

~ INTRODUCTION ~

*A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and gets to bed at night,
and in between he does what he wants to do.*

~ Bob Dylan

Music is therapy for the soul. Without it, the world would be an empty and lifeless place; in a spiritual sense it would be dead. Music, the rhythmic force of the universe, touches upon every human emotion and plays an important role in nearly every culture that shares this planet.

When Albert Einstein was asked about the inspiration for his theory of relativity he replied, “It occurred to me by intuition, and music was the driving force behind that intuition. My discovery was the result of musical perception.” In other words, music is crucial to our progress as human beings.

Musicians are a special breed, indeed, and I absolutely love being a part of that culture. I like to think of us as the chosen ones; chosen to make the world a more vibrant place through the wondrous sounds of melody, harmony, and rhythm. In doing so, we bring forth the only truly universal language—music.

But where does this talent come from? I believe our talents are given to us by God. If talent were something we could obtain through our own methods and by acts of will, we would all choose the type of talent we wanted and that would be the end of the story. We don’t have a choice what our gifts are—they just are.

Talent does not come *from* us; its power freely flows *through* us like an electrical current. We are merely the wire and conduits through which talent is displayed. While your talent is certainly a free gift, developing it to its full potential does have a cost. The decision to pay that price lies entirely with you. Developing your gift is not a burden; it is a divine privilege.

Let me give you an illustration that might help shed some light on this. Imagine a set of human lungs. One of them is completely full, representing your talent or gifting. The other lung is totally empty. That is your potential. You were born with one lung bursting with talent, but reaching your potential and filling up the other lung is left completely up to you. Whether you do so or not is your choice—reaching your potential is an act of free will and requires *desire, faith, and action*. True fulfillment in life only comes when you are utilizing the gifts you have been given, in the manner in which they were intended to be used.

The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goals. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.

~ Benjamin Mays

Throughout my travels around the world, I have met countless musicians, aspiring and professionals alike. The question I have been asked most frequently is: “How did you make it? Ultimately, they wanted to know how they could break into the music business and score the big gig. The answer is multifaceted and one I intend to divulge in great detail throughout this book.

The Big Gig is for musicians at all stages of their careers; from beginners just learning to play, to advanced players trying to break into the business, to professionals who have never gotten their big breaks and are reaching for higher ground and looking for inspiration.

The book offers a full and frank discussion of the music industry from the perspective of a freelance musician. It's not about how to get a record deal with a band; it's about how to become a successful player and make a living as an independent musician. I felt a personal calling to write this book in hope that other musicians could live out their dreams as I have. My goal is to teach you how to develop a vision, design a master plan for success, and see it through to the end.

While the book is more specific in terms of becoming a successful player, the principles are the same for achieving anything significant; the only difference is the specific skill sets needed to succeed. Even though the music industry is in a constant state of change, and from time to time undergoes rigorous periods of reinvention, the principles revealed in this book are timeless. If applied properly, they will yield positive results year after year, because the basic strategies for making a name as an independent musician will always remain the same.

For years the process of successfully breaking into the business as a player has been insider's knowledge only. What all aspiring players need is a successful musician to show them the industry ropes. Consider *The Big Gig* to be your own personal mentor, teaching you how to become a Jedi master. My aim with this book is to demystify what has largely remained unexplained about the business of being a musician. I also want to

help you preserve your sanity, dignity, and self-respect along your journey toward success.

Systematically going through this book will help you understand what it takes to succeed as an independent musician and will clarify the most common misconceptions. When you clearly know your mission, are able to identify the steps necessary to reach it, and are willing to do what's required, your chances of success will increase exponentially.

*If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up
somewhere else.*

~ Lawrence J. Peter

Keep in mind that the music industry isn't all sunshine and roses, so together we will explore the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of a musician's life. I will share some of the joys to be garnered from expressing yourself on an instrument and many of the frustrations musicians encounter along the way.

To be brutally honest, playing music for a living seldom pays well, and rewards in the form of acceptance, praise, and notoriety can seem even more elusive. For every brightly lit bulb on the Las Vegas strip, there are countless broken ones in dumpsters behind the opulent buildings that shimmer in the night. The shattered bulbs represent those whose dreams of making it as musicians came to a screeching halt after they realized how hard it actually is. Those who have the guts and tenacity to stick it out are few and far between.

*You have no right to anything you have not pursued, for the proof of
desire is in the pursuit.*

~ Mike Murdock

Music and business are two totally different things, yet one's success is dependent upon the other. From the moment I grasped that revelation, I divided my time equally between the music and business aspects of my career. It is an approach that has served me very well.

Now, a word about some of the most frequent terminology I use throughout the book. The two main characters of our story are inseparable: the artist and the player. Even though they usually share the common goal of giving the best performance possible, their roles, functions, and responsibilities are completely different—and so is their financial compensation.

When I use the term “artist,” I’m referring to the recording artists from whom players seek employment. They may not always be signed recording artists with record deals, but they are the people who are in need of our services and are hopefully able to compensate us for our time and effort. The artist can be one person, a band with many members, or a producer, contractor, or musical director. These are the employers and the ones doing the hiring.

The terms I most frequently use to describe the employee are, “player,” “musician,” “sideman,” “hired gun,” “freelance musician” or “independent musician.” They are all one and the same. Players are the hired guns who rent out their musical services to those who will pay for them.

This book will introduce you to many principles of success, but you must supply the desire, faith, and action. You, alone, must pursue your dream with all your heart. Through pure instinct, hard work, the help of family and friends, and an unquenchable desire to succeed—as well as God’s undeniable favor—I managed to break the unbreakable code and accomplish what I set out to do. The success I have enjoyed in my life has not been because of my own brilliance. My accomplishments are the result of a burning passion and clear vision, combined with sheer determination and persistence. Oh yeah, and a little luck and some God-given talent thrown in as well.

Like many other books, this one has evolved over the years. It is literally a result of more than thirty years of experience and research. My goal was to write the most comprehensive and in-depth manuscript ever written on the subject of becoming a successful independent working musician. My objective throughout the upcoming text is to inform, warn, direct, inspire, and motivate you. Anyone who reads it should come away with a thorough sense of the way the music industry works from a player’s point of view.

An incredible amount of hard work, love, and passion have gone into this project. I hope it will prove to be one of the most useful and inspirational tools you use on your journey to landing a big gig—and to becoming a better musician and person in the process. One vital piece of information could mean the difference between success and failure, but remember that reaching your goals hinges on your ability to apply what you’ve learned.

It is with great pleasure I present to you *The Big Gig: The Insider’s Guide to Living the Musician’s Dream*.

There is no happiness except in the realization that we have accomplished something.

~ Henry Ford