50) earns you 20p. The more you sell, then the higher up the Moyst Unsigned chart you get, and on a weekly basis Moyst will submit the Top 10 to their database of record labels, publishers and management outfits.

Songs can be submitted in any form you wish, though obviously, if you want to submit on the web, you should have the material on MP3. However, unlike a lot of sites, Moyst accepts postal submissions also.

**Upside** You can make money from your songs, and if you are successful, your work will get noticed, and get promoted.

**Downside** At 20p a song, you will not get rich overnight, but as you have no overheads whatsoever - it is all profit.

**TrackSeller.com** offers writers who have a website, the opportunity of enabling downloads of their songs via a third party.

TrackSeller charge no set-up costs, there are no monthly costs and no registration fees. You can register an unlimited number of songs and files with Trackseller at no cost and you can charge what you like, with TrackSeller taking just 11.5% for each real sale you make.

(Technically you do not even need a website of your own, because there is a search facility on the TrackSeller site which enables anybody who knows you have a song on the site, to look for it and but it directly).

**Upside** Free to join, and the percentage you get to keep (88.5%) is generous.

**Downside** We think you really do also need a separate website of your own. TrackSeller is possibly more suited for those who do not want the hassle of operating a download and cash-collecting system on their own site. It is not all that simple to get started although

TrackSeller claims you could have the first song up and available for sale in less than two hours.

**Broadjam.com** is closer to *Hostbaby.com* than any other site we've seen. It is not free, but for \$19.95 a month, you can

- Sell your music downloads from your own website
- Use your own domain name (such as *www.jimliddane.com*)
- Host up to 250 songs with unlimited streaming
- Post 50 photos, 30 albums and 8 videos, and offer song downloads for sale at 99 cents each, of which you get to keep 80 cents.

Like *Hostbaby*, you simply choose a template for their library, and off you go. The templates incidentally, are well-designed.

**Upside** Nice site, nice templates, and a very generous 80% royalty.

**Downside** Although you are there to sell your songs as downloads, any visitor to the site can play your tune in full (there are no 30-second previews) before buying. In our opinion, people who can play the song in full anytime they like, are not as likely to buy a download unless they really want to be able to carry the song around with them.

The songwriting world has changed dramatically since 1995, and nowadays, every writer can easily sell their product on a world-wide marketplace. However, you have to remember that the web is changing daily, it is impossible to guarantee the success, or indeed longevity, of any site. Meanwhile, why not check out the above, and while you're at it, click on a few more as well - sites such as

<http://www.music.downtune.com>

<http://www.oikz.com>

<http://intermixx.com/indiegate>

### **BUT SUPPOSE YOU THREW A PARTY AND NOBODY CAME?**

Now, when I was young, there was a very popular advertising campaign based on the premise - "Suppose you gave a party, and nobody came?"

Trouble is - I cannot recall what grievous sin the hostess had committed (nor indeed what product the catch-phrase advertised), but at least the slogan itself was memorable enough to inspire the Hy Averback 1970 movie *Suppose They Gave a War and Nobody Came?* Which brings me tortuously to this month's poser - "Suppose You Launched A Website But Nobody Visited?".

Now I have no idea just how many websites are up there in cyberspace, but let's try a little simple experiment.

Type the word "songwriter" into Google, and you will get multi-million results (and no

Virginia, I am not confused by all the zeros!)

Now given that Google carries ten results per page, it is clear that if you end up in the first hundred - then your site will be found in the first ten pages (which is about as far as anybody is likely to keep searching for you).

On the other hand, if you end up in the last hundred, then you will either be parked somewhere around page four million which means that your website might as well be positioned on the dark side of the moon for all the likelihood that anybody will ever find it, or worse still, your site will not be listed at all, even though your site does actually exist!

And of course, since most people use a Search Engine to find the sites they want - then obviously, if you are not listed, or are listed too far down - you have a real problem.

So, Rule 1 - you have to be listed by the top Search Engines - and as far up as you can.

First, it is essential to understand how Google (and other Search Engines), decide which sites to list - and where to list them.

Search Engines want to carry the most interesting and the most relevant sites on their early pages, so that their readers will end up on the pages which will be of most value to them.

Google finds sites initially through its "spider" - which every day, trawls the web looking for new sites, and then rating them. (This means you do not have to submit your site to Google - it will find you anyway.)

Of course the fact that you have been found is no guarantee that you will be listed, but

(a) if your site is well written

(b) is relevant to the subject

***and***

(c) has plenty of content

you are certain of a listing somewhere.

However, what pushes you up the Search Engine charts, is a link to your site from another site which has already proved its popularity on that Search Engine.

Now why - you are probably wondering - would a link from another site help?

Well as I said earlier, Google and the other Search Engines want to provide the most relevant leads for their clients and if a site already listed by the Search Engine and which is relevant in content to your site, is providing its readers with a link to your site, then the Engine begins to think your site must be worthwhile. And if that is the case, that Engine will want to list you as well.

And if the site providing the link to you is already a highly-rated site, then your site's value in the eyes of that Engine, will be so much higher again.

So, how do you get a link from a top-rated relevant site? (Relevance is very important. A link from an irrelevant site will not help near as much).

Just ask politely! It works wonders - it costs you nothing, and you might even get a result!

Of course, not every popular site may be willing to link, particularly when it dawns on them that your site is not yet listed at all - but if you can get just one top site to provide the link, you are in business and it is worth making the effort because if you are not listed, then you are dead in the water.

So, apart from that good link, what else helps you to get (or to lose) a high position on a Search Engine?

(1) **Content helps.** Lots and lots of it.

(2) **Frames** do not help. Spiders hate them.

(3) **Flash** does not help - at least on your front page. By all means use it inside if you have to, but I would not use it at all.

(4) **Hidden** or **Cloaked Text** does not help. It used to work but now, the Search Engines penalise you if they catch you at it.

(5) **Over-Submission** does not help. If you don't want to wait for the spiders to find you, by all means submit your site manually, but use that facility very sparingly.

(6) **Gateway Pages** do not work. Think you can fool the Search Engines by designing a front page specially for them which then goes on to link to another site altogether? They're wise to that!

(7) **Password-Protected Pages**, or **Java Applets** or **Adobe Acrobat** files on your front page may look good but some Search Engines are unable to index such material.

(8) **Link Farms** can penalise you. Sites which exist to link hundreds of sites to yours for a fee, have little or no content, and the links are usually not relevant to each other. They only get you heavily penalised.

Getting a high rating takes time, but it is not just worth it - it is essential. Without a high ranking, you really are wasting your time on the internet.

So that's it - not too easy, but certainly not impossible.

And you have to start somewhere, and sometime, so why not here, today?

## **Lesson 10 -When Somebody Asks *YOU* For Money**

For some reason, many songwriters seem to think that only the music business is full of scams.

Really?

Ever buy a penny share? Or purchase a used car?

The music biz is no different than any other, and those who at the top are usually honest.

After all, It is not the guy whose company's shares have ended in the gutter who is trying to scam you. It is the shyster - who knowing their real value, wants you to buy them anyway. And it is not the Detroit car manufacturer who is trying to sell you that piece of junk with the clock rolled back - it is your back street car dealer.

In other words - people on the fringes of the real business.

And that's the way it often is too, in the music business.

So let us look the the **REAL** music business, from a songwriter's point of view.

- (1) In the **REAL** music business, songwriters write songs - words and music.
- (2) The songwriters prepare their song for presentation to a music publisher.
- (3) The songwriters present their song to a music publisher, who then seeks out a record label, one of whose acts might record the songs.
- (4) If they do, the label pays the publisher a percentage. The publisher pays the writer a percentage. And the writer is happy. (Well that's how it is in the movies anyway).

But that is also how it is in the **REAL** music business too. Let us look at it in detail.

- (1) Songwriters write songs (words and music).

If the writer cannot write the words, or cannot write the music, then he seeks out a collaborator who can - for a percentage of income. Music Publishing Companies never offer to perform one of these tasks for a fee, or to put you in touch with a company or person who will do this for a fee. That is not the way collaboration works.

- 2) The songwriters prepare their song for presentation to a music publisher.

The writer(s) prepare a demo (or demonstration recording) of the song, so that they can present it to a publisher or label.

In most cases, writers make this themselves. If they cannot, they may use one of the many

demo companies. who will charge them studio and musician's fees for the service.

In recent times, a small number of unscrupulous demo producers have started attempting to charge a fee for each demo, and having been paid for the work done, then demand a percentage of the song from the writer - in some cases, threatening not to hand over the recording until the writer agrees.

Remember, what you have paid for, you are entitled to receive - so demand your recording, and do not use that service again.

(3) The songwriters present their song to a music publisher.

The publisher accepts or rejects the song.

If he accepts it - he will offer a contract and may also pay a small advance to the writers.

A genuine publisher will not for one moment, suggest that the songwriter should hand over any more money for any reason - including making a better demo, employing song pluggers, copyrighting the song etc. These are the normal costs borne by the music publisher.

(4) The publisher places the song with a record label or performer.

They record it and the money starts coming in. Money from record sales goes directly to the publisher, who pays this on to the songwriter. Money from radio and television plays are collected by the royalty organisations who pay the songwriter directly. And that is an over-simplified version of the entire procedure.

To sum up:

The music business is based on percentages of potential earnings. Not fees.

A songwriter is responsible for his own costs in getting the song to the publisher.

The publisher is responsible for his own costs in getting the song to the label.

The label is responsible for its own costs in getting the record to the public.

Thereafter, all income is based on a percentage of earnings - not fees.

Which would be fine, except for one hitch.

New writers often find it hard to get beyond step one. They write the song, and do not know how to get to second base. Which is where the problem starts.

Over the years, several mini-industries have sprung up, some of which seem designed to do little except take money from writers, and deliver nothing in return.

Here are just some examples.....

(1) If you can write the words but not the music, companies exist who will offer to perform the task for you.

**For a fee.** So ask them one question.....

If my song is all that good, why are you not offering to do it free - for a percentage of my earnings? That's the way the top songwriters collaborate.

(2) If you have a song, but do not know how to get a publisher interested, companies exist who will offer to perform this task for you.

**For a fee.** So ask them one question.....

If my song is all that good, why are you not offering to do it free - for a percentage of my earnings? That's the way the top music publishers work.

(3) If you have a recording but do not know how to get a label interested, companies exist (some of whom choose names very close in spelling to legitimate record labels. or use the name of a defunct but once famous record label), who will offer to record your song, and "release" it for you.

**For a fee.** So ask them one question.....

If my song is all that good, why are you not offering to do it free - for a percentage of my earnings? That's the way the top record labels work.

(4) If you cannot place your song, there companies exist who will offer to promote your song - if you agree to let them to make a demo or perform some other service.

**For a fee.** So ask them one question.....

If my song is all that good, why are you not offering to do it free - for a percentage of my earnings? That's the way the top agents work.

So to repeat.

The music industry is based on a percentage of potential earnings - not fees. and that is that.

And a warning - if you are still tempted.....

The International Songwriters Association has been operating since 1967.

Since 1967, we have never known of one case where a songwriter - who paid to have a melody written to his lyrics - ever ended up with a hit record.

Not one.



You can take it from me that if one of these firms had been able to achieve even a minor hit in that last forty years - they would be very quick to tell us all about it.

They haven't.

Now, we are not saying that you should be quick to hand over percentages in your songs - in fact you should keep as much of that 100% as you can.

But when somebody tells you that you have a great song which is going to make money, you should wonder why they are willing to settle for a flat fee - and not a percentage of the millions they assure you that you are going to make.

In other words, when somebody tells you your song is great - but wants a fee to do something to help you on your way - ask them one question.

“If my song is all that good, why are you not offering to do it free - for a percentage of my earnings?”

And finally. think about this.

If I told you tomorrow that I had written a hit song, and I was willing to either

(a) pay you a fee to finish it off for me

or

(b) offer you a percentage to finish it off for me

what would you do?

Well, if you really thought it would make money - you would take the percentage.

But if you thought that song hadn't a chance - you'd take the fee, and run!

So why are these people always looking for fees and never percentages?

Anyway - how did the greats do it?

When **Oscar Hammerstein** wrote his wonderful lyrics, do you think he paid **Richard Rodgers** a fee to put them to that great music?

Of course not. Mutual talents recognised each other and split the percentages.

When **Irving Berlin** wrote “White Christmas”, do you think he paid his music publisher to publish that classic song?

Of course not. Mutual talents recognised each other and split the percentages.

When **Frank Sinatra** started out, do you think he paid record labels to release his magnificent records?

Of course not. Mutual talents recognised each other and split the percentages.

Why should it be any different in your case?

## **Lesson 11 - Some Frequently Asked Questions**

**The following are the most frequently asked questions put to Songwriter Magazine. If you have a question not answered here, by all means drop us an e-mail and we will be happy to try and answer it for you.**

### **Apart from copyrighting my material, what steps can I take to prevent one of my songs being stolen?**

In spite of popular misconceptions, it is very rare for a complete song to be "stolen" - even an unprotected song. If you are going to have anything stolen, it is more likely to be an idea, a hook, or a phrase, and such thefts are difficult to detect and expensive to pursue, particularly if the material stolen is unpublished.

Accordingly, you should take great care of your unpublished material. Not only should you copyright it to the best of your ability, but you should send it only to named people in the companies to which you are promoting, and deal only with reputable companies and reputable people.

Finally, keep your unpublished material as secure as possible. Doing things like posting the lyrics on the Internet for all to see, leaves you open to wholesale theft by people based in countries with totally different copyright and legal systems.

### **The music business is a closed shop, and no outsider can get a song published. Is not this the case?**

Most careers are closed shops to some degree, but the music business is a lot less closed than most. You do not need educational qualifications (although they help), or money (although it helps too!). But you do need talent, and that is in shorter supply than you might think!

Secondly, newcomers do get songs published and recorded every day of the year, so the problem with your career may lie more with the quality of your material, or your method of promotion, than with the music industry per se.

Believe it or not, most executives want to find hits and keep their jobs. If your song is the hit you think it is, somebody will recognise it as such. It may take longer than it should (Janis Ian's first hit "Society's Child" was turned down by 22 companies), but in the end, it probably will be "discovered".

### **How good does a demo have to be?**

Most publishers we interview say that if the song is good - they will recognise the quality in spite of the lack of sophistication of the demo.

However, nowadays, many demos are of a high standard, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to have yourself taken seriously if you promote a very basic demo.

Having said that, remember that the demo is not everything. A strong demo will not sell a weak song no matter how much you spend, and frequently, the excuse of a "poor demo" is used to by publishers to turn down songs that are in themselves weak anyway.

**Where can I get up-to-date lists of publishers, labels and artists?**

Some libraries stock trade directories - many don't. In the USA, we particularly like Billboard Buyer's Guide (a very comprehensive listing of US labels and publishers, plus a less detailed but equally accurate listing for most overseas territories). They also publish the Billboard International Talent And Touring Directory, which lists management contact for a myriad of acts, although these are in the main, American acts. In the UK, Music Week publish an exhaustive guide called the Music Week Directory. In Ireland, Hot Press do the same for the Emerald Isle. Incidentally there are links to Billboard, Music Week and Hot Press on our links section.

**A firm has suggested to me that my melody is not up to par, but that they will write a better one for me, for just \$50.00. What do you think of this offer?**

Ignore this offer. Also ignore offers to publish your song for cash, to place your song on a compilation CD or cassette and promote it for you for cash, or similar schemes. We estimate that since 1945, over two million similar offers have been taken up by songwriters. but to date, we know of not one single hit resulting from such transactions. Having said that, if hits have been produced, we would love to hear about them, and once we do, we would be only too happy to publicise them - and indeed the firm who made them possible.

**Is there any case where a publisher or record label would require a lyric writer or songwriter to pay and fee or part with any money, or share in any expense whatsoever?**

Not that we can think of. Can you?

**I wrote the tune and I wrote the words, but I paid a musician to put chords to my tune, and a producer to make the recording of the demo. Now both of them claim that they are also entitled to a percentage of the song, and want their names on the song as co-writers.**

You are free to give a percentage of anything you own to anybody you like, but in this case, you have no obligation to give either of them even one percent.

Basically, the pianist has helped arrange **your** song. The producer has helped produce **your** song. It is still **your** song.

Now of course, if the pianist has written a solo instrumental break which is so original and important to the final version that you would like to incorporate it into your song, then you might wish to give him a percentage if you wish to keep his solo.

But writing chords - copying the tune onto paper - telling the singer how to sing - telling the musicians what to play - mixing down the final demo etc., are all services which people are entitled to be paid for. But in themselves, they confer no right of co-ownership or co-authorship of any song.

**I have received an email approach from a person describing himself as a song plugger, who seemingly has heard my work while visiting the offices of a record label, and now wishes to promote my songs for a fee. What do you think of this?**

This is very tempting, because you have indeed sent your song to a record label, and so, it definitely looks as though this person must have heard your song - how otherwise would he have your email address?

In fact, getting your email address is quite easy - all he needs is a contact within the record label who will supply him with a list of songwriters who have recently submitted songs for consideration. He then emails them saying he has heard the material, is very impressed by it, and would like to plug the songs. However, unlike most agents who take a percentage of your income once successful, he only wants an advance fee.

If you are tempted - ask him to take on your song on a percentage basis and see what is response is. If he is genuine, he will do agree to do this. If not.....

**I submitted my song for possible inclusion in a movie but did not hear further about this. Now some months later, I have received an email from a different, but well-known movie producer, telling me that he has already used my song in a movie he has just made, thinking that his company could get the rights from the firm I originally sent the song to. Now however, lawyers for the original company have warned him he must pay me the fee for usage as they never signed a contract with me. He cannot release the movie until he has cleared this matter up and has even sent me a photocopy of a bank draft for \$ 489,000 which is made out in my name. All he needs from me is my postal address, and/or bank details, in order to send me the money. What do I do?**

This is not really a songwriting scam as such, but a variation on a long-established internet fraud.

Although you did send your song to a genuine company originally, they obviously did not use it - but somebody has handed over your email address to a fraudster.

Now, this "movie producer" has contacted you, and when you check him out on the internet, he is genuinely famous, with a string of hit movies to his name. But the problem is - you have not received the email from him - just somebody using his name and forging his email address.

So where is the scam?

In fact, there are many possibilities for the fraudster. He may only want your home address and bank details to sell on for use in an identity theft scam, but more likely, he does really want to send you that draft for \$489,000!

So, you send him the address, and some time later, a bank draft arrives, for \$498,000, with a letter telling you to lodge it immediately. Which of course, you do, and if your banker knows you well, and trusts you, he may even credit your account with \$498,000 there and then. But remember, bank drafts are not "as good as cash" - or at least, they are not if they happen to be forged.

A few days later, you receive another communication. This may come from the "secretary" who sent you the draft. She has made a terrible mistake. The draft should have been for \$489,000 - but she typed it as \$498,000 so she is in trouble. Any chance you could as quickly as possible, send her \$ 9,000 to save her being fired?

Alternatively, you will be told that there is a fee of two percent owing to the lawyers who forced this producer to pay up - could you please send \$ 9960 immediately? The possibilities are endless.

You being honest and helpful - and the amounts requested being so small in comparison with the total sent - you rush to help.

Then four weeks later, your banker tells you the original draft was a forgery.

An email is nothing but an email. It can be made to appear to come from anybody. And remember also - if an offer looks too good to be true - it probably is.

### **Is there any point in entering song contests?**

Song Contests have little to do with the mainstream music industry, which does not however mean that they should be ignored. Usually, they offer cash prizes, and operate by collecting entry fees from songwriters, and then paying back a percentage of these fees as winnings. Sort of like your local lottery really, but with musical accompaniment. Now and then, the winning songs make it to the record market, and even less frequently, one of them actually charts. However, apart from the Eurovision, which launched Abba and Johnny Logan, most contest finalists are never heard of again. The Eurovision Song Contest, UniSong, the South Pacific Song Contest, and some others are worth looking at. Our Contest page has a list of some of the current ones.

### **How difficult is it to make money in songwriting?**

Extremely difficult. If you do not believe this, then look at the statistics published by the various rights organisations. These show that only a tiny minority of published songwriters (perhaps as few as 5%), make enough money each year to be able to devote themselves full-time to songwriting. Given that published songwriters constitute a minority of those writing songs, it is obvious that a vast body of writers exist who earn no money from their talent.

In spite of these dismal statistics, songwriting remains a remarkably competitive business, although given the rewards enjoyed by those at the top, this is not perhaps surprising. After all, one hit song can quite literally set you up for life, and so naturally enough, writers prefer to concentrate on the possible rewards, and not the likely pitfalls.

Because the chances of success are low, most songwriters drop out after a year or two, but in our experience, writers who keep plugging away will eventually succeed in getting some material out on the market.

However, let us again stress that since the vast majority of even published writers still make very little money from their talent, the achievement of getting published - monumental in itself - is still only the first faltering step on what is a very long, and rocky road.

### **Would joining the ISA help me to become a successful songwriter?**

Only in the sense that joining your local golf club could help you become the next Tiger Woods!

If you can write good songs, then you could obviously profit from the advice, the information, and the contacts which are on offer.

But you have to be able to write good songs.

If you cannot write good songs, then your musical career might be just as much helped by joining your local golf club!

## **Lesson 12 - International Songwriters Association**

International Songwriters Association Ltd was founded in October 1967 to publish Songwriter Magazine

There are ISA songwriters in more than sixty countries worldwide, with the bulk in either the United Kingdom or the United States

ISA songwriters receive such **ISA Publications** as Songwriter Magazine and Songwriter Update

ISA Songwriters have access to such free **ISA Services** such as Song Copyright, Song Assessment, Advice, Directory Information etc

ISA Songwriters have access to the **ISA Members Site**, where they can download the latest song contest forms, magazines, interviews, courses etc.

ISA Songwriters receive a large **ISA Subscribers Package** which includes the Songwriter Yearbook etc

Full details of what every ISA songwriter receives, are as follows:

### **(A) THE ISA PUBLICATIONS**

All ISA songwriters receive the following publications

#### **SONGWRITER MAGAZINE**

Songwriter Magazine is the International Songwriters Association's house publication.

Every issue includes an exclusive multi-thousand word interview with a songwriter who has written at least one million-seller.

Interviewees have included such writers as George Harrison (My Sweet Lord), Billy Joel (Still Rock & Roll To Me), Chris DeBurgh (Lady In Red), Barry Mason (Delilah), Bob Gaudio (December 63, Oh What A Night), Sonny Curtis (I Fought The Law), Hal Shaper (Softly As I Leave You), Bryan Adams, Leonard Cohen, Burt Bacharach, Bernie Taupin, George Michael, Paul Williams, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Gene Pitney, Don McLean, Jonathan King, and many more.

Songwriter Magazine also includes a full news page, giving the latest songwriting stories, as well as information on song contests, industry events, and collaboration offers. It tells you which acts are signing for which companies, and names the stars planning new albums this year.

In addition, Songwriter Magazine interviews music publishers, asking them about the type of material their companies are looking for, as well as a songwriter who is having his first successes right now.

There are also technical articles on such subjects as putting your songs online, thinking up

titles, getting story line ideas etc.

Finally, every issue of Songwriter Magazine includes a two-page SongSeller® section, which names the publishing and record companies, along with the singers, who are looking for songs right now.

Each tip is accompanied by full contact details, and our own comment on the source.

### **SONGWRITER UPDATE**

This weekly publication contains the latest song contest news, a full news section, contact information, plus tips on who is looking for what along with contact information for every act entering the charts this week etc!

Each issue averages 25 pages, so over a year, you get approximately 1200 extra pages of information.

### **SONGWRITER YEARBOOK**

This is the collection of Songwriter Magazine interviews which all new ISA subscribers receive.

The current edition includes a 6,000 word interview with Roger Cook - who in the 60's wrote countless pop hits, before quitting England for Nashville where he proceeded to become one of the hottest country songwriters around!

Also included is an exclusive interview with one of the greatest singer-songwriters of all time - Gordon Lightfoot, whose songs have been covered by everybody from Elvis Presley to Bob Dylan.

We also talk to Barry Mason whose songs have been recorded by everybody from Tom Jones to Elvis Presley, as well as country songwriter Tom T Hall whose beautiful lyrics have earned him the nickname of "The Storyteller"

Bruce Welch was once a member of The Shadows, but was also a very successful songwriter, penning hits for Olivia Newton John, Cliff Richard and many more, before setting up an independent music publishing company. He tells us how he did it.

Mike Batt (he writes for and manages Katie Melua) tells us how he made his name writing for television and movies, while Tony Hatch has written some of the finest pop songs of recent years, (as well as the theme for such TV series as "Neighbours").

Finally, Julie Gold tells us how she wrote one of the most successful songs of all time - almost by accident while Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber talks about Evita, Jesus Christ Superstar, Whistle Down The Wind, Cats, Sunset Boulevard and Phantom Of The Opera.

In one year alone, ISA Songwriters get over 1300 pages of information from the ISA!



## **(2) THE ISA SERVICES**

ISA songwriters can use the following free services

### **SONG ASSESSMENT**

Some song assessment services charge \$15 per song, but the ISA Assessment Service is free, and post free (as indeed are all our services). If you have a song but are unsure of its commercial potential, we will advise you on this as well as tell you how suitable your recording is. If we advise you to proceed, then we will also list nine or ten companies which are seeking new songs this week, with full addresses and contact names.

### **SONG COPYRIGHT**

Before promotion, you should always copyright material.

Some Song Copyright Services charge from £20 or \$30 per song. However, the ISA Copyright Service is free and post free. Send us the material, and a Copyright Certificate will be with you by return.

### **DIRECTORY INFORMATION**

If you need further promotion advice or contact information, Directory Information maintains a giant database of every recording act since 1967, and can give you the relevant address by return post. Again, this is free and post free.

### **ADVICE**

Then, if you get an offer of a contract, our free Advisory service will be ready to advise, and point you in the right direction, so that you can maximise your income from your work.

Again, this is free and post free. Our advice service also includes a separate Investigations service, where we can check out discreetly any problems you may be having. Again, this is free and post free.

### **COLLABORATION**

Nowadays, more writers collaborate than used to be the case.

Whether you are a lyric writer seeking a melody writer, or a songwriter seeking collaboration with another, then the Collaboration Service is there to put writers in touch with each other.

Again, this is free and post free.

### **DEMOS**

Finally, if you cannot make your own professional demo recordings, the ISA sister company, Musical Records Ltd can record them for you.

### **(3) THE ISA MEMBERS' SITE**

All ISA members have access to the ISA Members site, where you can • Read or Print ISA Services Listing • Read or Print Current Issue Songwriter Magazine • Read or Print Current Issue Songwriter Magazine Update • Read or Print Current Song Contest Forms • Read or Print Demo Order Form • Read or Print the latest update of the "Selling Your Songs" Songwriting Course • Read or Print Archive Songwriter Interviews • Read or Print Archive Articles By ISA Staff Writers • Read or Download "Web Design Mastery" Course • Check out the Top 20 Links For ISA Members and much more

### **(4) THE ISA SUBSCRIBER'S PACKAGE**

ISA songwriters receive the following introductory package

#### **1 SONGWRITER YEARBOOK**

The current issue of the Songwriter Yearbook, comprising in-depth exclusive interviews with star songwriters Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, Barry Mason, Tom T Hall, Gordon Lightfoot, Bruce Welch, Mike Batt, Tony Hatch, Julie Gold and Roger Cooke.

#### **2 SONGWRITER MAGAZINE**

This month's issue of Songwriter Magazine Newsletter including interviews with music publishers, two SongSeller® tipsheet columns listing companies looking for songs, a full news page, hit listings from around the world, a UK record label roster of all its acts, song contest information etc.

#### **3 THE MCPS**

The brochure explaining how the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society, the MCPS, works for songwriters and publishers

#### **4 THE PRS**

Explaining the role and function of the Performing Rights Society - the PRS

#### **5 DEMO BROCHURE**

Information on making demos, and on using the Musical Records Demo Service.

#### **6 "FREE DEMOS" LEAFLET**

A leaflet explaining how you can get free demos from Musical Records Ltd!

#### **7 SONG CONTEST ENTRY FORM**

An entry form for a current international song contest, open to all songwriters and lyricists.

#### **8 PROMOTION FILE SHEET**

The ISA-designed promotion sheet for all songwriters

#### **9 PRINTPACK OFFER**

A very special offer for songwriters who need letterheadings, contracts, cassette labels, cassette inlay cards, or lyric sheets printed with their own name and address

#### **10 PROMOTION ADVICE BROCHURE**

Fifteen points of advice for members about to start promoting their songs for the first time

### **11 REGISTER OF COMPOSERS**

Lyricists seeking composers, or composers looking for lyrics, this explains how the ISA Register of Composers operates

### **12 ADVICE FOR LYRIC WRITERS**

Eight points of advice for lyric writers

### **13 CONTACT INFORMATION SHEET**

Detailed explanation on who to contact if you have a song ready to roll. Examines the role of managers, publishers, labels, producers etc

### **14 COMPILATION CDs LEAFLET**

Examines what deals are being offered new songwriters in this complex, often profitable, but frequently dangerous field

### **15 TAX & THE SONGWRITER**

Don't wait until your first royalty cheque arrives before regularising your tax affairs. This shows you how to be ready for the taxman

### **16 A JOB IN MUSIC PUBLISHING**

Many writers would like to work in music publishing while continuing to write songs. This leaflet looks at the opportunities, and pitfalls, of such a move

### **17 A MUSIC PUBLISHER GIVES THE INSIDE STORY**

A UK Music Publisher tells you how he deals with songs and how to improve your chances

### **18 SONGWRITERS & THE INTERNET**

Everyone thinks the Internet is the next big market for songwriters. But is it - and can it help you to sell songs?

### **19 HINTS ON MAKING GREAT DEMOS**

Examines and evaluates the three methods of making demo recordings!

### **20 SONG CONTEST LISTING**

A listing of the major song contests at present operating in Europe, Asia, Australia and the USA

### **21 SHARK ATTACK**

A look at some of the odder fish infesting the songwriting waters

### **22 SONGWRITER UPDATE**

Our free internet e-mail newsletter, the "Songwriter Update", published once a week. The Update gives tips on who is looking for new songs, and also lists the current song contests and conditions of entry, plus contact information for every act entering the charts this week.

That's right - ISA songwriters receive everything listed here!

If have any queries concerning the above information, send an e-mail to

[jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie](mailto:jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie) and we will reply to you as soon as possible.

# The Top UK Music Publishers

*This list is for reference only. By the time this is published, some of these will surely have moved on.*

## 19 Music

Unit 33, Ransomes Dock, 35-37 Parkgate Road, London SW11, UK  
Tel 020-7801 1919  
Contact Simon Fuller

## Beggars Banquet Music

17-19 Alma Road, London SW18, UK  
Tel 020-8871 2121  
Contact Andy Heath

## Blue Mountain Music

8 Kensington Park Road, London W11 3BU, UK  
Tel 020-7229 3000  
Contact Alistair Norbury

## BMG Music

20 Fulham Broadway, London SW6 1AH, UK  
Tel 0207-835 5200  
Contact Ian Ramage

## Carlin Music

3 Bridge Approach, Iron Bridge House, London NW1, UK  
Tel 020-7734 3251  
Contact David Japp

## Champion Music

181 High Street, Harlesden, London NW10 4TE, UK  
Tel 020-8961 5202  
Contact Eddie Seago

## Charisma Music

127 Charing Cross Road, London WC2, UK  
Tel 020-7434 2131  
Contact David Pemberton

## Chrysalis Music

13 Bramley Road, The Chrysalis Building, London W10, UK  
Tel 020-7221 2213  
Contact Alison Donald

## Complete Music

25-29 Fulham High Street, Bishops Park House, London SW6, UK  
Tel 020-7731 8595  
Contact Kareem Taylor

## Eaton Music

Eaton House, 39 Lower Richmond Road, Putney, London SW15 1ET, UK  
Tel 0208-788 4557  
Contact Terry Oates

## EMI Music

127 Charing Cross Road, London WC2, UK  
Tel 020-7434 2131  
Contact David Pemberton

## Hit & Run Music

127 Charing Cross Road, London WC2, UK  
Tel 020-7434 2131  
Contact David Pemberton

## Minder Music

18 Pindock Mews, London W9 2PY, UK  
Tel 020-7289 7281  
Contact John Fogarty

## MPL Music

1 Soho Square, London W1, UK  
Tel 020-7439 2001  
Contact Alan Crowder

## Mute Music

429 Harrow Road, London W10, UK  
Tel 020-8964 2001  
Contact Daniel Miller

## Perfect Music

8-10 Basing Street, London W11 1DG, UK  
Tel 020-7229 1229  
Contact Emma Kamen

## Rondor Music

136-144 New Kings Road, London N5 2LT, UK  
Tel 020-8752 2600  
Contact Paul Connolly

## Sony ATV Music

13 Great Marlborough Street, London W1, UK  
Tel 020-7911 8256  
Contact Simon Aldridge

## Sparta-Florida Music

8-9 Frith Street, London W1, UK  
Tel 020-7434 0066  
Contact Chris Butler

## Universal Music

136-144 New Kings Road, London N5 2LT, UK  
Tel 020-8752 2600  
Contact Paul Connolly

## Virgin Music

127 Charing Cross Road, London WC2, UK  
Tel 020-7434 2131  
Contact David Pemberton

## Warner Chappell Music

28 Kensington Church Street, London W8 4EP, UK  
Tel 020-7938 0000  
Contact David Donald

## Windswept Music

40 St Peters Road, London W6, UK  
Tel 020-8237 8400  
Contact Peter McCamley

## Zomba Music

20 Fulham Broadway, London SW6 1AH, UK  
Tel 020-7835 5260  
Contact Tim Smith

# INTERNATIONAL SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION Ltd

PO Box 46, Limerick City, Ireland • Tel +353-61-228837 • Fax +353-61-229464

E-Mail: [jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie](mailto:jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie) • Web-Site: <http://www.songwriter.co.uk>

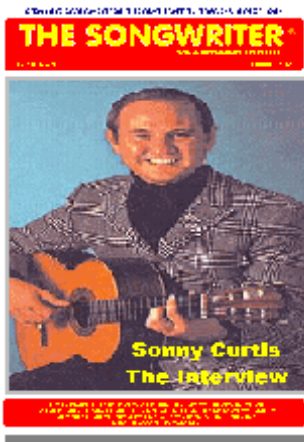
## HISTORY

Songwriter Magazine was founded in Limerick City, Ireland in October 1967, and in 1972, it absorbed the ISA, adopting the corporate name, International Songwriters Association Ltd. Nowadays, it caters for songwriters in more than sixty countries worldwide, the bulk of whom are in the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Songwriter Magazine is now the longest established songwriting publication in the world

## BENEFITS

New subscribers receive the current edition of *Songwriter Yearbook*, plus the latest edition of our publication *Songwriter Magazine*. Subscribers also receive our free weekly e-mail publication, *Songwriter Update*.



Interviewee **SONNY CURTIS**

All subscribers may make unlimited use of our free Readers' Services, such as Assessment, Copyright, Advice, Directory Information, Collaboration and the Telephone Service.

In addition to the regular publications, new subscribers receive a special introductory pack, details of which are enclosed with this.

## SONGWRITER MAGAZINE

The Songwriter Magazine was founded in October 1967 and includes news, interviews and instructional articles, as well as SongSeller, the tipsheet which lists dozens of companies and performers seeking songs each month. [Full details on Page 2]

## SONGWRITER YEARBOOK

This publication contains in-depth and exclusive interviews with such top songwriters as Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, Barry Mason, Roger Cooke, Mike Batt, Gordon Lightfoot, Bruce Welch, Tom T Hall, Tony Hatch and Julie Gold. [Full details on Page 2]

## SONGWRITER UPDATE

The Update is e-mailed to subscribers every week. It contains the latest song contest news plus tips on who is looking for what along with contact information for every act entering the charts this week. [Full details on Page 2]

## READERS' SERVICES

As an assistance to the songwriting community, we offer a number of services which are free (and post free).



Interviewee **BARRY MASON**

## ASSESSMENT

Have your song examined for free, and get advice on what to do next. [Full details on Page 3]

## COPYRIGHT

Protect your song's copyright at no charge. [Full details on Page 3]

## ADVICE

Get advice on any subject you like, free of charge. [Full details on Page 3]

## DIRECTORY INFORMATION

If you want to contact anybody in the music business, whether it be singer, band, label, publisher or producer, this service can oblige, at no charge. [Full details on Page 3]

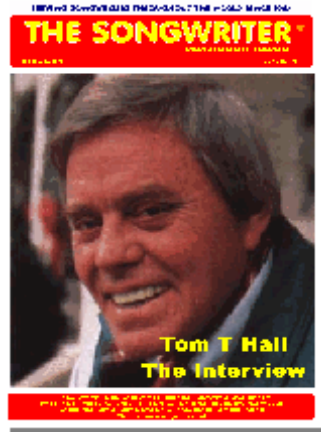
## COLLABORATION

Collaborate with another writer, with this free service. [Full details on Page 3]

## DEMO RECORDING SERVICE

If you wish to have a demo recording of your song made by a service widely regarded as the best and the most reasonably-priced in the business, our sister company, Musical Records Ltd can do this for you.

Male and female vocalists, plus a wide range of professional musicians, are available in all styles.



Interviewee **TOM T HALL**

*I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks for all the help and kindness shown to me by yourself and other members of the ISA generally over the last few years. I am sure that it is mainly due to this that many outside the music business manage to make any impact, and we are lucky that someone like Mr. Liddane is willing to spend so very much of his time in furthering the work of other people. Mr. Liddane seems to be available almost any time day or night, and I have found it very reassuring on many occasions recently to discuss technical and contractual details that would be pitfalls for the novice. There were times in the past when I felt like dropping the whole thing, but his encouragement kept me going. May he continue to help us on for years to come. John Fisher, Thurlow Drive, Thorpe Bay, Essex, UK.*

*As a recent member of ISA I would like to say how professional I find your organisation and also what great value (and I hope that doesn't sound too patronising!) Barry Speed, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain*

*I can only say this, If Musical Records prove to give a quarter the quality of service that you and the guys at the other end of this phone line deliver then I am a made man. Bill has been fantastic, Ray also. The replies are so swift! Nick Ames, London E17, UK*

*I appreciate your very prompt reply, and your reassurance. Wonderful to see someone doing things right. Keep up the great work. Nigel Normanton, Leeds, UK*

*Just a quick note to confirm I have received all the promised items both through the post and via email and to say thanks for your quick and very efficient service. Roger Penkethman, Crewe, Cheshire, UK*

*Thanks for everything, i.e.-mails and hardcopy - it's fascinating stuff. I'm really glad I joined! Michael Hussey, Dublin, Ireland*

*Great issue this month. I love your in depth interviews. Here's to great songs. Ron Dante, Hollywood, USA*

*I am already dazzled by your warm approach and all of the interesting information I have already received. Terri Bonnah, Ontario, Canada*

*I must say all your services seem first class and I have recommended the ISA to a couple of musical friends. Michael McQuiggan, Beckenham, Kent, UK*

*Thanks a million for your help. You offer a great service! Peter Croton, Basel, Switzerland*

*First of all let me repeat what I often read in the Newsletter: Thanks a lot for the great work you do! It's really extremely encouraging to read the news and to listen to other peoples' stories and ideas - and encouragement is something everybody dedicated to music needs. Jan Sperhake, Goettingen, Germany*

*Thank you Jim Liddane very much for the enlightening information that you sent! I wish I had received this information 30 years ago! Leland Griffith, Zacariah Enterprises, California, USA*

*I've received the initial package and found so much useful information. This is a wonderful organisation with a sincere purpose to assist songwriters, and a warm but professional approach. Tom Fair, Los Angeles, California, USA*

*Once again, I thank you for your extremely prompt response. You people are terrific! Bill Derham, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA*

*Although I am not at present as active in the songwriting world as I used to be, I still think that you are the greatest single help to songwriters in the UK (and possibly throughout the world). Waldi Schubert, London, UK*

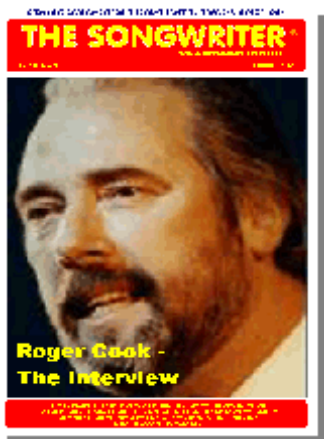
# WHAT SUBSCRIBERS GET FROM THE ISA

## THE ISA PUBLICATIONS

### SONGWRITER YEARBOOK

This is the collection of *Songwriter Magazine* interviews which all new ISA subscribers receive upon joining.

The current edition includes a 6,000 word interview with **Roger Cook** - who in the 60's wrote countless pop hits, before quitting England for Nashville where he proceeded to become one of the hottest country songwriters around! Also included is an exclusive interview with one of the greatest singer-songwriters of all time - **Gordon Lightfoot**, whose songs have been covered by such legends as Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan.



### Interviewee **ROGER COOK**

We also talk to **Barry Mason** whose songs have been recorded by everybody from Tom Jones to Elvis Presley, as well as to country songwriter **Tom T Hall** whose beautiful lyrics have earned him the nickname of "The Storyteller".

**Mike Batt** tells us how he made his name writing for television and movies, while **Tony Hatch** has written some of the finest pop songs of recent years, (as well as the themes for such TV series as "Neighbours")

**Bruce Welch** was once a member of The Shadows, but was also a very successful songwriter, penning hits for Olivia Newton John, Cliff Richard and many more, before setting himself up an independent music publisher. He tells us exactly how he did it, while **Andrew Lloyd Webber** - the writer who dominates both the West End and Broadway, tells us all about the rewards (and the tribulations) of writing the classic stage musical.

**Johnny Marks** explains how he cornered the market in Christmas songs, earning many millions in the process, and finally, **Julie Gold** tells us how she wrote one of the most successful songs of all time - almost by accident!

### SONGWRITER MAGAZINE

*Songwriter Magazine* is the International Songwriters Association's house publication.

Every issue includes an exclusive multi-thousand word interview with a songwriter who has written at least one million-seller.

Previous interviewees include such Gold Disc songwriters as Mitch Murray, George Harrison, Billy Joel, Chris DeBurgh, Barry Mason, Bob Gaudio, Sonny Curtis, Hal Shaper, Bryan Adams, Leonard Cohen, Burt Bacharach, Bernie Taupin, George Michael, Paul Williams, Merle Kilgore, Gene Pitney, Don McLean, Jonathan King, Buck Ram and many more.

As songwriter **Ray Lyles** wrote: *Well done for such an interesting magazine with such in-depth interviews. Great!*

*Songwriter Magazine* also includes a full news page, giving the latest songwriting stories, as well as information on song contests, industry events, and collaboration offers. It tells you which acts are signing for which companies, and names the stars planning new albums this year.

As songwriter **John Harvey** wrote: *The Songwriter is a fantastic magazine. Well-written, well-produced, very informative, interesting, and exactly what I've been searching for, for many years.*

In addition, *Songwriter Magazine* interviews a music publisher, asking him about the type of material his company is looking for, as well as a songwriter who is having his first successes right now.

There are also technical articles on such subjects as putting your songs on the internet, thinking up titles, getting story line ideas etc.

No wonder songwriter **Simon Holtom** wrote: *The Songwriter remains the only publication that I receive that I am guaranteed to read within an hour of arrival. That is out of a selection of around fifty trade magazines that clog up my post every month!*

Finally, every issue of *Songwriter Magazine* includes a two-page *SongSeller*® section, which names the publishing and record companies, along with the singers, who are looking for songs right now. Each tip is accompanied by full contact details, and our own comment on the source.

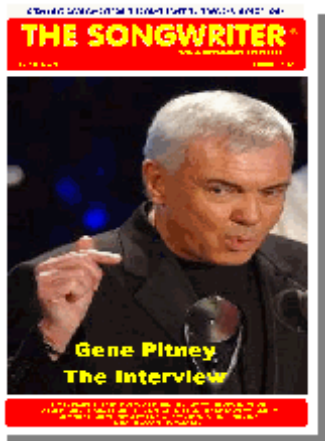
As songwriter **C J Knight** wrote: *I am pleased to announce that with your help, I have been offered a publishing contract. I refer to SongSeller where Jack Gale of Playback Records was looking for one song only for Jeannie C Riley, an established singer. Mr Gale telephoned me from Florida on Friday to say how much he liked C'est La Vie. Today I am in receipt of the contract for that song. The service you provide to songwriters is second to none and I have recommended your association to all my colleagues*

Songwriter **Patricia Knapton** wrote: *Thanks to a tip in SongSeller, I have had fourteen songs signed to publishing contracts*

**Frank Briggs** wrote: *I am pleased to inform you that with the help of SongSeller in the last issue, I signed a contract for three songs.*

### SONGWRITER UPDATE

The weekly e-mail publication *Songwriter Update* contains the latest song contest news, a full news section, singer and band contact information, announcements from readers, plus tips on who is looking for what songs this week - along with contact information for every single act entering the charts this week. Plus more - much more!



### Interviewee **GENE PITNEY**

*I want to thank all of you at ISA for all your help and support. I have been writing songs for a few years now. Until I discovered ISA on the internet, I wasn't quite sure how to proceed. I learned so much from the initial information package I received upon joining ISA. I learned how to edit my songs to make them more professional. It was as if I took several college courses on songwriting just by reading the material you sent me. After receiving my first two demo recordings back from you, I truly believe I have a chance to get my songs published. I keep listening to my the demos and am amazed I actually wrote them. I'm looking forward to a long and successful relationship with ISA. Linda Sue Reeves, Fresno, California, USA*

*I have recently signed a publishing contract with Plugged Publishing and Plugged Records of Stockholm, Sweden. My song, entitled "Saxophone Song", is to be released on an album by a new artist called Caroline W in late April or early May. I would like to thank the I.S.A. for providing the information which made it possible for me to promote my song to this company. I have been trying for song success for a number of years now, and was almost at the point of giving up! So I hope that my good news will encourage as yet unsuccessful writers to persevere! I'm certainly glad I did. I can't tell you how much it means. Brian Mason, Chelmsford, Essex, UK*

*Since I subscribed ten years ago, I have had songs out on seven albums, and to date a total of 46 songs published both here and in the USA! I'd like to thank the ISA for the brilliant work they do. Geoffrey Crust, Heartbeat Music Boston, Lincs, UK.*

*It is hard for me to fathom that there could actually be a person out there that cares as much as you do about your members! Maybe I'm just showing my American cynicism but my experience tells me that you are a jewel amongst the lumps of coal that represent the greater part of the mine of humanity. I thank you and I look forward to getting my first issue of Songwriter Magazine and further communications with you. Bruce McCormack, Sparks, Nevada, USA*

*First of all I'd like to congratulate you for your promotion advice. I posted my first demo since I'm an ISA member and I had a reply a week later from a company offering me to sign an artist agreement to promote my single. Patricio Endeiza, Mendoza, Argentina.*

*I continue to be amazed at the quality of everything that the ISA does and stands for. Well done and thank you again for a top quality service. Jim McAteer, Newry, Co Down, Northern Ireland*

*I also wanted to thank you for being so supportive of the songwriting community and being a tremendous resource for the music industry as a whole. I recently posted a request for original material which you picked up in your weekly newswire and the response we've been receiving has been quite impressive. Serious, professional and talented writers from across the globe. Much appreciated! Keep up the good work. Tracy Hunter, Solfege Entertainment Group, Inc., Florida, USA*

*I'm a new subscriber, and I am flabbergasted at the avalanche of material I've received already. Thanks a million for my initial package! You've sent me more in this package than I received from Songwriters Guild Of America in over 10 years! Thrilled to death, just can't believe my first Tip Sheets. Answered two already! Again thank you so much. Tom Maxwell, Kissimmee, Florida, USA*

*I have just this minute checked my e-mails. Thank you so much for providing the contact information I requested, and more! You really do live up to your publicity. What a service! Reg Parr, Olhao, Algarve, Portugal*

# WHAT SUBSCRIBERS GET FROM THE ISA

## THE FREE READERS' SERVICES

### ASSESSMENT

Some song assessment services charge a hefty per song, but the ISA **ASSESSMENT** Service is free, and post free (as indeed are all our services). If you have a song but are unsure of its commercial potential, we will advise you on this as well as tell you how suitable your recording is. If we advise you to proceed, then we will also list nine or ten companies which are seeking new songs this week, with full addresses and contact names.

As songwriter Sean Locke wrote: *Thank you for the excellent assessment service you provide. It is a priceless service to have.*



Interviewee **NORMAN PETTY**

### COPYRIGHT

Before promotion, you should always copyright material. Some Song Copyright Services charge from £20 or \$30 per song. However, the ISA **COPYRIGHT** Service is free and post free. Send us the material, and a Copyright Certificate will be with you by return.

As songwriter Morris Lewis wrote: *The first ISA service I used was Copyright. It worked perfectly. If all your services are as efficient as this, then I have been very lucky to have been accepted as a subscriber.*

### DIRECTORY INFORMATION

If you need further promotion advice or contact information, **DIRECTORY INFORMATION** maintains a giant database of every recording act since 1967, and can give you the relevant address by return post. Again, this is free and post free.

As songwriter George Carlton wrote: *Please thank Directory Service for their wonderful reply concerning contact information. It was extremely helpful. Long may ISA continue!*

## A Few Words From An Interviewee Or Two

*It was the most accurate profile of our activities I have yet read - I can well appreciate why your readers hold you in such high regard. Congratulations. Norman Petty, NorVaJak Music, Clovis, New Mexico, USA.*

*I was very pleased with the interview which appeared recently. I love the magazine, and look forward to future issues. Johnny Marks, St. Nicholas Music, Broadway, New York, USA.*

*"Songwriter Magazine" is a first class paper, with really excellent articles by and about top people. It reflects accurately the whole profession. I bet that many amateurs felt, when they received their first copy, that the information it contained was worth many times the subscription. Reg Guest, Reg Guest Music, Hove, UK.*

*I really enjoy reading "Songwriter Magazine" - it's always very interesting. Marijohn Wilkin, Buckhorn Music, Nashville, Tennessee, USA.*

*Right across the spectrum, people have mentioned the interview you did with me. It is at times like these that I realise what an all-round service you provide. Des McKeogh, Suedes Music, London,*

### ADVICE

Then, if you get an offer of a contract, our free **ADVISORY** service will be ready to advise, and point you in the right direction, so that you can maximise your income from your work. Again, this is free and post free.

As songwriter Neil Haigh wrote: *Thank you very much for your highly detailed and considerate reply to my request for advice. Your advice was absolutely correct in every regard.*

You can request advice by letter, e-mail or fax, or of course by phone.

As songwriter Howard Farr wrote: *As a token gift, I enclose a few copies of my new single. An extra special thanks to the people on the other end of the phone at ISA who are so freely helpful. Please make sure they get a copy - I will send more if necessary.*

### INVESTIGATIONS

Our advice service also include a separate **INVESTIGATIONS** service, where we can check out discreetly any problems you may be having. Again, this is free and post free.

As songwriter John McLaughlin wrote: *I am writing concerning a matter I took up with your Investigation Department. I would really like to thank you for the concern you showed me in this matter, and your prompt response.*

### COLLABORATION

Nowadays, more writers collaborate than used be the case. Whether you are a lyric writer seeking a melody writer, or a songwriter seeking collaboration with another, then the **COLLABORATION** Service is there to put writers in touch with each other. Again, this is free.

As songwriter Keith George wrote: *Thank you for a wonderful service to songwriters. The response was amazing. I have now got together with a brilliant lyric writer and singer, all thanks to you.*

### DEMOS

Finally, if you cannot make your own professional demo recordings, the ISA sister company, **Musical Records Ltd** can record them for you.

As songwriter Leslie King wrote: *To think that 18 years ago, you demoed my first songs, and I was pleased then. How can I ever thank you for what you have done now. The latest demo was just brilliant!*

We will leave the final word with ISA subscriber, Tony Booth: *Since subscribing to ISA, I have had one song recorded in Canada (which might never have happened without your legal assistance), and numerous offers of recordings....as well as several publishing offers. As a one-time unknown songwriter, all I can say is subscribe now!"*



Interviewee **TONY HATCH**

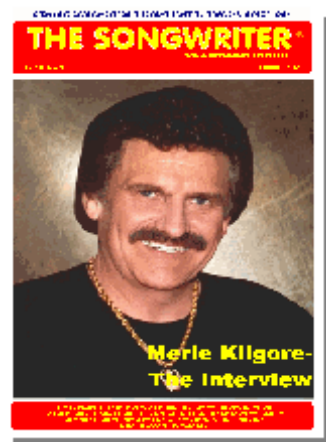
*I tend to have doubts about "reader testimony"-type incentives for any organisation, but your service and speed in answering questions of [currently] a non-member speaks very highly and completely backs up the testimonials I've read. I'll be joining as soon as possible - you really do put your money where your mouth is! Congratulations! Matthew Davis, Exeter, Devon, UK*

*Thank you for everything. It is well worth the money! Thelma Harcum, Willingboro, New Jersey, USA*

*I just joined ISA and less than two weeks ago, I responded to a lead. I sent a demo and in less than a week got a favourable response on one of my songs. This platform for songwriters really works. Roland Marke, Jacksonville, Florida, USA*

*Thanks to all for the good tips in the newsletters which have made it possible for me to get five songs under publishing contracts in the last five months. Three were signed by Jan Olofsson's London-based Birth Music, and now he wants to work more closely with me. Arild Tveit, 4600 Kristiansand, Norway*

*While I'm writing, I'd like to thank the ISA for its help in getting me started, and the useful advice and contacts. From having no publishing contracts at all, to the dozen I have now, plus several record releases, plus the record label interest in my band, plus the major publishing company interest in my new songs. Mark Stockton, Sevenoaks, Kent, UK*



Interviewee **MERLE KILGORE**

# WHAT SUBSCRIBERS GET FROM THE ISA

## THE INTRODUCTORY PACK

### 1 SONGWRITER YEARBOOK

The current issue of Songwriter Yearbook, comprising in-depth interviews with songwriters Andrew Lloyd Webber, Barry Mason, Tom T Hall, Gordon Lightfoot, Bruce Welch, Mike Batt, Tony Hatch, Julie Gold and Roger Cooke.

### 2 SONGWRITER MAGAZINE

This month's issue of Songwriter Magazine Newsletter including interviews with music top songwriters, the SongSeller® tipsheet columns listing companies looking for songs, a full news page, hit listings from around the world, a UK record label roster of all its acts, song contest information etc., plus instructional articles.



Interviewee **JANIS IAN**

### 3 THE MCPS

Explaining how the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society, the MCPS, works for songwriters and publishers

### 4 THE PRS

Explaining the role and function of the Performing Rights Society - the PRS

### 5 DEMO BROCHURE

Information on making demos, and on using the Musical Records Demo Service.

### 6 "FREE DEMOS" LEAFLET

Explaining how you can get free demos from Musical Records Ltd!

### 7 SONG CONTEST ENTRY FORM

An entry form for a current international song contest, open to all songwriters and lyricists.

### 8 PROMOTION FILE SHEET

The ISA-designed promotion sheet for all songwriters

### 9 PRINTPACK OFFER

A very special offer for songwriters who need letterheadings, contracts, cassette labels, cassette inlay cards, or lyric sheets printed with their own name and address

### 10 PROMOTION ADVICE BROCHURE

Fifteen points of advice for members about to start promoting their songs for the first time

### 11 REGISTER OF COMPOSERS

Lyricists seeking composers, or composers looking for lyrics, this explains how the ISA Register of Composers operates

### 12 ADVICE FOR LYRIC WRITERS

Eight points of advice for lyric writers

### 13 CONTACT INFORMATION SHEET

Detailed explanation on who to contact if you have a song ready to roll. Examines the role and the relative importance of managers, publishers, labels, producers etc., and shows you how to decide who to approach first

### 14 COMPILATION CDs LEAFLET

Examines what deals are being offered new songwriters in this complex, often profitable, but frequently dangerous field

### 15 TAX & THE SONGWRITER

Don't wait until your first royalty cheque arrives before regularising your tax affairs. This shows you how to be ready for the taxman

### 16 A JOB IN MUSIC PUBLISHING

Many writers would like to work in music publishing while continuing to write songs. This leaflet looks at the opportunities, and pitfalls, of such a move

### 17 A MUSIC PUBLISHER GIVES THE INSIDE STORY

A UK Music Publisher tells you how he deals with songs and how to improve your chances

### 18 SONGWRITERS & THE INTERNET

Everyone thinks the Internet is the next big market for songwriters. But is it - and can it help you to sell songs?

### 19 HINTS ON MAKING GREAT DEMOS

Examines and evaluates the three methods of making demo recordings.

### 20 SONG CONTEST LISTING

A listing of the major song contests at present operating in Europe, Asia, Australia and the USA



Interviewee **BUCK RAM**

### 21 SHARK ATTACK

A look at some of the odder fish infesting the songwriting waters

### 22 SONGWRITER UPDATE

Subscription to our free internet e-mail newsletter, the *Songwriter Update*, published once a week.

The *Update* gives tips on who is looking for new songs, and also lists the current song contests, and conditions of entry, as well as the top songwriting news stories of the week, along with a listing of every act charting this week, plus their contact details.

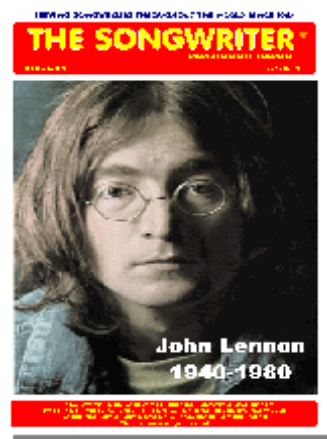
### PROCEDURE

On the day we receive your subscription, we will mail you the above package and on the same day, we will also start your magazine postings. Simultaneously, we will start sending you the weekly e-mail *Songwriter Update*.

And off course, you can start using the free services from that moment on.

### GUARANTEE

If you are ever in any way unhappy with anything offered by the International Songwriters Association, the last subscription payment made by you (quarterly or half-yearly depending on which payment method you have used) will be refunded in full, and without question.



SONGWRITER MAGAZINE

*Further to one of your tips, we have just been offered a British songwriting contract! Billy Boy Brown, London, UK*

*Thanks for your letter of welcome, and all the information, magazines etc, just received. It stopped me in my tracks!!! Brilliant! Richard Jackson of JackDaw Music, West Midlands, UK*

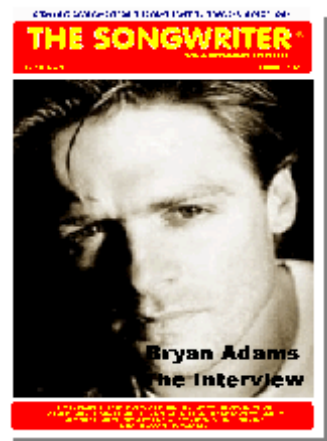
*It takes six bulls to have a bull fight! It took me six years to get a British songwriting contract! Your ISA made all this possible. Thank you Mr. Liddane and "Bravo ISA". Ignacio Rogla De Leuw, Barcelona, Spain*

*In the introductory letter which you sent to me, you mentioned that a company who were looking for some uplifting, hooky and eccentric music! Well, I thought I had a couple of songs to suit them, and I promptly got a reply with an offer of a contract! Vince Hughes, Wales*

*I am writing to you to thank you because, if it were not for "Songwriter" I would not now have four of my songs under contract. Tony Topham, Mansfield, Notts, UK*

*SongSeller has so far enabled me to place three songs with two different companies. One of these was released in December on Laser Records (distributed by WEA) and the song is published by M&M Music (Tony Hatch's company). D Restel Bevis, Hampshire, UK*

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the excellent service. Songwriter Magazine and SongSeller are extremely valuable. Steve Finn, Finnished Music, Cardiff, South Wales, UK*



Interviewee **BRYAN ADAMS**



# WHAT SONGWRITERS SAY ABOUT THE ISA

## A FEW TOTALLY UNSOLICITED COMMENTS

Some while ago in the ISA magazine that is emailed out on Sunday, Samantha Starr was asking for material for her to record for her new record. We sent a couple of tracks that appeared to suit the request.....Well, last week she got in contact with us and said that she had picked one of our tracks out of the many that she had received!!

She has been in the studio and recorded the track and sent a couple of copies through. It sounds great. It is already subject to publishing assignment and our publisher has agreed for the track to go on the record.....all good news this end of late....must be the heat!

Still waiting for Damon Mitchell (USA) to perform another of our tracks and get the deal sorted with NAD records.....Looks like we might get a couple of tracks out this year.

Thanks again for the tips and all the help you give...great stuff - keep it up.  
**Colin Steele, Essex, UK**

I have just subscribed and I love it! Thank you very much! I was looking for co-writers and I got to know many people and many songs, great! I am still working on it, tho, and emails with new songs are still coming!

**Elena Ley, Cologne, Germany**

Thanks for your help and for all that you are keeping me informed on - ISA is a great service, thanks.

**Monica Shepherd, Reading, UK**

I just realised that I forgot to say thank you for all of your wonderful, detailed help regarding UK/US song contractual matters. Anyway, your support and suggestions were extremely informative/pertinent and sure helped us get things sorted. So, thank you - you really are very quick, thorough and amazingly helpful.

**Sue Bennett, Eastbourne, Sussex, UK**

My God, what a fast return for a copyright submission sent from Australia on the 1st May. I just received the Copyright Certificate today (18th May) stating the copyright date as 11th May. I can't believe how fast it was.

**Rob Lynton, Sydney, Australia**

I have been an ISA member since January this year. I am a singer songwriter of 12 years experience and I have just sent my latest demo off to a select list of publishers that I found, thanks to your excellent and informative directories - information I might add that would have taken me ages to compile myself, if at all.

**Charlie Wittich, Bedfordshire, UK**

Thanks as always for your prompt, professional service. Second to none, you know!

**Kelvin McGregor Bower, Ayrshire, UK**

Your newsletter has arrived, I wish that all the people that I send my CDs to, were as efficient as the ISA!

**Stan Owen, Epargnes, France**

Thank you so much for the information. I must say that I am extremely impressed with the speed of your response.

**Hal Eaton, Auckland, New Zealand**

Just a line to say I have received my first newsletter from you. It is a fantastic piece of work!

**Brian P Byrne, Dublin, Ireland**

Thank you for this very useful information. In the short time that I have been in touch with ISA you have always responded to the occasional question very promptly indeed. I recently received an application pack from you, which again answered a lot of key questions.

**Philip Dye, Halifax, West Yorks, UK**

Just a quick message to say, firstly, thanks for the great service I continue to get from ISA. The newsletters arrive promptly every time and they're packed full of useful information.

**Mike Abbott, Hampshire, UK**

And I want to say how useful I found the recent articles on CdBaby and Hostbaby. I've been scouring the web for some time, wondering which of these music sites are the best, and which may be duds. Your articles have helped make up my mind to go for both sites as and when I get enough songs into acceptable condition.

**Phil Williamson, Camden, London, UK**

Thank you so much for your unfailing efficiency - fantastic organisation!

**Janice Thomas**

I want to say "THANKS" for all the help you have given to me over the past 20 years that I have been asking for you all to help me in my quests for co-writers, publishers names and addresses, recording companies and demo assessments. I do not know, and never will, how you help all the thousands of writers composers



### Interviewee MIKE BATT

worldwide to get their original material to the proper people that is capable of giving us help in getting our songs published and recorded.

**John James, Oxfordshire, UK**

Thanks very much for the information, that strongly affirmed my impression of the deal altogether. Some minutes ago I got a mail from the company mentioning the price of the representation, which was so high, I would never have paid it anyway - \$1070 - but having read your text, I don't even have the feeling I'd be missing out on anything. Getting these kinds of offers makes me see the value of your very modest priced services even more clearly. Keep up the good work!

**Mike Erola, Cologne, Germany**

By the way, as a new member I am blown away by the sheer amount of very useful info and expertise that is provided - makes the other organisation I used to belong to look decidedly bland in comparison!

**Greg Ledger, Fleetwood, Lancs, UK**

I thought I would write to say thanks. I have been a member of the ISA for several years now, and I have been writing song for approx. six years, a few months ago I finally decided to send off a demo, and to my surprise I got signed. I have now had one of my songs "Beautiful Blue Eyes" on a compilation album, and today i.e.26/10/05 I have my single Destitute Boy being released onto the official download charts. I am over the moon with it all and would just like to say that's for all the great articles and tips you have given over the years.

**Paul Westlake, Gwynedd, Wales**

Bless you, this is great! What a priority treatment you give to members. I am happy to belong to the Association.

**Roli Hope Odeka, Milan, Italy**

I do appreciate the advertisement that you inserted in your ISA online news letter for me a few weeks ago. I had a great response from ISA members for to co-write with me. These replies were from all part of the world. These replies I received tells me a story that ISA membership is worldwide. I thank the ISA staff for their faithfulness to us writers that are all around the globe, waiting patiently each week for the ISA online news that bring writers together as co-writers and worldwide friends. Thanks once again to the ISA staff for their thirty years faithful service to me and thousands of other writers.

**Jon Spence, Hobart, Australia**

For any songwriter the importance of support is essential to growth and inspiration. We can all gather wisdom from life but it's a treasure to find people that have time, to stop and share their wisdom selflessly to help those same songwriters feel rewarded and special. This is the music family I've been a part of at ISA for some years.

**Maria Stride, Zaira Music, Surrey, UK**

Once again I am so very impressed with your prompt reply re forwarding "The Songwriter" to my address in Spain. I think that your organisation ISA could give lessons in efficiency to some of the the multi nationals. I can only reiterate that as well as operating a fantastic service to songwriters and musicians your efficiency on the occasions that I have contacted ISA has been exemplary.

**Barry Speed, Girona, Spain**

I have recently signed a publishing contract with Plugged Publishing/Records of Stockholm, Sweden. My song, entitled "Saxophone Song", is to be released on an album by a new artist called Caroline W in late April or early May. I don't as yet know the title of the album, and I think it will be initially released only in Sweden, but I will let you know as and when I have more news. I would like to thank the I.S.A. for providing the information which made it possible for me to promote my song to this company. I have been trying for song success for a number of years now, and was almost at the point of giving up! So I hope that my good news will encourage as yet unsuccessful writers to persevere! I'm certainly glad I did. I can't tell you how much it means.

**Brian Mason, Chelmsford, Essex, UK**

Thank you for your e-mail. I received the CD today and was delighted with the result. It has certainly been worth the wait! The backing music and singer have been blended together beautifully. I have written this song for my daughter's wedding and I wish I could invite you all! I would be more than pleased if you wish to publish my e-mail in any of your newsletters. Thank you once again - I will raise a glass or two to ISA at the wedding.

**Colin Gray, Herts, UK**

It's good to be part of an organisation that cares about its members.

**Julian Wilson, Cheshire, UK**



### Interviewees FELICE & BOUDLEAUX BRYANT ("THE BRYANTS")

# You Get All Of These Publications

*Inside the current issue of*

## SONGWRITER YEARBOOK

The current edition includes a 6,000 word interview with **Roger Cook** - who in the 60's wrote countless pop hits, before quitting England for Nashville where he proceeded to become one of the hottest country songwriters around! Also included is an exclusive interview with one of the greatest singer-songwriters of all time - **Gordon Lightfoot**, whose songs have been covered by everybody from Elvis Presley to Bob Dylan.

We also talk to **Barry Mason** whose songs have been recorded by everybody from Tom Jones to Elvis Presley, as well as country songwriter **Tom T Hall** whose beautiful lyrics have earned him the nickname of "The Storyteller".

**Mike Batt** - the man who brought us The Wombles, tells us how he made his name writing for television and movies, while **Tony Hatch** has written some of the finest pop songs of recent years, such as Petula Clark's "Downtown", (as well as the theme for such TV series as "Neighbours")

**Bruce Welch** was once a member of The Shadows, but was also a very successful songwriter, penning hits for Olivia Newton John, Cliff Richard and many more, before setting up an independent music publishing company. He tells us how he did it.

**Johnny Marks** explains how he cornered the market in writing Christmas songs, earning many millions in the process, and finally, **Julie Gold** tells us how she wrote one of the most successful songs of all time - almost by accident!

*Inside the current issue of*

## SONGWRITER MAGAZINE

Legendary songwriter **Janis Ian** talks about the songs she has written, including the multi-million hits "At Seventeen" and "Society's Child"

Songwriter Magazine Editor **Jim Liddane** shows you how to make money by putting your songs on the internet

Liverpool songwriter **Don Woods** may not have yet hit the charts, but is doing very nicely thank you, in a niche songwriting market

Songwriter Magazine's **Martin Young** tells how the top songwriters "borrow" their ideas from ordinary everyday life

### Plus

Songs required for

Andrew Strong, Kenny Rogers, Susan P, Swans, Eddy Raven, Wolfgang, Johnny Winter, Wendy McAdam, Crystal Martindale, Nikki Glekin, Culpepper Music, Jason Lee, Ce Ce Winans, Scarlet, Ocie Melanson, Beverly Baker, Oakridge Boys, Haddaway, Deanna Morris etc

### Plus

Latest songwriting news, song contest deadlines, collaborations required, record company signings, industry personnel changes etc

*Inside the current issue of*

## SONGWRITER UPDATE

Songs required this week for Texan Records, Jamie Howard, Bobby Farrell Music, Cornelius Music, Ivory Productions plus many more

### Plus

Latest song contest news and entry deadlines • Complete news section • Latest news from ISA members • Collaboration requests

### Plus

This week's guest writer advises on songwriting, recording, selling on the internet etc

### Plus

Contact information for every new act entering the charts this week

## Plus All Of These ISA Services

- **ISA COPYRIGHT SERVICE** Send as many songs as you like, and receive a dated copyright certificate. Free of charge
- **ISA SONG ASSESSMENT SERVICE** Want to know how good (or bad) your song is? Send it in. Free of charge
- **ISA ADVICE SERVICE** Want advice on anything to do with songwriting? Ask us your questions and we will answer. Free of charge.
- **ISA DIRECTORY INFORMATION SERVICE** Want to know how to send your song to the singer who could do it justice? We have the contacts.
  - Free of charge.

## Plus This Introductory Package

The current Yearbook • The current issue of Songwriter Magazine • The MCPS leaflet • The PRS leaflet  
Musical Records demo brochure • "Free Demos" leaflet • Song Contest Entry Form • PrintPack Offer  
Promotion Advice Leaflet • Register Of Composers • Advice For Lyric Writers Leaflet • Contact Information Sheet • Compilation CDs Leaflet  
Tax & The Songwriter Leaflet • A Job In Music Publishing Leaflet • A Music Publisher Gives You The Inside Story Leaflet  
Songwriters & The Internet Leaflet • Hints On Making Great Demos Leaflet • Song Contest Listing • Shark Attack Leaflet • Songwriter Update

## Plus Access To The Members Site

The ISA maintains a separate site for members, where you can  
Read or Print ISA Services Listing • Read or Print Current Issue Songwriter Magazine • Read or Print Current Issue Songwriter Magazine Update •  
Read or Print Current Song Contest Forms • Read or Print Demo Order Form •  
Read or Print the latest update of the "Selling Your Songs" Songwriting Course • Read or Print Archive Songwriter Interviews •  
Read or Print Archive Articles By ISA Staff Writers • Read or Download "Web Design Mastery" Course •  
Check out the Top 20 Links For ISA Members and much more

# INTERNATIONAL SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION Ltd

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## ISA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Title (Mr Mrs Miss Ms).....First Name .....Initial.....Last Name.....

Postal Address.....

E-Mail Address.....Tel.....Occupation.....

If a current/previous member of any songwriting organisation, name the organisation [State whether current or previous member]

### PLEASE PICK A PAYMENT METHOD

#### IF YOU WISH TO PAY BY BANKER'S ORDER

If you maintain a current bank account, you can use the Banker's Order form printed at the bottom of this page to pay the sum of UK£ 9.95 on a quarterly basis. This way you pay only for the publications and services as you use them. (Your first three months are free)

#### IF YOU WISH TO PAY BY CHEQUE

We accept personal cheques made out in the following currencies and amounts on a bi-annual basis. (Your first three months are free)  
UK £19.90 (UK or British Sterling areas) US \$30.00 (USA or US Dollar areas) EUR €30.00 (Eire only) CA \$45.00 (Canada) AU \$55.00 (Australia)

#### IF YOU WISH TO PAY BY BANK TRANSFER

We accept bank transfers into our London account from any bank world-wide, in the amount of UK £19.90 or US \$30.00 or EUR €30.00  
International Songwriters Association Limited International Bank Account Number GB33 MIDL40010671132547  
Branch Identifier Code MIDL GB2105F HSBC (Sort Code 40-01-06), 90 Baker Street, London W1U 6AX, UK

#### IF YOU WISH TO PAY BY CREDIT CARD (or PAYPAL)

You can pay by Visa, Mastercard or American Express over the internet, on a bi-annual recurring basis. (Your first three months are free)  
Click on <http://www.songwriter.co.uk/page15.html>

#### IF YOU WISH TO PAY BY CASH

You can send cash by registered post in the following currencies and amounts on a bi-annual basis. (Your first three months are free)  
£19.90 or \$30.00 or €25.00 or CA\$ 45.00 or AUS\$ 55.00

#### GUARANTEE

If you are in any way unhappy with anything offered, the last subscription amount paid by you (whether that be quarterly, or half-yearly depending on the payment method chosen by you) will be refunded immediately without question.  
This has been the policy of International Songwriters Association since 1967

#### NOTES FOR SUBSCRIBERS COMPLETING THE BANKER'S ORDER FORM BELOW

Before filling in the form, please look at your cheque book or a bank statement.

- (1) In the section below marked "Name Of Account", fill in the exact name under which your account is held. (For example, you may be known as "John Jones", but your account may be operated under the name "J M & M J Jones").
- (2) Complete all the form except the one box headed "Date Of First Payment". This should be left blank.
- (3) To avoid having to return the form to you, please fill in your bank's **full** postal address

#### BANKER'S ORDER FORM

Please pay to the order of International Songwriters Association Ltd., Account Number **71132547**, at HSBC Bank, 90 Baker Street, London W1U 6AX, UK (**40-01-06**), the sum of **UK£9.95p**, on the date below, and thereafter, each quarter, on the **1st February, 1st May, 1st August, 1st November**, until you receive notice in writing from me, and debit my account accordingly.

<b>Account Number (if known)</b> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <b>Name of Account</b> .....	<b>Date Of First Payment</b>  <i>Leave this box blank - please!</i>	<b>Signed</b> .....  <b>Date</b> .....
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<b>Name of Bank</b> .....
<b>Address of Branch</b> .....
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..... <b>UK</b>
<i>Fill in your bank's name and address above</i>

<b>Name</b> .....
<b>Address</b> .....
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.....
<i>Fill in your own name and address above</i>

