



New Members' Manual & FAQ



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*Pages Marked * Above Should Be Photocopied Or Else,
Extra Copies Downloaded From <http://www.songwriter.co.uk/forms>*

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT BOOKLET

Please read this booklet carefully, and keep it in a safe place for future reference

INTRODUCTION

The most important information you will need concerning your membership of the International Songwriters Association, is given on Pages 3, 4 and 5 of this publication. Please read that section before doing anything else.

Secondly, everything you will need to continue your career in songwriting, will be available either in the ISA Publications or on the ISA Private Members Site.

Nearly all of the questions we get, have already been answered either in this package or on the site, so it helps to familiarise yourself with both the ISA Publications and the ISA Private Members Site.

Having said that, if there is anything you cannot locate, do not waste your time looking for it. Simply email us and we will tell you what you want to know.

We are more than happy to hear from our members, and we will always respond as soon as we get your email.

ISA PRIVATE MEMBERS SITE

The ISA Private Members Site can be accessed through the link given in the "welcome" email. Your login link is also printed at the top of each issue of "Songwriter NewsFlash".

This link will change periodically. When it does, you will be notified by email, and the link at the top of each issue of "Songwriter NewsFlash" will also change.

PUBLICATIONS

All ISA Publications, including "Songwriter Magazine", and "Songwriter NewsFlash", are detailed in this booklet, on Pages 3, 4, and 5.

As regards "Songwriter Magazine", the latest issue is enclosed. Future issues will be on the ISA Private Members Site under "Songwriter Magazine", and past issues are on the ISA Private Members Site under "Songwriter Magazine Archive".

As regards "Songwriter NewsFlash", the latest issue is on the ISA Private Members Site under "Songwriter NewsFlash".

To access this ISA Private Members Site, which also comprises hundreds of pages of information, simply take the code provided in the "welcome" email, and within seconds you will be on site.

SERVICES

All ISA Services, including Copyright, Assessment, Advice, Directory, and Collaboration, are detailed in this booklet, on Pages 3, 4, and 5.

They are also listed on the Yellow Card which accompanies this package.

They are also listed on the ISA Private Members Site.

Some (namely Advice, Directory, and Collaboration), can be accessed through the ISA Private Members Site via email or via the post. Copyright and Assessment however, can only be accessed via the post.

To access this ISA Private Members Site, which also comprises hundreds of pages of information, simply take the code provided in the letter accompanying this package, and within seconds you will be on site.

CONTACT INFORMATION

International Songwriters Association Ltd
PO Box 46, Limerick City, Ireland

Email: jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie
Email: songwriter@ireland.com

Tel + 353 - 61 - 28837

PRIVATE MEMBERS SITE

The ISA Private Members Site is open to all current members.

You are given an access code on joining, and that code changes from time to time.

When it changes, an email is sent to you, and the current access code is also printed in each issue of "Songwriter NewsFlash".

Here is a short listing of what is on the site.

TODAY'S NEWS All of today's music industry, songwriting and music publishing news, assembled fresh each time you drop by

THE ISA The Publications and Services of the International Songwriters Association

ASSESSMENT How to use the Assessment Service of the International Songwriters Association

COPYRIGHT How to use the Copyright Service of the International Songwriters Association

DIRECTORY The addresses, telephone numbers and contact names, for hundreds of Music Publishers and Record Labels

HOW TO ARTICLES Want to know more about Copyright? Placing your songs in Movies or on TV? Collaboration? Writer's block? Sharing credits? Song promotion? Making demos? Building a website? Putting together a home recording studio? And much more? It's all here in dozens and dozens of articles!

SELLING YOUR SONGS Read, print or download the current edition of the ISA's 108 page, 60,000 word book on selling your songs

LINKS You could be clicking for hours on the thousands of songwriting links on our public site. Here we have listed what in our opinion, are the Top 20 links that all songwriters need

INTERVIEWS Read, print or download dozens of interviews with some of the world's top songwriters, including Mike Batt, Tom T Hall, Roger Cook, Gordon Lightfoot and many more

NEW ON THE CHARTS The newest acts to make the charts, along with their record label name, and the names of every music publisher who has had a song recorded by that act since 1996!

SONGSELLER NOTICE BOARD Want to tell other members something? Want to read what they have to tell you? Or simply interested in seeing who is looking for new songs? Dozens of listings for you to peruse, updated each day

SONG CONTESTS Read, print or download, the current crop of Song Contest Entry Forms

SONGWRITER MAGAZINE Read, print or download the current issue of Songwriter Magazine

SONGWRITER MAGAZINE ARCHIVE Read, print or download, back issues from the vaults of Songwriter Magazine

SONGWRITER UPDATE Read, print or download, the current issue of Songwriter Update

UPLOADING YOUR SONGS There are so many places nowadays where you can sell your CDs or even individual songs on the internet, or else, simply upload them for the benefit of posterity, that there is no reason why you cannot be out there if you want to! And here is where to upload them

USEFUL DOWNLOADS The section where you can download some useful songwriting tools, such as "Web Design Mastery Trial" which was written to assist you in learning how to design a professional looking web page in the easiest possible fashion - with copy & paste codes • Plus a couple of useful Music Publisher and Record Label directories • Not to mention some stave paper, for when that musical idea hits you, and the shops are closed! • Oh and some sample songwriting and collaboration contracts as well • And let's not forget the latest editions of "Selling Your Songs", "Songwriter Magazine" and

"Songwriter Update" • All free to read, print or download

VIDEOS Some top songwriters, music publishers and record label executives, inform and instruct - on video

Questions & Answers

How do I access the ISA Private Members Site?

Just go to your link, typed on the front of this leaflet, and when you click on the arrow, you transfer to the ISA Private Members Site Map, which lists everything on the site.

[Also, see the yellow card enclosed, headed ISA Private Members Site]

The above link to the site changes from time to time, and when it changes, you will be notified by email.

Your current link is also printed at the start of each issue of "Songwriter NewsFlash".

My access code does not work. What can I do?
You are probably using an out-of-date code.

Either look up the last issue of "Songwriter NewsFlash" where the latest number is published, or send us an email whereupon we will send you the current access code.

ISA PUBLICATIONS

The ISA publishes two newsletters available to all members- "Songwriter Magazine", and "Songwriter NewsFlash".

The ISA also publishes two books "Selling Your Songs" and "Directory Of Recording Stars", also available to all members.

Questions & Answers

How do I access the ISA Publications "Songwriter Magazine", and "NewsFlash"?

"Songwriter Magazine" is published quarterly, on the 1st January, 1st April, 1st July and 1st October.

The current issue can be viewed, printed or downloaded, on the ISA Private Members Site under the "Songwriter Magazine" heading.

If printing this off, it usually takes 70 pages.

"Songwriter NewsFlash" is published occasionally (usually once or twice a month), and appears on the ISA Private Members Site.

A copy is also sent by email.

The contents of are also updated on the ISA Private Members Site, under the "SongSeller NoticeBoard" heading.

How do I access the ISA Publications "Selling Your Songs", and "Directory Of Recording Stars"?

"Selling Your Songs" is revised twice yearly, and can be viewed, printed or downloaded, on the ISA Private Members Site under the "Selling Your Songs" heading.

If printing it off, it usually takes 108 pages.

The "Directory Of Recording Stars" is updated every 13 weeks, and can be viewed, printed or downloaded, on the ISA Private Members Site under the "Directories" heading.

If printing this off, it usually takes 90 pages.

I can find the publications, but cannot view them. What can I do to rectify this?

If you can find but cannot view the publications, this is most likely because you do not have Adobe Reader on your computer.

Most modern computers come with Adobe Reader already installed, so any PDF file should open immediately, once it has been double-clicked.

If you are certain that you have a current version of Adobe Reader on your PC, but

(1) the PDF still will not open

or

(2) it will open, but you cannot click on the links

or

(3) it will open, but you cannot copy and paste from the text

then you probably have an old version.

If so, you might consider upgrading to the current version, which is Version 9. This costs nothing and is quite simple to do.

I can find the publications, and can view them, but they do not look the same on paper when I print them as they do on the screen. How can I make them look the same?

If you have any version of Adobe Reader (and 99% of all recent PCs will have this), then you will be able to view the publication exactly as it was intended.

However, if it does not print exactly as it appears on screen, that may be because you have an early version of Adobe, or because your printer is not able to handle the PDF.

You can easily solve either or both these problems, as follows.

(1) If you are using an earlier version of Adobe Reader, the best way to solve problems you may be having is to download and install the (free) latest version from

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

Don't worry—this is a very simple one-click procedure which should take about a minute.

(2) Depending on which printer you are using, a PDF file may not print properly unless you select the "Print as image" option in the printer dialogue box. Using the "Print as image" option may take several minutes to print one page.

When you go to "Print", a large box will come up, and somewhere there you will find a button marked "Advanced".

Click on that, and you reach the "Advanced Print Setup" screen. Down at the bottom is a box, usually unclicked, titled "Print As Image". Tick the box, click "OK", and then "OK" again on the original box and then press "Print".

If you have any problems viewing or printing this, simply email us and we will have a look at the problem for you.

ISA SERVICES

The ISA provides a range of services, which are supplied free to you as a member.

The following is a listing of the services available free of charge, to all members.

Copyright Service

Each submission can contain as many songs as you wish, but we do not recommend that you send more than a few in each envelope - a maximum of perhaps six.

Lyrics, recordings, manuscripts, or a combination of all of these, can be sent to copyright.

Address the package to

Copyright Service
International Songwriters Association
PO Box 46
Limerick City
Ireland

Write your name and address in full on the rear of the envelope, along with the song titles.

Enclose nothing other than the matter to be copyrighted, in the envelope being posted.

Copyright takes approximately 21 days from its arrival here and lasts initially for two years (renewable). Non-renewed copyright submissions will be destroyed.

Once the copyright is issued, a certificate will be sent by post.

No copyright submissions can ever be returned once lodged, so make sure you have kept copies for your own use.

It helps, but is not essential, if you list the song titles on the rear of the envelope.

Never depend on one method of protection in case of loss or dispute - use at least two methods always.

It is a pre-condition of using this service that you accept that in the event of loss/damage etc, the liability of the ISA is limited to the original purchase price of the contents of the package sent, which usually means, the cost of a blank cassette or a blank CD.

Copyright lasts initially for two years, but can be renewed every two years for a further period.

This service cannot be provided by e-mail.

Assessment Service

Each submission must contain one song on tape/CD only, plus the lyrics. Send the song to

Assessment Service
Songwriter Magazine
PO Box 46
Limerick City
Ireland.

There is no limit on how many songs you send, as long as each song is sent in a separate envelope.

However, new subscribers should send only one song and wait for this song to be returned, before using the service on a regular basis. (The reason for this is to make sure that any general errors in existing presentation can be corrected by you in future submissions).

The tape/CD will not be returned, but will be destroyed, so only send a copy of your work for assessment.

The service can take up to 30 days, so do not query delivery until 30 days has elapsed.

This service cannot be provided by e-mail.

Advice/Directory Information Service

Send your request preferably by e-mail to the

Advice Service *or* the Directory Information Service
Songwriter Magazine
PO Box 46
Limerick City
Ireland

In the case of requests for advice, provide all the details plus photocopies of any relevant documents/ contracts etc., in the first letter.

In the case of directory information, state clearly which act, record label, publisher or manager you wish to contact.

Questions & Answers

How do I access the ISA Services, such as Copyright, Assessment etc?

Just go to the ISA Private Members Site, and on the Site Map, you will find each service explained on individual web pages. You can also go to

<http://www.songwriter.co.uk/services>

where the services and publications are all listed on just one page.

If writing to the International Songwriters Association, do

I have to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply?

No. We pay all our own return postage.

If I wish to Copyright, or have Assessed, material written by myself as an ISA member in collaboration with another person who is not an ISA member, can this be done?

Yes, but all correspondence can only be with you as you are the registered member.

If I need Contractual Advice, can I get this from the International Songwriters Association?

Yes. Please send by post or email, a copy of all the documentation, including accompanying letters. In addition to this, the ISA can recommend legal advisors based in the UK and/or the USA, who are experienced in music industry law.

If I leave the ISA, what happens my copyright deposits?

They remain on deposit until the period of protection expires.

Why is the initial ISA Copyright service, limited to two years?

Most writers will have placed the material with a publisher within two years of writing it, whereupon protecting the material become the responsibility of the publisher.

Where that has not happened, a writer can extend the copyright protection.

ISA SUBSCRIPTIONS

Your Subscription is due upon notification, unless payment is being made by Banker's Order or Credit Card-PayPal, in which case, it is automatically paid until cancelled by you.

For your protection, Credit Card-PayPal or Banker's Order arrangements are not Direct Debits, so we cannot "take" or "request" money from your account, nor can we change in any way, or increase in any way, the payment which you have authorised PayPal or your Bank to make.

In other words, we can neither initiate, alter or terminate your Bank Standing Orders or Credit Card/PayPal payments - only you, the customer, can do that.

Questions & Answers

How long does ISA membership last?

Membership of the International Songwriters Association lasts until cancelled by you if you are paying by Banker's Order or Credit Card or PayPal, or until you fail to renew your Membership if you are paying by cheque or cash.

How do I renew my ISA membership when it comes due?

This depends on how you took out your membership but we think we have made it as simple as possible.

If you enrolled by Banker's Order, payment is quarterly, and will renew automatically until cancelled by you through your bank.

If you enrolled by Credit Card or PayPal, the payment is half-yearly, and will renew automatically until cancelled by you through your Credit Card provider or PayPal.

If you enrolled using a Cheque, the payment is half-yearly, and you will receive a renewal form in the post about four weeks before renewal is due.

How do I cancel my ISA membership?

This depends on how you took out your membership but we think we have made it as simple as possible.

If you enrolled using a **Bank Standing Order**, simply notify your bank to stop payment, and send us a letter or email to that effect on the day you cancel.

Remember, for your protection, what you signed is a Standing Order and not a Direct Debit, so we cannot "take" or "request" money from your Bank account, alter the amount to be paid, or initiate or cancel the Order. Only you can do that.

If you enrolled using **PayPal**, they provide the following instructions on how to cancel - as follows:

* Log in to your PayPal account and Click the "My Account" tab. Then * Click the "History" subtab.

* Click "More Filters", select "Subscriptions And Agreements", and then click "Subscriptions".

* Change the date to the year the subscription was created, and then click "Show".

* Click "Details" next to the subscription.

* Click "Cancel Subscription".

* Cancelling a subscription cancels all future scheduled payments of that subscription. A subscription can be cancelled up to the day of the next scheduled payment".

There is no need to notify us - PayPal will do that for you.

Remember, for your protection, the PayPal facility is a Standing Order not a Direct Debit, so we cannot "take" or "request" money from your PayPal account, alter the amount to be paid to us, or initiate or cancel the Order. Only you can do that.

Finally, if you enrolled using a **Cheque**, simply ignore the Renewal Notice when it comes. There is no need to notify us.

CONTACT THE ISA

ISA operates from Limerick City, Ireland.

Contacting The ISA

- E-mail to jliddane@songwriter.iol.ie (this is the most efficient method and the fastest)
- Letter to International Songwriters Association Ltd at PO Box 46, Limerick City, Ireland
- Telephone to +353-61-228837

We reply by telephone, letter or e-mail to all communications.

Due to the increasingly large number of calls from non-members seeking advice, it is no longer possible to provide a live phone service.

Instead, you should call +353-71-228837 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, leaving your name, address telephone number, and your message, on the answering service, along with a suitable time at which you may be phoned.

Detail your query so that the appropriate person will phone you back with the correct answer.

THE ISA GUARANTEE

Anything which International Songwriters Association Ltd supplies, is guaranteed, or your money is refunded without question.

In the case of subscriptions, your last subscription period (whether that be quarterly or half-yearly depending on how you choose to pay), will be refunded in full without question.

This has been our policy since 1967.

AND FINALLY.....

We have tried to make this introductory leaflet as clear and as straightforward, and as informative as possible.

If however, you feel that we have failed in any way, please let us know and we will correct it. There are always improvements to be made, so please help us make them.

James D. Liddane, Chairman ISA

What Is PRS?

Music is everywhere around us in modern life. In concert and at festivals, on the radio and television, in shopping malls and elevators, in pubs, clubs and discotheques. In fact it would be easier to list the places where music is not used.

Music seems to be freely available but it is not free. Music is created and owned by somebody and that somebody - be it a composer, songwriter, lyricist or music publisher - has a right to ask for payment.

Whenever copyright music is heard in public the people who own the copyright in the work are entitled by law to give permission and should get paid by the music user. However, the people who create and publish the music need help to give that permission (that is, to license their music) and to collect the fees due. So they give PRS the right to do both on their behalf. For most PRS members the money they receive for performance is a vital part of their income. It helps them to continue to create the music we enjoy.

PRS (the Performing Right Society) is the UK association of composers, songwriters and music publishers. It administers the "performing right" in their music. There are similar performing right societies throughout the world. By agreement with them, PRS represents their members in its territory and is represented by them in theirs. At any one time PRS licenses millions of compositions - everything from an advertising jingle to entire symphonies, with every kind of pop/rock/jazz and folk music in between.

What does PRS do for music creators?

PRS looks after the performing right in their works. The right of songwriters and composers to be paid when their work is performed in public was first enshrined in legislation in this century by the Copyright Act 1911 and is currently contained in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988. But it would be almost impossible for the individual creators to keep track of public performances, and broadcasts, of their music across Britain and the rest of the world, and to issue licences and collect fees due.

What does PRS do for music users?

PRS makes it easy for them to use music legally and pay a fair fee to do so.

Music users - radio and TV companies, concert halls, hotels, shops, factories, discos and many others - would find it almost impossible; and extremely expensive, to get permission from the music copyright owners each time their music was to be broadcast or performed in public.

PRS licenses them to use any copyright music which the Society controls (which means almost all the copyright music in the world).

So, by taking out a single PRS licence and paying the appropriate fee any music user can legally use just about any music.

Who runs PRS?

PRS policy and administration are controlled by an elected General Council of non-executive Directors who include a Chairman and two Deputy Chairmen. Half the Council members are writers and half are publishers, each category broadly divided between pop and non-pop interests including classical. All Council Directors are elected by the membership from amongst the membership. The Management, which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Society, is appointed by the Council.

When and how is a licence issued?

By law a music user requires a PRS licence before playing music. To encourage this PRS has a discount scheme for those who request a licence before they are contacted by one

of the Society's network of local Inspectors. The main job of the Inspector is to locate unlicensed music users and assist them to obtain a licence at the correct rate. Besides its head office in London, PRS also has regional offices in Edinburgh, Bristol, Warrington, York and Peterborough.

Who needs a PRS licence?

The 1988 Copyright, Designs and Patents Act sets out three types of performing right for composers and songwriters: the right to perform a work in public, the right to broadcast a work and the right to include a work in a cable programme service. Licences are required by every radio and television service and almost every satellite service based in the United Kingdom as well as by cable operators for certain of their services. But these licences only cover the original transmission into private homes or public places, not the use of radio and television sets to provide entertainment for the public.

PRS public performance licences are required by any and all premises which use music. These range from concert halls and dance halls through public houses, hotels and restaurants to ships, aeroplanes, hairdressers, doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms and even telephone 'holding' systems. There are over 40 different PRS tariffs from which the correct licence fees for different kinds of premises are calculated. A PRS licence is usually issued annually and is referred to as a 'blanket' licence: PRS does not always need to know what pieces of music are used.

When is a PRS licence not needed?

PRS chooses not to license:

1 performances during Divine Service in churches or other places of worship (although in other countries a charge is made);

2 musicals, operas, ballets etc when they are performed on stage in their entirety or in excerpts;

3 the performance of specially written music for 'son-et-lumiere' or for plays, or other dramatic or theatrical productions.

Permission for performances of 2 and 3 should be obtained directly from the copyright owner (usually the publisher).

How are PRS licence fees set?

Usually they are negotiated with associations representing the various users. They take into account the value and amount of music involved and the circumstances under which it is performed. In some cases, such as concert balls, PRS receives a proportion of the ticket sales. In others, an annual fee is paid.

The users also have the right to refer the PRS charges to the Copyright Tribunal, a legal panel set up to resolve disputes between copyright owners and their customers. In recent years, the Tribunal has ruled on the rates to be paid for the use of music for pop concerts, at discotheques and in working men's clubs.

What can PRS ask licensees to do?

There are times when a music user must, if asked, report in detail to PRS every piece of music performed live. PRS has compiled a list of venues and arts festivals selected on the basis of their size and the number of live music performances held there annually. The proprietors of each of these venues are required, under the terms of their licence agreement with PRS, to supply details of all the music used during live performance. This information is then used as a basis for distributing a proportion of PRS revenue. The licence holders of the particular venues where such information is required will be contacted separately by

How are the royalties distributed?

As PRS makes no profits for itself, all money collected is paid out as royalties after deduction only of its operating costs. At the PRS head office in London, an advanced computer system keeps records of all musical works composed by PRS members plus information on licences and broadcasts.

As far as possible, the net royalties are distributed to PRS members in accordance with the extent to which their works have been broadcast or publicly performed. In some cases, it is not possible to find out every detail of performances. PRS then uses 'samples' to allocate royalties, and also draws on record sales charts and other relevant information.

How long does membership last?

Membership normally lasts for the member's lifetime. However, a member may, by giving three months prior notice, terminate membership with effect from 31st December in any given year. Provisional writer membership may also be terminated at the discretion of the General Council if no royalties are credited to a member over at least a period of three years. On the death of a member, an heir may be admitted as a successor member. Full details are published in the PRS Members' handbook.

What else does PRS do?

Each year, PRS donates a small part of its income to a range of musical causes including scholarships and awards. These include awards to choral, jazz and contemporary music festivals as well as educational projects.

PRS also plays its part in lobbying national government and international organisations for improvements in the legal rights granted to composers and songwriters.

What other information is available from PRS?

- PRS Members' Handbook
- PRS Yearbook
- PRS The Movie, (film available on video formats on free loan)
- Leaflets including Music, the Law and You; Music in Theatres; PRS Live Music Distribution Policy

PRS Membership

What are the advantages?

Membership of a performing right society is the only practical way in which composers, songwriters and music publishers can receive what is due to them for the public performance and broadcast of their work. Because PRS has links with similar organisations abroad, joining PRS means that a world-wide network of performing right societies are working on behalf of over 750,000 composers, authors and music publishers. So, members receive royalties for performances around the world, not just in PRS territory.

Who is eligible?

Composers of music, authors of lyrics or poems which have been set to music, arrangers of non-copyright music and music publishers are eligible to apply for membership as long as they fulfil certain criteria. Composers and lyricists must have 3 works which must each have been either:

- a commercially recorded, or
- b broadcast within the past two years, or
- c performed in public on at least twelve occasions within the past two years, and commercially published.

Alternatively, the writer applicant can be:

- d A writer who has had one work in the Top 50 of a popularity chart recognised by PRS, within the past twelve months.
- e A writer who has written the theme or opening/closing music for a film which has been publicly exhibited or for a series of 3 or more episodes broadcast on network television

or national radio.

f A classical music composer who has achieved a national broadcast lasting 5 minutes or longer.

g A classical music composer who has had 2 performances, each lasting 5 minutes or longer, at a concert or recital of classical music licensable by the Society.

Publishers must have a catalogue of 15 works of which at least 10 have been commercially published or commercially recorded. In addition:

a The writers of the 15 qualifying works must be members* of PRS, or one of its affiliated societies abroad.

b The publisher must have acquired rights in at least 10 of the works for a territory within the EEC.

c In a case where the catalogue of works consists entirely of works recorded on the soundtracks of films (see definition of "Commercially recorded" below) then:

- 1 such a catalogue must not consist only of works recorded on the soundtrack of one film; and
- 2 the works must not be of less than 30 minutes duration in aggregate as recorded on such soundtracks.

A copy of the record or sheet music must be submitted in support of the application; copies of all assignments between the applicant and the writers in respect of the works concerned must also be supplied. Individual applicants must also submit a Birth Certificate.

**For this purpose writer-applicants qualifying to be admitted on the same date as a publisher-applicant would be considered as "members"*

What are the categories of membership?

Provisional

The category to which new applicants are usually admitted.

Associate

If PRS royalty earnings are sufficient, a member is promoted to associate membership and is then entitled to attend and vote at General Meetings.

Full

Again, if PRS earnings increase, a member is promoted to full membership and is entitled to attend and vote at General Meetings, have certain additional voting rights and also stand for election to the General Council.

Full details of the earnings criteria for admission to associate and full membership are published in the PRS Members' Handbook.

The category of membership to which a writer or publisher is admitted does not affect in any way the share of royalties which he or she is entitled to receive.

The heirs of deceased composers, authors and music publishers are also eligible for membership.

How long does membership last?

Membership normally lasts for the member's lifetime. However, a member may, by giving three months prior notice, terminate membership with effect from 31st December in any given year. Provisional writer membership may also be terminated at the discretion of the General Council if no royalties are credited to a member over at least a period of three years. On the death of a member, an heir may be admitted as a successor member. Full details are published in the PRS Members' handbook.

Contact 020 7580 5544 for further information
 Extracted from the PRS Publication "What Is PRS?" by kind permission of the PRS

Did You Pick Up Your FREE Copy Of "Directory Of Recording Stars"?



**Every ISA Member is entitled to a free copy of
the International Songwriters Association's
"Directory Of Recording Stars"**

**You can download your own copy today simply
by going to the International Songwriters
Association Private Members Site,
and clicking on the download button.**

This book is updated every 13 weeks

THE MCPS

WHAT THE MCPS IS

The MCPS or Mechanical Copyright Protection Society, is an organisation which represents thousands of music publishers and composers in Britain, and through its overseas agreements, millions of composers and publishers worldwide.

HISTORY OF THE MCPS

The MCPS was founded in 1910 making it one of the oldest music industry organisations in the world. In 1976, it was acquired by the Music Publishers Association (MPA). Its turnover nowadays is in excess of £115 million, and it employs more than 300 people at its head office in London, as well as staff in various UK regions and Eire.



WHAT THE MCPS DOES

MCPS acts on behalf of its members, to collect royalties due to them from the commercial recording of their music. In addition, it negotiates agreements with those who wish to record its members music, and then distributes this money to the appropriate members.

SHOULD I JOIN THE MCPS?

If you have a song which has been commercially recorded in some form or other, or one which is about to be commercially recorded, then it is possible that MCPS membership could be for you. Do remember that the MCPS exists to collect royalties for you, so if for example, you are only releasing your own songs on your own label, then obviously, you will not need to have the MCPS collect those

royalties for you!

Similarly, if you are signed to a music publisher for **all** your recorded works, then obviously you need not become a member, since your music publisher will, through his membership of the MCPS, be already collecting your royalties for you. However, if any of your work is being released in recorded form, by any source other than yourself: if any of your work has been recorded for inclusion in any form of broadcast material (including videos, film etc), or if any of your work is published by a publisher not a member of the MCPS, then you should consider joining.

MIGHT I NOT QUALIFY?

If your work is only being performed in public, and has not been recorded, then the MCPS is not the appropriate organisation. You should of course then look at the PRS, which collects performance-based royalties.

WILL IT COST ME MONEY TO JOIN THE MCPS?

No - the MCPS does not charge a fee. Instead, it deducts an agreed percentage from members' royalties.

HOW CAN I JOIN THE MCPS?

First of all, contact the Membership Department of the MCPS and explain why you feel you ought to be a member. You can phone them on 0207-580 5544, or you can write to them at Copyright House, 29-33 Berners Street, London W1T 3AB, UK. The Membership Department will forward a letter of application, and if you qualify, then you can become a member of MCPS

Need Some ***FREE*** Songwriting Printing?

- CD Label?
- Songwriter Letterheading?
- Songwriter Business Card?
 - Cassette Label?
 - CD Inlay Card?
 - Cassette Inlay Card?
- Outgoing Mailing Label?
- Return Mailing Label?
- Song Promotion File?
- Song Collaboration Contract?
 - Promotion Letter?
- Personal Letterheading?
- Music Publisher's Letterheading?



Well, just e-mail us your name, address, telephone number(s), email address and/or website, typed out as you wish them to appear, and we will send you master copies of ALL of the above - so that you can print them off your own computer whenever you like!

And the cost?

00.00!

To read more, just go to

<http://www.songwriter.co.uk/printpak>

Another Exclusive FREE Service Of International Songwriters Association

ISA Members Only • We will not supply the above in any name other than the name of an ISA member

PROMOTION ADVICE

The following is for newcomers promoting songs for the first time. To save a lot of grief and heartache - when we say "songs", we mean songs - not lyrics. No company reviews lyrics on their own. And nowadays, "demos" are on CD or MP3 (and never cassette)

- (1) Make sure that the demo recording is as good as you can make it. Nowadays, many demos are as good as masters, and some are better! If the demo is not as good as it should be, do not waste your money sending it. Top-quality demos still get rejected, so there is little hope for a below-standard demo.
- (2) If sending a disk, make it clear if it is not a standard CD. Even today, some CD Players still do not play MP3-CDs.
- (3) Don't expect to get the demo back. To you, it is a work of art. To the music executive, it is just another demo, and he may (or may not) bother to return it.
- (4) Make sure that the demo itself looks new, and that the label is clean. Make sure that the lyric sheet is a new copy. No publisher is going to bother listening to a song that looks as though it was written five years ago, and has been round every other publisher since.
- (5) Make sure that your letter looks professional. It should be sent on printed letterheading which should be neat and well-printed. If the letterheading is printed, you may - if you cannot use a computer - write the letter. If the letterheading is not printed, the letter should definitely be typed.
- (6) In the letter, be very brief, as a professional songwriter would. Simply say that you are sending the song (state title) for their consideration, and leave it at that. If you have a particular singer in mind, by all means say that the song would suit that singer. If you are not happy with the song or the demo, do not announce this. There is no point in prejudicing them against the song before they've heard it. Anyway, a professional songwriter would not be apologising, he would be making a better demo, or constructing a better song.
- (8) If you have other songs online on your own website, mention this briefly. Even if he cannot use the actual song you sent, he might well click on to hear some more.
- (7) Use a new light-weight Jiffy or Arofol bag (size four is best). Affix a good-quality (if possible, printed) label on the front. Address it to the A & R Department of the company, unless you have already got a contact name, and make sure that your own name and address are printed clearly on the rear.
- (8) Enclose a second smaller Jiffy or Arofol bag (size three is best), with your own name and address on it. Put sufficient stamps on this to allow for return postage but do not expect to get it back. But do it. Even a negative reply lets to know that they are a company who does accept unsolicited material.
- (9) If promoting overseas, enclose a bank note of the country in question to prepay return postage. You can obtain foreign bank notes at most large banks. IRCs which are recommended by postal services for prepaying foreign postage, are useless.
- (10) Set up a Promotion File for the song. We supply a Promotion File Sheet. Photocopy this sheet making perhaps ten copies at a time, and keep the original as a master.
- (11) On the Promotion File, write in the details of the song in the box at the top, and when you are going to post the packet, complete the Parcel Post receipt. The Post Office will stamp this, thus giving you a Certificate of Posting in the unlikely event of a copyright dispute ever arising.
- (12) If you are responding to a tip, read carefully exactly what the company is looking for - style of song, type of demo etc. They will get only a few packages with exactly what they requested, and those demos will get listened to. They will get hundreds of packages with everything but what they requested. They'll get dumped.
- (13) Usually, if you are going to hear, you will get a reply from a company within 60 days. Not all firms are prompt, and most may never reply, nor return your demo. There is absolutely nothing you or anybody else can do about this. Abusing people about your missing CD will achieve nothing apart from ensuring that they will definitely throw your next one in the bin. It is annoying to lose a demo, but it is a fact of life. If you don't like the rules - don't get in the game.
- (14) Immediately the song is in the post, start work on the next one. Most successful writers have a dozen or so songs on the circuit at any one time. Do not wait around for a reply, and do **NOT** chase the submission up. It looks amateurish.
- (15) A number of reactions are possible.
- (a) You may get no reply at all, in which case, knock that firm off your list of potential publishers. They may have a closed door policy - they may be inefficient.
- (b) You may get the parcel returned marked "unsolicited". This is fairly unusual in the UK (but not in the USA). knock that firm off your list of potential publishers and notify the ISA.
- (c) You may get a rejection slip, in which case, check to see if there is a contact name given on it. The next time you send a song to that firm, use the contact name.
- (d) You may get a letter returning the CD, but requesting more material. There is no hurry about doing this - believe it or not, they won't be sitting there on tenterhooks waiting for your reply! Write back telling them when you will be sending in your next song and when you have something ready, photocopy the letter they sent you, and send it with your new demo. Do not - repeat, do not send in something inferior simply because you are in a hurry. You'll blow your contact for good.
- (e) You may get a contract in the post, or an offer of one. Contact your lawyer, or the ISA, to have it vetted.

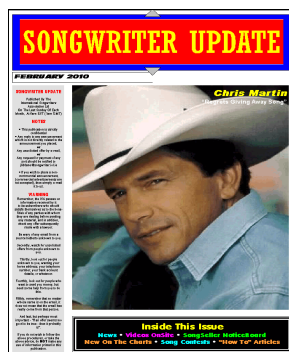
Songwriting is a business - nothing more, nothing less.

If your package looks professional and sounds professional, you are in with a chance - but that is all really.

If it looks amateurish and sounds amateurish, you might as well put your money on a healthy horse.

The ISA has been there since 1967, and in our experience, writers who persevere, eventually get at least a contract offer.

It is literally, 5% inspiration and 95% perspiration however, and songwriting is not just a long road, it is also a lonely road.



Songwriter Update

WHAT IS THIS?

Each month, the ISA publishes an e-mail newsletter called the *Songwriter Update* which is only available to subscribers.

It contains a News section, a Song Contest section, a SongSeller section, a Notices From Members section, a New To The Charts section, plus various articles of interest to writers

WHEN DOES IT APPEAR?

Songwriter Magazine Update appears on the last Sunday of each month

HOW LARGE IS EACH MONTHLY NEWSWIRE?

Approximately 50 to 70 pages

HOW DO I GET MINE EACH MONTH?

You can read it online by going to the ISA website or you can print it off, either in its entirety or on a page-by-page basis

Songwriter NewsFlash

WHAT IS THIS?

Every so often, ranging from once a week to once a day, depending on the information available, *Songwriter NewsFlash* is a short email NewsFlash comprising whatever urgent news about Songs Wanted by performers, labels etc

WHEN DOES IT APPEAR?

Songwriter NewsFlash appears at no particular time

HOW LARGE IS EACH NEWSFLASH?

Approximately one page

HOW DO I GET MINE EACH TIME IT COMES OUT?

It appears first on the ISA Private Members Site and once it has been published we send a copy to you by email later that day

ADVICE FOR LYRICISTS

The Music Industry is not geared for dealing with lyrics on their own, and in order to have your work considered, you must be able to offer complete songs (that is a package comprising words and music). If up to now, you have written only lyrics, then the following advice is for you.

First, avoid people offering to write melodies for cash, irrespective of what way the offer is framed. Some of these melody-for-cash merchants, will write music to the local bus timetable, as long as they get £25 or or whatever, and once they've taken your cash, you can kiss your chances goodbye. Some of course, frame their offers cleverly, but the simple facts are these - if anybody offers to turn your lyrics into a song in return for any payment whatsoever by you, then run a mile.

You will occasionally see demo recording firms offering 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 by them is simply built into the cost of the demo. Secondly, if you want to find out how genuine this offer is, ask the company to let you hear the melody BEFORE you pay for the demo 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 30 years, would he tell us about it? We'd be happy to publicise it,

Although most lyric writers think in terms of obtaining a collaborator, every lyricist should try and pen a melody himself first. Many lyricists have a rough tune in their heads, but some are put off by their inability to "write down" music. In fact, very few top songwriters can "write down" music either ... but services exist which can copy down your rough song onto paper for £5 (\$7) upwards. So, initially, try and see what you can come up with in the form of a melody, and sing, hum or whistle the results onto a cassette. You can always use our free assessment service to help you decide the value of what you yourself have come up with.

It may be that in the end, you will decide to try and obtain a collaborator. Most hit songs are written by partnerships anyway, so there is nothing very unusual about this. Ideally, you should try and obtain help from somebody you know locally. Collaboration is best done on a personal face-to-face basis. If you do not know another songwriter locally, then perhaps you know a musician? Most musicians want to write songs, but lack the enthusiasm or indeed, the inspiration, to get started. You can give them that inspiration, and in so doing, start a new songwriting partnership.

If you do not know a musician locally, then you will probably have to approach some total stranger, to help you. Try a local approach first. A small advertisement in your local newspaper could work wonders. You could also approach your local musical instrument shop and ask them to put you in touch with a musician. Failing that, you might print a small leaflet setting out your requirements, and ask your local music or record shop to hand it out to musicians for you.

Pay particular attention to new groups and bands. Many of these find lyric-writing an impossible chore. We know this because we get lots of requests from bands seeking lyric writers, and there are just not enough good ones out there.

If all of your local approaches fail, then you will probably have to turn to postal collaboration, which is harder to operate, even though many successful partnerships started this way. For example, Elton John met Bernie Taupin through an ad in **NME**. Pop papers like **NME** often carry ads from musicians seeking lyric writers, but beware of the shark operators who infest these waters also, trying to extract money from gullible lyric writers. Apart from the pop press, you should look at **SONGWRITER MAGAZINE**. In every issue, you will note names of melody writers who are seeking lyric-writing collaborators on a 50-50 split of royalties, 50-50 split of costs, basis. Do remember of course, that these writers will have plenty of replies, and that they will probably be inundated with lyrics. However, they are worth trying. Also, you will note a similar column in every issue listing names of lyric writers seeking melody writing collaborators. Insertions in this column are free, and do work.

There are a large number of composers who are willing to work on lyrics provided that the lyric writer is willing to pay for the subsequent demo recording. These composers are usually musicians, and are looking for new lyric inspiration. If you had intended to use a demo service offering a "free" melody, then this is a far better way of doing it. These composers have no financial interest in penning a weak melody, or in working on weak lyrics, so you get their best shot. Their only reward will be if the song is published, so they will at least do their best. These composers are to be found listed on our **REGISTER OF COMPOSERS** sheet

Finally, organise yourself and become a proper songwriter. 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, we again wish to remind you that you should never pay out money for a melody to be written to your lyrics, nor pay out money for any demo recording simply to obtain a "free" melody.

Hit melodies to hit lyrics are written by composers, and not by songwriting services. Indeed, in the 80 years that services have been busy writing perhaps two million "free" melodies, we have never known one to become a hit. If it had, we would know all about it, as the services would have been very quick to let us and everybody else know about it!

Contact Information

The following information is intended to assist newcomers promoting songs written for named performers.

Do remember that postal promotion is at best, a hit-or-miss business, and that nothing beats the personal approach, if of course, you are in a position to make such an approach in the first place.

INTRODUCTION

When you write a novel, you know what to do next - you take it straight to a publisher.

Even though you are well aware that books are actually manufactured by printers, and actually sold by booksellers, you are not likely to think of going to the printer or to the bookseller yourself with your manuscript. In other words - the route for the aspiring author is clearcut. Authors approach publishers.

However, with a song, it is not quite as straightforward. True, you can go straight to a music publisher and indeed most songwriters still do. But you can as easily go straight to the record label, or indeed to the performer himself. And it doesn't stop there.

The performer for example, is often represented by managers of various hues, not to mention producers, sundry agents and lawyers, some or all of whom, may have an input into what finally ends up on record, or are at least in a position to know what has that input.

So from the ever-increasing and ever-impressive list of superstars, corporations, moguls, would-be moguls and hangers-on, who should you approach with your song, if you have a specific artist in mind?

THE PERFORMER

Most songwriters think that if only they could get to the star himself, they could very easily sell their song. Hollywood is as much to blame for this fairytale scenario as anything else.

In the classic movie, the songwriter just strolls up to the singer and hands him a CD, or (if the scriptwriter is displaying a little more imagination that week), sings the song to him in the back of a taxi on the way to the airport. By nightfall, the song has been recorded in a state-of-the-art studio (which for some reason or other is never already booked out), and by the next morning, it is Number One everywhere. Oh - and the songwriter always gets the girl as well.

The reality is unfortunately, not quite as romantic. One of our subscribers dines well from his hilarious account of how, after weeks of tracking and hunting, he finally waylaid the star of his dreams, leaving a hotel. Pushing everybody else aside, our hero thrust the manuscript of his next hit into the singer's surprised hands.

The stunned superstar made a quick recovery - flashed him his famous winning smile, whipped out his pen, autographed the back of the envelope, and handed it back to the baffled songwriter just as they bundled the singer into his limousine.

Exit one happy superstar, and one deflated songwriter in a scenario that is, I'm afraid to say, closer to reality than anything Hollywood has dreamt up to date.

Even when you can persuade a performer, hyped up on a heady cocktail of fame and illicit substances, to come down to earth long enough to listen to your CD, you can usually see from that faraway look in his eyes, that within minutes of your bidding him good-bye, he will not remember that you were ever there - let alone what he did with your CD.

Stars are different - that's why they're stars, and they're rarely equipped to deal with aspiring songwriters, or indeed, real life. The personal approach has worked outside the movies, but usually, it works because it is a personal approach from somebody known to the performer already - and somebody who knows when is the most opportune time to make that approach.

The moral of all this? ISA rarely gives personal addresses for singers, except where the singer has no current label or no current management - and if that's the case, should you be bothering in the first place?

THE RECORD LABEL

Theoretically, the people at the record label are the only people who should matter, although when it comes to making that crucial decision as to whose song is used, this is not always the case. However, if you send your song to the relevant label, they will at least know what to do with it, and to whom to send it.

Most labels have UK and US headquarters. Although, it makes sense to send a song for an American singer, to the American office, and a song for a UK singer to the UK office, there is usually nothing lost if you do it in reverse, as most of the larger labels operate courier services between branches anyway, so your CD should find its way home no matter where you send it.

Indeed, one of our subscribers, finding that his attempts to contact an American singer via his New York label, were being constantly frustrated by his CD coming back unopened, marked "unsolicited", sent it to the London

office instead, marked for the attention on the singer. To his amazement, two weeks later, he got a reply from the same New York office which had kept sending back his material heretofore! Apparently, since it now came to them from their UK office, they no longer regarded it as unsolicited!

ISA always gives the UK and US record label addresses for any singer.

THE MUSIC PUBLISHER

A word of warning before we proceed. Most American-based publishers refuse to accept "unsolicited" material from songwriters, and insist on returning it unopened. There are exceptions, but these are becoming few and far between.

These companies advise that you should write first asking for permission, and if they give it (and in so doing, give you a code to use in your address label), you are free to send the song.

The problem we notice is however, that having advised you to write first, they often fail to reply one way or the other to such requests, which puts you back where you started anyway.

Apart from this little problem with (mainly) American-based firms, the music publisher is not only the best bet if you are pitching your song in no particular direction, but is often also the best bet if you are trying to place your song with a particular star.

A letter to any large publisher suggesting a specific singer as a potential outlet for your song, will (if the song has any potential) often elicit a positive response.

However, if you wish to be more precise with your promotion, then the last publisher to have a chart entry with that particular performer, is always worth trying first.

ISA will usually only name a specific publisher as the best contact when the publisher has a current hit with the star in question.

THE OTHERS

Some singers are represented by just one person or company. Others maintain a battery of representatives, ranging from personal managers, through record producers, legal advisors, booking agents, business managers, public relations managers, general dogsbodies of uncertain status, and the wife's brother, whom nobody else would employ.

Generally speaking, if ISA gives a contact other than a record label, it is either because we believe that that specific person has some input into the choice of material, or because that particular person or organisation, has proved an effective conduit for placing material with that performer in the past.

SOME LAST WORDS

If you have a name in a record label, music publisher or management office, you should address your submission to that person, even if you're not sure as to the relevance of the name you have.

If your letter is addressed to a named (even if irrelevant) person, the person who opens it will nearly always re-direct it to the correct executive anyway.

If you have no name - then telephone the company concerned, introduce yourself confidently as though everybody should know who you are, and in your most polite fashion, ask the telephonist for the name of the person to whom your letter should be sent. If you sound confident - you'll get the information.

If you are unable to obtain a name, then address the CD to the star for whom the song is intended.

Mail addressed to the star is usually directed to whomsoever handles that performer's affairs, and whoever gets it will usually re-direct it to the relevant executive handling choice of material.

Above all, try and avoid addressing the CD simply to the company itself. With no name whatsoever on it, the package will be opened by the lowest staff member around, who may very well not have the slightest idea what to do next with it.

With an executive's name (or a star's name) attached, it will travel higher up the ladder, to be dealt with by somebody powerful enough to make decisions, or intelligent enough to refer it to somebody who can.

Finally, make everything look professional. Typed labels, clean jiffy bags, and a smart appearance, help concentrate the mind of the recipient. In this regard, ISA publishes "Promotion Advice" which is available free, and each time you send a song to the Assessment Service, it will be assessed both as a song, and as a presentation.

VANITY PUBLISHING, SUBSIDY RECORDINGS & COMPILATION ALBUMS

Vanity Publishing is as old as music publishing itself. It means that the so-called "publisher" offers to "publish" a song, in return for a fee. What results is not a saleable product. It is frequently nothing more than a nicely-printed lead sheet. No royalties ever accrue, barring a nominal dollar paid in some states to avoid accusations of deception. Needless to say, nobody ever recommends Vanity Publishing!

Subsidy Recording or Custom Recording is where a company offers to manufacture, release, promote and distribute a recording of the song or songs, in return for a payment which is meant to cover part or all of the costs of the exercise. Usually, a higher royalty than normal is paid on any sales, so basically the performer is investing money in his own talent.

Such offers are basically business deals, and obviously, any performer will be able to evaluate his chances of recouping the investment given (a) the size of his existing fan base etc, and (b) the company's ability to provide the service promised, based on its previous record in so doing. Rarely if ever profitable.

Compilation Albums are a variation of the above, where a number of songs by different performers are put on one album. Sometimes, the release is put in shops, and promoted, like any other record. Others are simply meant to act as a promotional vehicle for the artist or songwriter.

Compilation offers are often difficult to assess because of their vagueness and uncertainty as to what is being offered, and generally speaking, we don't usually recommend them for **pure songwriters** (i.e. non-performing songwriters) except in certain cases. This is not in any way to suggest that there is anything whatsoever wrong or unethical about such offers. However, we do not see how they benefit pure songwriters. **Performers** on the other hand, can benefit, particularly if

- the CDs are actually being put into shops,
- the package is well-designed and the overall sound quality of **all** of the tracks is of a high standard,
- professional promotion takes place, and
- the release is geared at a specific easily-identifiable market - for example country music, heavy rock, songs about sport, or indeed any niche market with an audience.

After all, some people do go into shops without a specific album in mind, and may well pick up something which looks good, or about which they have heard or read something. The royalty return may be virtually nil, but the performer gets himself heard by a new audience which may remember the name when he eventually gets himself a commercial release.

However, it is hard to see why people would buy albums of unconnected songs by **pure songwriters**, none of whom they have ever heard of. Even if they do buy the album, it is difficult to see what benefit it will be to that songwriter in the future, when generally speaking, the non-performing writer is such an anonymous person on most records anyway.

As for sending them to radio stations, a Controller of Programmes at one of the large commercial radio stations has told us that he does not remember ever playlisting one of the many songwriters compilation CDs that came in, nor frankly does he recall any other station playlisting them either.

Again, with regards to sending them to labels and publishers, it is rare for executives at either of these type of companies to preview entire 20 track CDs - indeed you're lucky to get them to agree to play a one-song demo!

Having said all that, we do not condemn them out of hand - even for **pure songwriters**.

For example, some companies make no profit at all on them, and do it mainly to spread their style of music. If you are in a minority market (for example, gospel in the UK etc), it may be your only outlet.

Then, there are companies who bear most of the cost themselves in the hope that they will be able to sign some tracks for commercial release, and hold onto the publishing or part of it. Your contribution is often minimal, and

although you are being asked to pay portion of what **should** normally be that company's expenses, you may feel it low enough to make it worthwhile.

However, there are also companies which charge the writer a hefty fee for inclusion on a compilation album the purpose of which is to promote the songs, **and** at the same time, insist on signing the songs to publishing contracts. In other words, they ask the writer to bear what should be the publisher's cost of promotion himself, and also take the songs!

And finally of course, there are companies who make such a good profit from the performers or writers on each release, that they have no interest in pushing the product - they have already cleaned up and do not intend to dip into their profits by spending any money on promotion.

If you're made an offer at any time in the future, you might consider the following points:

(1) Are real guarantees being given or are the guarantees framed in a very vague way?

(a) For example, what guarantees are given concerning the standard of the other songs and recordings? One member paid a very large sum of money to make a superb master recording himself, only to discover when the release came out, that many of the other tracks had obviously been taken from cassette demos of very variable quality, with the result that most of the album sounded amateurish. Before entering any deal, ask the company for a previous release. Listen to it. Would you have been happy to have had your song on that album alongside the others?

(b) Sometimes you are told that albums will be "available to the shops". How are they going to get into the shops? Walk? Who is the distributor? Can the company name any shops in your own area which have previously stocked a compilation released by this company? Check with these shops.

(c) Sometimes you are told that radio stations will be "supplied" with the album. But many are supplied - few are played. The question is - will the album be played? Which stations have played previous releases?

(d) Sometime, you will be told that the album will be posted to labels and publishing houses. Is there any reason to believe that it will be reviewed by them any more favorably than if you sent in the track yourself?

(2) Is the cost realistic?

Generally, you can press a CD, and print artwork, labels, inlay cards etc., for around £1 per disc. If you are being asked to contribute a certain sum to a project, multiply this sum by the number of other tracks on the album and work out whether the company is bearing any of the cost itself, or whether it is the performer or writer who is paying for everything. One member was asked to pay a certain sum for three tracks on a CD. He later produced an entire album of his own material on CD, for less than the price being charged for those three tracks!

(3) What successes have been achieved to date?

We do not suggest that the firm should be able to quote chart hits (although it is worth asking if the company has ever had **any** sort of hit, **anywhere**), but if the compilation is being used for promotion of the songs, ask have previous compilations resulted in people or songs being signed by majors, and if so, which acts/songs by which majors? If the compilation is being promoted to radio stations, how many plays resulting in PRS royalty payments have resulted from previous releases? Will they show you the PRS statements to back up this claim?

(4) Is the company willing to put you in touch with previous clients?

If so, you can check with them as to how happy they have been with previous releases. If the firm will not put you in touch with other clients, this may not be a good sign.

Remember, Compilation Albums are simply business deals - not normal music industry deals. You should carefully examine any offer, and do not commit yourself or your songs, to any deal which does not give you at least a fighting chance of success.

REGISTER OF COMPOSERS

(Photocopy This Page Before Use, Or Download or Print Extra Copies From <http://www.songwriter.co.uk/forms>)

The ISA operates a REGISTER OF COMPOSERS, made up of subscribers who are willing to pen melodies to suitable lyrics on a 50-50 basis, on condition that the lyric writer agrees to make a demo of the subsequent song at his own expense, and promote same. The register operates as follows:

- Lyric writers who wish to have a demo made, can apply for a copy of the Register of Composers, by sending in a self-addressed unstamped envelope. The register sent will comprise a list of about 10 names and addresses of composer-members who are willing to write melodies on a 50-50 split of royalties basis, the lyric writer paying for the subsequent demo. Lyric writers cannot send the same lyrics to different composers at the same time, unless they inform each composer of that fact.
- Participating composers on the list will be able to provide the lyric writer with either (a) a lead sheet or (b) a cassette recording or (c) a CD, utilising vocal plus one instrument, or else the relevant chords written down.
- All costs incurred by the composer in preparing either the lead sheet or the rough recording, will be borne totally by the composer. All costs involved in making the subsequent demo, will be borne by the lyric writer.
- The lyricist and composer will agree to a 50-50 split of royalties, either by an exchange of letters to this effect, or by signing an agreement. No charges may be made by either party on the other.
- The list will be up-dated every 13 weeks. Any member wishing to take his name off the list, or add his name to the list, can do so then.
- No lyric writer is obliged to accept any melody provided, but if accepted, the lyric writer **MUST** make a demo of the completed song at his expense, or the partnership agreement is terminated. Similarly, no melody writer is obliged to write a melody to any lyric submitted, but he/she will return unsuitable lyrics within 14 days, if a stamped addressed envelope has been provided by the lyricist. Both parties will copyright their own material before exchanging it with the prospective collaborator.
- If you - as a composer - wish to add your name to the next list of available composers, then complete the top half of the form [PART 1] below. Alternatively, email the details to us, based on the information on the form below
- If you wish to receive the list, then please complete the lower half of the form [PART 2].

[PART 1] APPLICATION BY COMPOSER TO BE PLACED ON THE REGISTER OF COMPOSERS

Name.....Address.....

I can provide a melody to suitable lyrics on Lead Sheet (M) OR Cassette (C) OR Compact Disk (CD)
(Please tick).

I am interested in working on the following type of lyrical material

- Top 40 Country (CW) Dance Reggae (RG) Heavy Metal (HM)
 Ballads (B) MOR (MOR) Folk (F) Rhythm & Blues (RB)
 Rap (R) Hip Hop (HH) Other (please stipulate on the line below)

I understand that my name will appear in the next listing for an initial period of 13 weeks, and that after that period, I may withdraw if I wish. I am not obliged to work on any lyrics which I do not find suitable, and will return them to the lyricist if he/she provides me with a stamped addressed envelope. I will sign a 50-50 agreement with the lyric writer if he/she accepts the completed song, on condition that the lyric writer pays for the subsequent demo. I will make no charge for providing the melody or for anything else.

[PART 2] APPLICATION BY LYRICIST TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE REGISTER OF COMPOSERS

Name.....

- I declare that I wish to make a Demo Recording of one or more of my lyrics.
- I understand that I may, if I wish, send, lyrics to one or more of the names on the list, but not the same lyrics to more than one composer. I will enclose a stamped addressed envelope for his reply.
- I will receive either my lyrics back if he/she is unable to provide a melody, or else, I will receive back a melody in the form of a lead sheet or rough cassette or CD recording.
- If I then accept the melody provided, I will sign a 50-50 Agreement for the song(s), and will guarantee to make a Demo of the song(s), at my own expense. If I do not accept the melody provided, I will return the recording or the lead sheet to the melody writer within 7 days.
- I accept that ISA is offering simply to forward any lyrics received to any composers listed, and that ISA has no responsibility whatsoever for any arrangements entered into, for any failure by a composer to write a melody or to return lyrics.
- Do NOT use this Service if you do not accept the above terms

Tax And The Songwriter

It was J.B. Colbert who once said: "The art of taxation consists in so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest amount of feathers with the least possible amount of hissing". Being the gentleman who plucked on behalf of Louis XIV, he ought to know the score better than most, even if Charles Aznavour was not featuring too heavily in the charts back in the days of the Sun King.

Still, Charles had his own problems later, proof of the fact that things really change very little over the centuries, and every songwriter who is lucky enough to have one of his songs recorded, will at some stage come into contact with the dreaded taxman. If he has taken certain basic precautions, his problems will be substantially less, and with a little luck, his large fortune (or small nest egg) may escape relatively intact

The first thing to do, as an amateur or professional writer, is to keep careful records of any money paid out in connection with your songwriting. Not everything will be allowable in the end of course, but a busy writer soon forgets that packet of cassettes purchased in Curry's, that taxi fare from Victoria to Denmark Street, not to mention the ISA Membership Fee, and if the accountant chosen by you is not himself familiar with the business (art???) of songwriting, he may not ask all the relevant questions

All receipts should be kept, including electricity bills and household purchases, since portion of your house may well constitute your "songwriting office" and portion of the expense incurred in its upkeep, may well be used to offset any tax liability. Why not invest in a large cardboard box, and throw nothing away...particularly receipts, bus tickets, and what-have you. Remember that if you use your car in connection with your songwriting, you should keep detailed records of the mileage incurred as a result of your songwriting activities

Of course, you do not pay any tax until you have an income, but when you sign your first contract and get paid an advance, or when that first royalty cheque comes through the letter-box, you will be liable to declare the income to the tax authorities so that they can decide if you owe them money. At this point of course, you will have got yourself an accountant, because under no circumstances, should you deal with, or even talk to, the tax authorities yourself. They are trained to "pluck the goose" and you may not have been trained to hiss. Never ignore a letter from the tax authorities - it will not go away, but return to haunt you three months later, and prejudice the authorities further against you. Pass any communications received to your accountant and let him handle everything. Do not be tempted to reply to anything "unimportant" yourself - tax matters are never "unimportant", and once you have an accountant, it is foolish to buy a dog, and bark yourself.

To obtain an accountant, you should ask somebody you trust (and who is obviously prosperous) to recommend theirs to you. If you can get somebody interested in pop music, so much the better, but avoid the wide boys recommended by other wide boys - the sort of accountant guaranteed to "rip off the tax people". If he is all that expert, he might turn his expertise to ripping you off instead. Your publishing firm may recommend one to you, and he will probably be familiar with songwriting problems, but make sure that he is not also the accountant handling the affairs of your publisher.

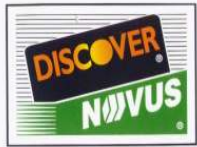
Since songwriting is not exactly a business, you will be limited in the number of allowances which you can claim against income, and so you will probably be advised to examine some "tax-saving" or "tax-avoidance" schemes, set up companies etc. If these are recommended by your accountant, try and find out if they have been used before by a client of his, and how successfully. If they are suggested by outsiders, tread carefully.

Esoteric schemes involving box numbers in the Cayman Islands, may sound very attractive, but do remember that the line between "avoidance" (quite legal) and "evasion" (definitely illegal) can be rather thin, and vaguely socialist governments, tend to frown on such schemes, and draft legislation to stop them.

(Most ominous of all is the recent legislation outlawing all schemes from the inception of the scheme - and not from the moment such legislation is passed).

Anyway, one "People's Revolution" in your chosen tax haven, and you may end up digging roads for a living.

However, tax rates do vary from place to place, and you should if at all possible, take advantage of this fact, if you can! I stress "if you can" because not everybody can take wife, kids and mother-in-law to the Ivory Coast, simply because there is no



income tax there!

Using a "tax haven" does not however mean that you have to stay 365 days a year, as long as you maintain a permanent residence in your new location, and do not maintain a permanent residence in your country of origin. You can also keep your British citizenship, as it is normally "residence" and not "citizenship" which determines your liability to a country's taxes.

A warning however, for our American members: the US government taxes both its residents and its citizens. So even if you leave the USA and reside abroad, but maintain your American passport, you may still still be liable for American taxes in law, though not necessarily in practice.

Members living in Jersey would be well advised to stay put, but outsiders intending to move in to its 20% rate of income tax, should be in the millionaire class already. Jersey is very choosy as to who it takes nowadays.

The Isle of Man, with its 21% rate, is attractive, if rather less central than Jersey, while an independent Scotland might yet turn out to be another Cayman Islands!

The Irish Republic (which offers a taxfree haven to writers although the amount has been limited in recent years, and may be even further curtailed in the future) is perhaps the best location in Europe, if one does not mind the weather (plus somewhat higher prices).

In Europe, Andorra seems the best bet tax-wise, though it is rather cut off from most places, and Gibraltar might seem claustrophobic, but .

Italy oddly enough, is not a bad country for a tax-conscious foreigner to live in, and when the millions start rolling in, you might spare a thought for Mexico, Greenland, Bahamas and the good old Caymans

Meanwhile, be prepared. Keep proper records, seek out trusty accountants, and remember Thomas Haliburton's pre-Tax-Haven dictum: "Death and taxes are inevitable".

Now if only he had known about San Marino!

From Jim Liddane's CD "The Basic Course In Songwriting"

PROMOTION FILE

(Photocopy This Page Before Use, Or Download or Print Extra Copies From <http://www.songwriter.co.uk/forms>)

SONG TITLE.....DATE COMPLETED.....
 WRITTEN BY.....DATE COPYRIGHTED.....
 DEMO RECORDED BY.....DATE RECORDED.....
 TOTAL INVESTMENT TO DATE.....DATE PROMOTION STARTED.....

LETTER POST

Certificate of Posting of an Inland Letter/Packet or of an Uninsured ordinary Letter/Packet for Abroad

A letter/packet prepaid.....and addressed as under has been posted here this day (FULL address)

.....

Accepting Officer's Initials.....

Serial Number If For Abroad Or Inland COD Form No

Date Stamp

Date Posted

Date Returned.....

Comments Made.....

.....

Contact's Name.....

LETTER POST

Certificate of Posting of an Inland Letter/Packet or of an Uninsured ordinary Letter/Packet for Abroad

A letter/packet prepaid.....and addressed as under has been posted here this day (FULL address)

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.....

Accepting Officer's Initials.....

Serial Number If For Abroad Or Inland COD Form No

Date Stamp

Date Posted

Date Returned.....

Comments Made.....

.....

Contact's Name.....

- Although normal copyright procedures are sufficient to protect your song, you should remember that if you wish to pursue any action through the courts against any person or company, who has, in your opinion, copied your composition, you must be able to prove access by that person or company to your song. For this reason, you should always use the above Certificates Of Posting before promoting your song.
- Each song should have its own sheet (or several sheets if you carry out a lot of promotion on that particular song).
- Complete all the details in the top panel once you have completed a song.
- When you start to promote it, fill in the Name and Address of the person to whom it is being sent in the left-hand panel.
- The space "a letter/packet prepaid....." should only be completed once you have been told by the counter clerk, the amount of postage due. Also the counter clerk should initial the section marked Accepting Officer's Initials and then date stamp the sheet.
- In the right-hand panel,, you should fill in the date posted. The remainder of that panel can be completed as promotion proceeds.
- If the song is rejected, note the name of the person signing the letter, Even rejection slips can be useful if they are signed by somebody in the firm rejecting the song. The name becomes a "contact" and future submissions can be sent on a more personal basis, to a name taken from a rejection letter.

If your heart's set on a career as a teacher, an airline pilot or a doctor everything is quite straightforward. You know that as long as you can gain the necessary qualifications and training, you can land the job you want. But what happens if you fancy a career in the music business? No one can tell you exactly what qualifications you need and advertisements for jobs in record companies or recording studios are rarely seen. In fact, these kind of jobs are usually filled by word of mouth rather than going through official channels.

Ask any successful A & R man or engineer how he got his job, and the usual answer you'll get is "luck", or "being in the right place at the right time". If you're fainthearted you'll give up and join the civil service instead. But if you're determined, there are one or two things you can do to bring that coveted job a little bit nearer.

Mostly this involves using your own initiative, compiling a list of the companies you'd like to work for and writing to each one, stating your qualifications and ambitions. Maybe you'll write fifty letters and only get one reply. But that one may be a job offer and, even if it isn't, if you write another fifty letters two months later, some jobs may have fallen vacant in the meantime.

Music publishing is a subject which fascinates quite a lot of people who fancy their chances of discovering a Bernie Taupin or Elton John. Yet many people have only the vaguest of ideas about what actually goes on

day to day in a publisher's office. Now, more than ever before, publishing involves a great deal of administration work and promotion as well as listening to tapes and matching up artists and songs.

This means that there are a lot of jobs which require a head for mathematical figures as well as music. Publishing jobs in fact range from office boy to General Manager, but there is one way of coming into publishing which will give you a better training than anything else, particularly if you have ambitions to head your own publishing company some day, and that is to join a music publisher as a Promotions person. This is how David Most, Mickie's brother, came into publishing, and Brian Oliver of April Music, and countless others. We talked to Brian Oliver and also to Eddie Seago of RAM Publishing, to find out how two very successful publishers built up their careers.

"I was originally a songwriter", said Eddie Seago. "I started writing while I was working as an insurance broker at Lloyds. I used to have a lot of time to kill while I was waiting to see underwriters, so I used to go and sit in cafes and write songs. One day while I was waiting in a restaurant queue, I bumped into an old school friend, Mike Leander, who had gone into law, and I asked him how he was getting on. He said he wasn't in law any more, he was working for a music publisher, so I told him I was now writing songs and the result was a short-term contract. My first successful song was called "Early In The Morning" and was a hit for Vanity Fair.

I continued to work at my regular job as I was quite security minded in those days but I gradually became fascinated by the music business. I was writing more and more with Mike, until at

last I gave up my job and went into publishing, and now I have the overall responsibility for running Rock Artists Music, which involves not only the songs Mike Leander and I write but also songs by John Rossall and many more".

So here's one publisher who came into the game through being a songwriter himself. If you can write songs, you automatically open doors for yourself in the publishing world, but you still have to step over the dividing line from being on the writing side to getting on to the administrative side.

Brian Oliver, General Manager of April Music, who are affiliated to CBS Records as well as being independent publishers in their own right, was also a writer when he had his first introduction to publishing.

"I was a freelance journalist in the Carlisle area and I also had a group which I was trying to get off the ground. The first single the group made, on the Polydor label, was a Chinn and Chapman song which was published by April Music. I was still living up in the North and I did loads of promotion for that record, getting press

coverage and radio plays. The record wasn't a hit, but I'd proved that I was useful on the promotion side, so April offered me the job of Assistant Promotions Manager and I moved to London.

I gradually lost my ambition to be a singer/songwriter and became more and more involved with publishing, moving from promotions to Creative Manager

and now General Manager. Amongst the people I soon discovered through hearing their tapes were the CBS band Lone Star and a team of writers called Bugatti and Musker, who wrote "Milk Train" for Roger Daltrey, "Reggae Like It Used To Be", for Paul Nicholas and his biggest single, "Dancing With The Captain".

I would say that, to get into publishing, you need to have a good knowledge of the music scene and have enough imagination about music to be able to tell from a tape if a song has potential and maybe if it was given a different treatment and demoed another way it might be right for a certain artist.

A successful publisher needs both intuition and judgment when it comes to matching a song with an artist.

The usual route into publishing is the way I did it, coming in via promotions, which really is a difficult job requiring endless energy and staying-power, as you have to compete with everyone else who is also trying to get records played on the radio.

You also have to know which programme is right for a certain song, etc.

Publishing nowadays is very alive and there is a lot of money to be made. There is also a shortage of good, creative people around to do the job. There are no apprenticeships you can serve and landing a job is largely a matter of luck and determination".

Most publishers agree that the best way into publishing is either through being a songwriter yourself and making personal contact with the publishers that way, or else by simply writing round, sounding interested and enthusiastic and offering to take any position in the company, even if it's only making the tea, so that you can gain the necessary knowledge and gradually work your way into a top job.

A JOB IN MUSIC PUBLISHING?

FREE DEMOS - OR FREE MONEY!

(Photocopy This Page Before Use, Or Download or Print Extra Copies From <http://www.songwriter.co.uk/forms>)

We'll not exactly, but if you know of songwriters who might not already be subscribers, then all you have to do is to send us their names and addresses so that we can post them out information on International Songwriters Association.

For each person on your list who subsequently pays a subscription, you will receive a credit note entitling you to one-third off the cost of an Musical Records demo. If two join, you will get two-thirds off a demo, and if three join, you will get a free demo. This is in addition to any other vouchers, discounts etc., on offer at that time!

There is absolutely no limit to the number of free demos you can earn, and when you have earned five demos, we will give you a sixth, absolutely free! One songwriter, who earned her first free demo within four days of getting her first copy of The Songwriter, has since earned two more! More recently, a writer earned three free demos in the space of one month.

Fill in your name and address in the top section below, and then fill in the names and addresses of any suitable songwriter(s) in the spaces underneath.

Then return this form to Bill Miller, International Songwriters Association Ltd, PO Box 46, Limerick City, Ireland. You may photocopy this form for further use, or request extra forms if needed.

We will confirm with the name(s) supplied that they would like to receive the information, before sending it out.

YOUR OWN NAME

YOUR ADDRESS

So, if you know a songwriter who does not know about the ISA - let us know today, and we'll do the rest.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE OR DOWNLOAD A COPY, AND POST TO

Bill Miller, International Songwriters Association, PO Box 46, Limerick City, Ireland

A Publisher Gives You The Inside Story

Mark Halpern, an ISA member as well as being Professional Manager at Bosworth Music in Regent Street, London, once invited ISA members to submit material to him.

He kept a record of the submissions, and this is his report on what he thought about the whole episode.

"I started with good intentions and did indeed give personal critiques to perhaps the first fifty submissions. It soon became apparent that I would get little work done if you all kept sending demos - and you did. I'm afraid the dreaded standard letter became essential. Let me assure every-one, that all submissions were listened to. Many were returned, but the best were kept aside and are currently being exploited.

A few words regarding submissions. These are intended to benefit writers, not to criticise merely for the sake of it.

We British are undoubtedly a nation of eccentrics.

There are amateur writers producing all kinds of weird and wonderful compositions which bear no relation to the current pop/rock music scene.

If you submit a song to a publisher or A&R dept that is even one year out of date in terms of sound then I'm sorry but you'll be wasting your time and money. I received songs that were perhaps fifteen or twenty years out of date, needless to say they went straight back. If a writer wants success, then the pre-requisites are to listen, learn and analyse current trends. Absorb what is happening so thoroughly into your musical mind that the sounds, construction and production techniques are second nature to you. Please, writers, give yourself every possible chance to succeed by familiarising yourself with what's going on now, today ... not yesterday.

By this I do not mean copy or rip off what anyone else is doing. Simply learn how modern songs are crafted together, then (and this is crucial if you want success) ... add something original of your own if you want to get noticed. This may be a particular sound, a twist to a lyric or an original way to approach a hook line, anything, but be different. Many older writers cannot accept the top 40 as being relevant to their idea of proper music. Perhaps it's true, 'They don't write songs like they used to but if you are willing to learn, it is possible to change this attitude for a more positive one.

It's been said many times before, and no doubt will be repeated again and again - does nobody listen? The music business is an industry, it's not a game. It's unashamedly about promoting talent and making money. Sorry if you don't like it, nevertheless it's true. Okay, you've just written the 'song of the decade' so, why don't some writers spend a little time and cash making a decent demo? I received so many songs that even in this age of Hi-Tech, were so poorly recorded, that I literally listened to the first few fumbling bars, cringed, and hastily returned the song to its owner. Your song must make a terrific impact within the first few bars or it is doomed to failure.

Closely related to the above, and probably the most important rules, are now coming up. If you remember nothing else,

remember the following; Any song in any style must have, commitment, energy, rhythm, emotion, passion, drama, contrast, impact, excitement, good lyrics, originality! Many songs I received were frankly limp and lifeless, and most lacked nearly all of the above 'golden' ingredients. The lazy writer will not succeed.

On the plus side I received some very good material, and as stated earlier this is currently being promoted.

Frankly folks, due to pressure of work I will be unable to return poor quality submissions, but original songs with a professional production and contemporary sound will get my full attention, so please send those in.

Quite a few people sent recordings wrapped in articles ranging from serviettes to tin foil. Why? A box is perfectly adequate.

When a publisher sees a song like this, with scribble all over it, he immediately thinks, 'Amateur'. Type or neatly write the

song title on the recording along with your

name and address on both the

CD and box or inlay card.

Above all, use a CD. We still

get cassettes but no pro writer

uses tapes. In every case, the songs that

looked scrappy were scrappy. I can tell the

'botched up job' a mile off, before I've even heard a note

of music, and so can any other publisher or A & R man.

Publishers do work for a living and don't have time to read a four page letter about, how, why, where, and when a writer was inspired to write a particular song. I just want to hear something good please. A short note asking for the songs to be considered is quite sufficient. Yes, always send a S.A.E.

A neatly typed lyric sheet is a good idea, but whole symphonic scores and top lines are not initially much use.

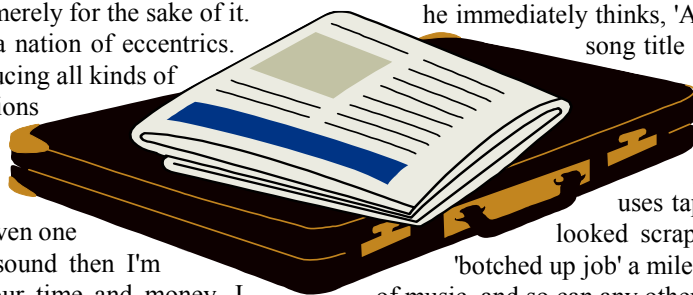
Please keep writing, but before you even consider submitting material, make sure its the best professional job you can do.

Anything less these days will be in vain. Before you record a single note, step back and assess what you've done. Can you imagine that song playing on the radio?

Can you imagine hordes of eager people rushing out to part with hard-earned money to buy your song? Be ruthlessly honest with yourself. If you have even the slightest doubt, re-work the song or lyric. By all means get other peoples' reaction, but ultimately it's your faith in your product that counts. (And that's what it is, product, that you want ordinary people to buy, and every note of your song must do a selling job)

Here is a horror story to finish with and herein lies a lesson for all would-be writers. A friend of mine is a famous session bass guitarist. He knows many people in the music business. He told me of a room at a certain record company where sack upon sack of unsolicited demos are piled ceiling-high, unopened. There are undoubtedly a number of good reasons for this sad state of affairs, but I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions. Who said songwriting was easy anyway?

Nevertheless, it still remains true that if you do have a world beating song in your head, the rewards can be enormous, even though the competition is very fierce. So keep writing and get lucky!



The Songwriter And The Internet

There are three important factors involved in deciding if you need to have your songs on the web - Credibility, Money and Time. We will start by looking at all three.

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 involved makes lots of 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?"

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.liddane.com*". That usually shuts them up!

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

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. So, nothing but pluses when it comes to credibility.

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. So there's a plus - and a minus!

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. And that is a definite minus.

The Verdict?

So there you have it - two pluses and two 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 simpler 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. Like CdBaby, or Amazon etc.

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 could probably also program video recorders).

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 yourself.

Option 2 - Use A Program

This the option which the ISA originally chose for its own site, and it worked 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.

So you pick one - put up a site - and wait.....

*But Suppose You Gave 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 Averbach movie *Suppose They Gave a War and Nobody Came?* Which brings me tortuously to the 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. I stress "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).

Try asking 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. And ISA will always link with one of its members!

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

(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, and worse than that, could result in your site disappearing from Google altogether.

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 start here, today?

(1) On the ISA Private Members Site, go to "Uploading Your Songs" where we maintain a listing of companies which will put you on the web, and enable you to sell your songs to the world in general.

(2) And if you have not yet put up a site and want to play around with the idea, why not download the free book on our site titled "Web Design Mastery"?

(3) And above all, ask us for advice. That's what we are there for and we just love showing off - showing off is what we do best!

But remember one thing - you are first and foremost a songwriter. If you have songs, but no website, then you have the product, but no shop, but there is no point in having the shop if you have no product.

In other words, don't let the site strangle your songwriting!

SONG CONTESTS

*The following is a partial list of song contests . Unfortunately, many contests do not survive, and so the inclusion in this listing of any contest is no guarantee whatsoever that it will still be operational next season, or if so, from the same address!
If you want up-to-date information on any song contest, go to the Song Contest section on the ISA Private Members Site or watch the SongSeller column of ISA's Songwriter Magazine*

Eurovision Heats (UK & Eire)

British National Song Contest
BAC&S
2nd Floor British Music
House, 25-27 Berners Street
London W1P 3DB
UK

Irish National Song Contest
RTE
Donnybrook
Dublin 1
Eire

Entry forms available
September onwards

Billboard Song Contest
PO Box 470306
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74147-0306
USA

Dallas Songwriters Assoc
9601 Winding Ridge
Dallas, Texas 75238
USA

Glinsk Song Contest
Castlerea
Galway
Ireland

Great American Contest
PMB 135,
6327-C SW Capitol Hill Hwy
Portland, OR 97239-1937
USA

International Songwriting
Contest
211 5th Avenue South #LL20
Nashville, TN 37219
USA

John Lennon Song Contest
620 Frelinghuysen Avenue
Suite 801
Newark, NJ 07114
USA

Mid-Atlantic Song Contest
4200 Wisconsin Avenue NW
PMB 106-137
Washington DC 20016
USA

Midwest Song Cntest
PO Box 8142
Madison
WI 53708
USA

Pacific Song Contest
PO Box R1864
Royal Exchange
NSW 1225
Australia

Portland Songwriters
Association Song Contest
PO Box 16985
Portland, OR 97292-0985
USA

Song Expo / BISF
Wilhelminaplein 20
5171 KX Kaatsheuvel
Netherlands

Songwriters Of Wisconsin
Song Contest
PO Box 1027
Neenah, WI 54957-1027
USA

Tipperary Song Contest
18 Father Matthew Street
Tipperary Town
Co Tipperary
Ireland

UniSong
PMB 513
5198 Arlington Avenue
Riverside, CA 92504
USA

USA Songwriting Competition
4331 N Federal Hwy #403a
Fort Lauderdale
FL 33308
USA

West Coast Songwriters
Song Contest
1124 Laurel St (Suite 120)
San Carlos, CA 94070
USA

Woody Guthrie Song Contest
Oklahoma Songwriters Ass
PO Box 6298
Moore, OK 73153
USA

Hints On Making Great Demos

What exactly a demo is

A demo is a recording, usually on CD, rarely if ever on cassette, and even less frequently on DAT, which enables you, the writer, to demonstrate your material to prospective purchasers - no more, no less.

Not surprisingly most professional demos are on CD. It is still the demo standard, perhaps because every music publishing office, every home, and every car has a CD player. Some publishers will accept MP3s sent email, and others will audition MP3s on websites to which they are referred..

Very few are on DAT or minidisk, because although sound quality is excellent, very few publishers actually have one on premises or at home, and no car that we know of (or at least, can afford!), has one.

And as a publisher said recently to us - "I listen to 90% of the demos in the car or at home, and I still prefer CDs".

The three best methods of making a demo

(1) Gather together the requisite recording equipment, and record in your own home, using your own talent supplemented by musician friends. This is the ISA's **most** preferred option.

(2) Hire a studio perhaps for a day or so, and then either perform on the demo yourself, or obtain the paid services of musicians and vocalists, to do this. This is the ISA's **second** preferred option.

(3) Use an outside facility, (some recording studios, and the ISA provide such services), to have your song recorded for you without any involvement by yourself. This is the ISA's **least** preferred option.

Method 1 Advantages

(1) Once the equipment has been bought and installed, you can spend as long as you like on each demo.

(2) There is no ongoing cost, and if the song does not turn out exactly as you want it, you can scrap it and start all over again, at no real expense.

(3) You can experiment with different musicians, vocalists etc., until you are happy with what you have.

(4) Since you are in total control, it should sound exactly as you had intended it to sound.

Method 1 Disadvantages

(1) There can be a high initial cost, (several thousand pounds just to purchase enough equipment to get a professional sound).

(2) You will have to master the equipment (but this is not as difficult as you might think) and you may not have an area at home suitable for recording in.

(3) You may not live in an area where other musicians, vocalists etc., are easily available.

However, if you can afford the initial outlay, have the space, and know some musicians, then this is the option we recommend for all.

Method 2 Advantages

(1) You have no initial outlay.

(2) The sound quality should be top class, and as you will have no problems about operating the equipment (somebody will be doing that for you) you can concentrate on the song.

(3) The studios will usually be able to recommend pro musicians.

(4) As in Method 1 above, since you are in control, the finished product should sound exactly as you intended it to sound..

Method 2 Disadvantages

(1) Expensive (studios usually charge by the hour - as do musicians), which may mean that if you are not quite happy with the recording, but are already being faced with a large bill as it is, you may not be willing to risk re-recording until you get it right.

(2) Unless you are lucky with the musicians provided, a lot of your time may be spent rehearsing them.

Although it is an expensive way of making a demo (one member paid £700 for just one song), it is definitely worth looking at if you can afford it, or can haggle with studios (see across).

Method 3 Advantages

(1) You have no initial investment, and the cost of the recording session is usually, fixed so it is easy to budget.

(2) It should cost far less than Method 2 - certainly less than £150 per song, and perhaps as low as £40.

(3) The sound quality, and the quality of musicianship and production, should be top-class, and the presence of a third-party, the independent producer, should ensure some added touches to enhance your song.

Method 3 Disadvantages

(1) You have no control over the finished product since you are usually not there when it is being done, and it may turn out far different than you expected.

(2) Some facilities may not really be using professional musicians or singers, just part-timers, who might be nowhere near as good as those you could hire yourself.

(3) Not all companies offer refund guarantees.

Although it is an inexpensive way of making a demo, the ISA recommends you look seriously at Methods 1 and 2, before choosing this option.

Using Method 1

If you are using Method 1, do not rush into purchasing equipment without asking advice from everybody you can. Buy such magazines as *The Mix* or *Making Music*, and read the equipment reviews carefully.

If you know somebody who already has a similar set-up, ask them for advice, and if they are thinking of upgrading their equipment, see if they will sell you their old gear, and show you how to use it.

Buy nothing less than an 8-track recording facility, try out as many microphones on your equipment as you can before deciding on which mike suits both your voice and the general acoustics, and remember, if you have £2,000 to spend, it can get you £6,000 worth of equipment if you purchase carefully second-hand.

When it comes to recording, a good vocalist, a good guitarist, and a whizz-kid on the keyboards are all you really need. If they are also songwriters, then you are really in business!

Using Method 2

If you are using Method 2, remember that recording studios usually charge by the hour, or the day, and that when they are not recording, they are losing money - so bargain for unbooked time.

Studios can charge anything they like, so shop around. Rates vary from £1 per hour per track (i.e., a 24-track studio could charge you £24 per hour), upwards, so be prepared to haggle. Remember, the lower the number of tracks, the lower the cost.

Prices as high as £150 per day are widely available, but make sure you know what exactly a day is (it should be 10 hours), and which facility you are getting for that price (it should be 24-track).

Prices as low as £65 per day are also widely available, but again make sure that for this price, an engineer is included (there is no point in hiring the place if you have to work the desk yourself).

Some facilities can also offer rehearsal studios at about £5 per hour, and these are worth using instead of the main studios, if the musicians have not rehearsed with you prior to the recording.

Although you may be tempted to bring in your own musicians, only do so if you are confident that they know what they are doing. Do remember that musicians supplied by the studio will hit the ground running, and will not faint at the sight of recording desks, flashing lights etc., so even though they may look more expensive than your own mates, they will in the end, possibly cost you less in studio time.

Do not enter the studio without a written quote which lays down the charges for everything (and don't forget rates quoted often do not include VAT), and don't forget to ask the following questions:

(1) Will there be any free rehearsal time or setting-up time allowed? There should be at least one hour.

(2) Will the ten-hour day allow time for lunch? Otherwise, you may end up getting just 9 hours work done - unless everybody starves!

(3) How much will copies from the master tape cost, and who will own and keep the master tape at the end of the session?

(4) Is an engineer included in the rate quoted?

Using Method 3

If using Method 3, talk with somebody who has used the outside facility before placing an order and ask the company if you can purchase a sample tape of a recent production.

Place an order for just one song initially - even if a discount is offered for multiple orders.

Ask what time-scale is involved - usually, it is between two and ten weeks, and finally, make sure you receive a refund guarantee in writing.

Recommended Reading

- 1 *The Songwriter's Guide To Making Great Demos* (Harvey Rachlin)
- 2 *Making Music With Computers & Software* (Making Music Magazine)
- 3 *Making Multi-Track Music* (Making Music Magazine)
- 4 *The Band, The Mix, Making Music* Magazines

SHARK ATTACK

CATV Host Draws Fire For 'Helping' Talent

BY DAN GORDON

"Fantastic! All That Needs Is Distribution." The host of *Record Row Review* has found another killer song. "Great. That needs to be on a compilation CD." Another dynamite song has been found in this week's stack of tapes and CDs that the host of *Record Row Review*, Cliff Ayers, auditions on Channel 19, Nashville's cable access TV station. "I could listen to music like that all day long." Yet another top-notch song has been played on Ayers' show -10 seconds of it, anyway.

Cliff Ayers is on TV each week talking about his business - the promotion and distribution of the music of amateur singers and songwriters. Cliff Ayers will take a singer's song - if it is good enough - and record it on a CD with the songs of other hopefuls and, he says, get that CD to radio stations. Or, for songwriters. He can, he says, get a tape to country stars who are recording their albums in Nashville studios. "All that one needs is some promotion," Ayers says, as his show progresses. If the tape has a song that's not up to Ayers' standards, he offers to sell his services to help produce a better tape.

Bob Ponella is a singer/songwriter who says he paid Cliff Ayers a total of \$450 for including a recording of one of his songs on a CD Ayers said was mailed to radio stations across the country. "I got suspicious when I asked Ayers for a list of the stations he'd sent my song to and he said there were FCC regulations against giving out lists of stations. I knew then that I'd blown my money." Ponella said he never received a copy of the compilation CD with his

song included because Ayers told him all copies had been sent to radio stations.

"I got suspicious when I asked Ayers for a list of the stations he'd sent my song to and he said there were FCC regulations against giving out lists of stations."

BOB PONELLA
Singer/Songwriter

Ayers' activities have been reported by Ponella and other amateurs to the Nashville district attorney's office, but Ponella says he was informed soon after his complaint that no action would be taken against Ayers. No written contract existed between Ponella and Ayers, and Ponella was told that charging to send a tape to radio stations or country stars is not illegal. Ponella was advised that he could bring a civil suit against Ayers for fraud, if he was so inclined.

Jesse Goldberg is a Nashville lawyer and amateur songwriter who also has a cable access TV show, *Mind Your Own Music Business*. He says amateurs learn when they get to Nashville that sending their material to radio stations or country stars, whether they do it themselves or pay for the service, is not the way to advance their careers. In most cases, the ads you see seeking poems to be set to music are another scam, Goldberg cautions. Goldberg says those who offer such services are known in the music business as "song sharks."

Sharkus Musicus: A Species Profile

According to a number of publishers, artist management personnel and radio professionals contacted by IN

REVIEW, the song shark infests Nashville's waters, on the lookout for tender young talent, ready to help them follow their dreams. . .for a price. The shark favors tiny, dark offices on Music Row, where he waits for prey who may stumble into his office looking for someone, anyone, on Music Row to listen to his/her songs. The species usually favors longish hair, heavy jewelry and name dropping. Cliff Ayers often wears a chest medallion the size of a cow pie and his hair is longish - think Charlie Rich on a bad hair day. He asserts, "I was in the army with Tony Bennett."

The shark may do exactly what he says he will for an amateur, but what he does, experts agree, is of no help to a music career. It is the imagination of the songwriter, fueled by implications from the shark and crippled by a lack of knowledge about the music business, that leads the amateur to believe that the services provided by the shark are of value.

The shark will take the amateur singer's recording and create a compilation CD with the works of a dozen or so clients and send those CDs to radio stations. The implication is that the radio stations review such material and play some of it and make stars out of some of the amateurs. For amateur songwriters, tapes are recorded of their songs and the shark sends them to big-time stars. The shark charges for duplication, postage and his expertise in knowing how to reach radio and performers. Fees the shark charges start at a few hundred dollars, but can run to thousands, if the amateur has money and the shark can convince the amateur that professional photographs,

a professionally written biography and/or re-recording of the songs involved is necessary for success. The bottom line is that even if the shark does everything he promises, what he does is rarely, if ever, of any value.

I called Ayers and, posing as an amateur songwriter, asked if he could help me get my songs to the right people. "I've been doing this for 42 years," he said. "I have a company in Europe, too." I mentioned his fee. Ayers said, "Send your tape and we'll talk money. We send compilation CDs out to radio stations regularly". I told Ayers I had a perfect song for Johnny Cash. "If he's gonna be in the studio soon, I could get your song over there. Send me a tape."

Mitch Allen is a professional radio broad-caster with Mix-96 FM in Nashville. We've recycled these compilation tapes from time to time but have never played songs from one on the air. I hate to admit it but sometimes we play them in the break room, for laughs."

Victoria Shaw, a professional singer and songwriter, who wrote, with Garth Brooks his famous song "The River," says she can't accept songs for review from any writer she doesn't know personally.

"They might sue you if they think you later used an idea of theirs or something. I don't know any artist, manager or publisher who accepts material in the mail. The policy is that we do not accept unsolicited material and send it back unopened."

Cable Access TV

Let's talk cable access. How is Ayers able to use cable Access TV in Nashville and across the country to play tapes, talk of promotion and distribution, and give his phone number and address, to, in effect, air a 30-minute infomercial twice a week at taxpayers expense?

Is CATV under any obligation to check into the practices of those who appear

on their channel? Jim Gilchrist, who runs the cable access channel in Nashville, says that the channel is open to programming which "does not violate our rules against libel, slander, obscenity or fund raising."

Gilchrist says he has received four anonymous complaints about Ayers but can't act unless he has proof that Ayers is guilty of a crime. If Ayers were to be convicted of a crime, the board for cable access would consider dropping the program. Gilchrist says the board might even investigate Ayers, but has a very limited budget and can't afford to do any detective work. The channel's \$40,000 annual budget comes from a grant by Metro Council.

They also solicit donations from the public and underwriting from Nashville businesses. Ayers, according to the Better Business Bureau, operates 11 companies. but has never, Gilchrist confirms, donated money to Channel 19. Periodically, Ayers uses his cable access show to present the *Indi-Awards Show*.

This competition is, according to Ayers' promotional literature, open only to those who pay \$100 for membership in the Entertainer Indie Association, one of Ayers' many companies.

According to the Better Business Bureau in Nashville, one of Ayers' companies is a record label that he claims has recorded "more than 400 artists," although Ayers did not respond to the BBB's request for a list of those artists.

The Nashville BBB has had no complaints over the past three years about his operations as Ayers refuses to work with local residents.

Explaining his no-Nashville amateurs policy on his program, Ayers says, "We don't work with anybody in Nashville. They come here, they talk to this guy and that guy and pretty soon you can't tell them anything. They think they know it all

'Valueless' Services

Services such as those offered by Ayers have been deemed "Valueless" by many music professionals.

I called Ayers a second time, this time identifying myself as a journalist asking for the name of one singer or songwriter who could tell me how help from Ayers' businesses put a song on the *Billboard* country charts, just one person in the 42 years that Ayers has been doing business.

Ayers, in a response peppered with profanity, said, "We do not put people on the country charts."

He spoke about charging for good demo tapes and creating compilation CDs "that are sent to radio."

But, with 42 years of "helping" singers and songwriters, his efforts have never lead to a charted record, except for his own chart, which he publishes in his own magazine. Forget charts. I said, asking for the name of one satisfied client

Ayers began in a 20-minute performance, Ayers included these comments. "They tried to run me off Music Row. The music business is run by women.

I'm 74. I did what I had to do. I've been attacked by TV and newspapers, and I call and threaten to sue and they always run a retraction on the fifth or sixth page."

When asked for a copy of a retraction, or the year in which a paper ran one, or even the name of a paper running a retraction, Ayers responded, "Why are you such a fucking coward?"

JAWS 74

From his public access cable program, suspected "shark" Cliff Ayers promises would-be recording stars a chance to have their music played on the radio.

While Ayers has not been charged with any crime, many have questioned the legality of his "consulting" tactics.

Do You Have A PC?

Here are a few things worth doing as an ISA member!

(1) MAKE THE ISA YOUR HOME PAGE

Why?

That way you automatically get the latest songwriting news each time you turn on your computer, and as well, you have a Google Search box on the same page, so that you can automatically do a Google Search of the entire web (or if you prefer, just our site) each time you open your home page!

How do you make the ISA your home page?

If using Internet Explorer, click on **TOOLS**.

Then click on **INTERNET OPTIONS**.

At the top of the box which comes up, you will find "**Home Page**".

Simply type into that box
<http://www.songwriter.co.uk>

Then go down to the bottom of the box, and click "OK".

And from then on, **International Songwriters Association** will come up automatically when you turn on your computer, and you can check the latest songwriting news as it happens.



(2) INSTALL THE ALEXA TOOLBAR ON YOUR COMPUTER

Why?

That way, you can check the Rating of any site you visit, discover how long that site has really been on the internet, get the postal address, email address, and phone numbers of the owners of the site - very handy if you are dealing with somebody you do not know! How do you put the Alexa Toolbar on your site?

Go to

<http://www.alexa.com/site/download>

Click on the **INSTALL NOW** button.

Then each time you visit a site, the toolbar will show you the Traffic Rank of that site. (The lower the figure, the bigger the site).

Also if you click on the figure, you can find out all sorts of interesting things about the site, including how long it has been on the web, its postal address etc., and if you look at the other links on the toolbar, it will tell you what other sites people who visit this site, also visit. (This can be useful to help you build up a list of sites similar to the one you have just visited).

If you want to see how it works, then check out the ISA by going to

<http://www.songwriter.co.uk>

and click on the **TRAFFIC RANK** logo at the bottom of that page.

Then, you will see that International Songwriters Association was established in 1967, has been online since 1998, has a traffic rating of (whatever the figure is today!), plus our postal address, email address, telephone numbers etc.

As I say - very useful when you do not know with whom you are dealing or how long they have **really** been around!

Expert Talk

Since 1967, we have interviewed or profiled more than 600 industry personalities. For writers who wonder exactly how these people think, we thought we would take some of their more provocative thoughts, and put them together for new members

I pay great attention to the package when it arrives. Sounds trite, but I do think that if a songwriter has put together a professional looking package, he is serious about what he is doing, and in those cases, is probably capable of writing something commercial - even if it is not the song he has sent this time! I like a typed lyric, a typed letter, and a clean-looking CD. If the package looks messy - I find that 99 times out of 100, the product itself is messy. I do not do this - but I know that I could return 99% of all submissions without listening to them, and never miss a hit song, simply by judging the appearance of the package!"

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 were undependable.

We look for clever writers. I don't mean they know how to use big words - I mean a writer who has a tune in his head - something that's absolutely brilliant - and can grab someone, no matter what form it is in. We're looking for anything that can make money.

The best way to get noticed is a brief but intelligent letter, a well-recorded demo featuring no more than two really strong songs properly demoed. A great exercise for a writer is to pick an artist - shall we say Madonna - and then try and write a song that would suit her - not write the song first and then try to work out who it suits.

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 sometimes wonder about songwriters! I feel that some think that the music publishing business is a charity, and that if the song is not good enough, the publisher should take it anyway. I have a good job - I intend to keep it, so I am not going to risk my career signing dud songs. I am not a songwriter, but a lot of the time, I get songs sent to me which I could have easily penned myself. I want to hear something that I could not have written - something that makes me sit up and take notice, something that makes the hairs on the back of my neck - something so original that I know I have to have it. A lot of the time, the song is 90% right. Get it 100% right first - then send it!

I think I wrote my first song when I was about 14. It was terrible, but I thought it was brilliant! I played it for everybody - they all told me it was brilliant. I did nothing with it, and after writing a few more, I sort of gave up. I started again when I was 20 - and the first few songs were neither here nor there and I was about to give up again. Then I remember being in a library one day, and coming across a book titled "Old Love In A New Town", and deciding that 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 again.

Nobody asked you to become a songwriter. You seem to have thought you had enough talent to make it which is fine. But you also seem to have thought that publishers like us would jump with excitement at the news you had decided to join the music business, would hold your hand when things got rough, and wipe your nose for you when somebody didn't like your work. Unfortunately, I have not time to do that - I've a business to run as well, and several people support families and pay mortgages on my expertise. Keep one thing in mind when you send me a song. We will not go broke if I do **not** sign your song - but if your song is not up to standard, we could easily go broke if I sign too many songs like it. On the other hand, no matter what happens to us, you won't ever go broke writing songs. In other words, I'm taking all the risk and you're taking none. I'm too cautious? So would you be in those circumstances.

A lot of what we get is almost right - but not quite right. Sometimes it is difficult to know how to respond, so most publishers say nothing in these cases. I mean, if you tell the writer it is not quite right, he will be on the phone right away demanding that you tell him what is wrong with it so that he can fix it. Frankly if I knew that - I could write hits myself. Other writers are naive. One guy told me - "I know it's not really right, but can't you turn it into a hit?". Imagine if your mechanic told you - "Sorry, the car is not running perfectly, here's the spanner, any chance you could finish the job yourself?". Another odd thing about songwriting is that many new writers are quite "other-worldly" if I can use that phrase. I mean, if I had this great idea on how to turn sludge into silver, I would prepare a proposal, wear my best suit, be polite as possible, and hope that my expertise would impress the money men. Songwriters seem to live in different worlds from the rest of the business world. They produce sloppy demos of half-finished songs, adopt a take-it-or-leave-it attitude to the publisher, and can get quite aggressive if there is any suggestion that the song might need a bit of re-writing. I realise that writers are artists and that publishers are businessmen, but both sides have to meet each other somewhere in the middle of nothing will ever get done.

Every morning, I get upwards of ten tapes in the post - the wannabees. You can recognise most of them without opening them at all - unlabelled, untyped, dirty ugly presentations for the most part. An awful lot of what I get in the post so bad that I wonder sometimes if songwriting is the last refuge of the incompetent. Some of the tapes are horrific - your toes would curl up listening to the thin weedy voices, singing thin weedy tunes, and what's more, singing them off-key and with no backing whatsoever. Occasionally when I need a laugh, I play one or two of them, and realise that no matter how desperate things may be for me, there's another sod out there even more desperate than myself - even if he does not realise just how desperate he is! And as for the lyrics, did these people sleep during every one of their English literature classes? But then, you open something and all of a sudden, all the dross is forgotten as you realise that out there is somebody that nobody else knows about - except yourself, and that you're getting a shot at him before the competition even knows he's there. That makes all the rubbish bearable and that is why you have to listen to all the rubbish - simply because in there somewhere is your next pay cheque.

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So Where Do I Sell My Songs Anyway?

For many new songwriters, getting a deal is simply a matter of putting your song on the web, and waiting to be discovered.

For most, the old method of making the demo, and posting it out to publishers, labels and stars, is "old hat".

Promotion methods may have changed, but do not totally ignore the tried and tested even if you are going the web route.

In the good old days, it was all much simpler (or so most newcomers believe). There was a strict chain of command, and if you wanted to be a songwriter, you followed it religiously. Or else, you became a plumber, and made far more money.

First, you penned a brilliant song. (I know that "goes without saying", but I just thought I'd mention it - it's still important, even nowadays).

Then you either wrote it out in manuscript form, or if you were at the cutting edge of technology (in other words, your Dad possessed a tape recorder), you might make a simple piano-voice recording. It didn't really matter how poor - songwriters were never going to be singers. Singers were not going to be songwriters. Law Of England apparently.

Finally (as now), came the difficult part - getting the song to the recording star. But even here, the route was all laid out for you.

If you were silly enough to send it directly to the star, you might get a signed photo back, and if you were cheeky enough to send it to a record label, you would usually get a stuffy letter, advising you to go through a "recognised music publisher".

And so you went to a publisher - whose name you could probably obtain from a quick perusal of whatever sheet music your music shop stocked.

A well-dressed man (all publishers wore wide-lapelled suits with fresh carnations in their button holes) loved your song (again that goes without saying), and promptly sent you a contract, full of strange "herewiths" and "hereunders", basically offering to take half of everything you earned for the rest of your life, in return for you giving him your first song, your first-born, your house etc.

And you signed without giving it a further thought. (I mean, why read it - you wouldn't understand it anyway, and in the movies, people always signed contracts without reading them).

Next, your new best friend made a professional recording of your song free, gratis and for nothing. This was called a "demo" (another mysterious phrase of uncertain origin) and when all was ready, called in his trusted song plugger.

This gentleman, replete with check jackets, cheap scent and a never-ending supply of cigars, quickly went to work, visiting the A&R (another one of those strange terms) Departments at the major record labels, scattering songs, cigars (and occasionally other substances) as he moved.

Eventually, one of these A&R executives, responsible for choosing the songs which the recording act assigned to them would cut, picked your song, and assigned it to a famous singer - who had absolutely no say in the matter.

Finally, the lucky singer went into a studio (usually owned by the label), and in the space of three hours, cut three songs, one of which (yours naturally), would be the A side of his next single.

Before you knew it, your song was being played nightly on Radio Luxembourg, and as long as you could persuade your friends that the tiny (and usually mis-spelled) name in brackets on the label was really you - fame was there for the asking.

Eventually, (in other words, about a year later), when the shops had paid the record label, and the label had paid the publisher (each step seemed to take six months - that must also have been the law in those days), the publisher would finally pay you.

And it was oh so orderly. And yes, to misquote Maurice Chevalier, I remember it well.

But that was then, and this is now, so let's begin again with the brilliant song (well commercial song anyway), and take it from there.

Nowadays, you make your own demo - even publishers no longer make demos for their songwriters, but in so doing, you now have to decide what role you are seeking in the music biz.

You see, in the old days, songwriters were never expected (or encouraged) to become performers, whereas nowadays, you can go straight to a label (they no longer think you're being cheeky), selling

not just your song, but also yourself. There would have been no point in doing that in the good old days - nowadays, it is often the quickest route for a writer to make it as a writer.

But if you do not want to become a performer, you should at least know who the likely candidate for your song is. Within reason. (Do keep in mind that Madonna has probably more songs offered to her in a day than I have had hot dinners in a year).

And when all that is done, you have to work out how to get the song to your chosen recipient - except that nowadays, the old faithful - songwriter to publisher to record label to star - method, is not all that relevant any longer.

You can of course, always try and find out the star's home address (one member spends a lot of time trying to "run into" them at restaurants - a sort of songwriting paparazzi if you wish). Others attend live performances, and frequently get to hand the item over at the venue, but most writers now approach the singer through management.

Even though management does not always have much to do with picking the songs for recording, at least, they know who does and can re-direct accordingly, and if you go that route, hopefully you will get to keep some percentage (if not all) of the publishing.

Other writers swear by the record label approach. Again, labels may not be the people who choose the songs (or even make the recording), but again, at least they will know who does, and again, you will get to keep some of the publishing.

And some writers try and get to the producer. This is not always as reliable as it seems. The last producer may not be the next one, and by the time the producer's name is announced, the material has probably been chosen anyway.

And finally, some writers still go down the route of contacting the publishers of that singer's most recent hits. Even though sheet music is not as common as it used to be, that information is easy to find (we publish it for example).

Of course, here you will have to give up at least some (if not all) the publishing but on the other hand, it may still be the most direct route to take, and you have somebody in situ, who knows the business, and has the contacts. You will also (if lucky), get an advance - you might even get some free studio time, and collaboration opportunities may very well open up for you.

Those are the routes, but to be honest, most songwriters still dream about the Holy Grail Of Songwriting - "The Tip" - whereby the songwriter is told which singer is looking for which type of song - and is given all the information required to submit it.

And all of that still comes in that most wonderful of inventions - "The Tipsheet". Or does it?

Which brings me neatly to my next point- "so what's gone wrong with tipsheets?"

A few weeks ago, "The Leads Sheet" announced it would cease publication in December, having been issued every month since 1991. Some months before that, "Song Domain", edited by music biz veteran Jack Kavanagh, folded following the death of its editor, after many years in existence. And shortly after, "SongCasting" one of the few tip sheets to be published purely in print format, ceased after 25 years.

And the list goes on - publications that exist purely to print information about companies seeking new songs from songwriters, seem to be heading for near extinction. But why should that be?

In theory, songwriter tipsheets (like compilation CDs), are a great idea. Musician tipsheets like *BandIt* work brilliantly, and the belief that somebody out there is so desperate for a new song that they are willing to advertise for it in a songwriter tipsheet is an intoxicating prospect - well intoxicating enough to keep thousands of writers shelling out cash for such sheets.

Thousands. Aye - there's the rub - to misquote Shakespeare.

Let us forget reality for one happy moment and dream that you are a 39 year old male songwriter from Neasden, who has just written a song titled "On My Granny's Grave".

No sooner is the ink dry, than you read in your tipsheet (of which you are of course, the sole subscriber): "Wanted, song about a dead grandmother, written by a 39 year old male, preferably from Neasden".

Then you wake from that lovely dream.

And although you may indeed have written a song called "On My Granny's Grave" and are the proverbial "39 year old songwriter from Neasden" - in daylight, that tip actually reads: "Wanted, hit songs on great demos".

And far from being the sole subscriber, that tipsheet has 5,000 others. And you just know that 90% of those will bung in their latest opus, and yours is going to get lost in the shuffle.

Which is why very few (if any) pro songwriters, bother with tipsheets, preferring to submit their demos to contacts they have built up through previous submissions - which is why few tipsheets can mention hit songs, which resulted directly from a tip published by them.

But let's get one thing clear. Most small to medium-sized publishers *are* actively seeking new songs on an ongoing basis and on average, most will already be getting from two to ten CDs a day - without any advertising at all.

This volume, they can cope with, even with an average staff of just four (which believe it or not, is the average staffing level worldwide).

Very few of those firms however, will ever advertise for songs.

But because they still need hits, and because experience has taught them to expect few hits from chance mailings, somebody is bound to suggest placing a listing for material in a tipsheet, and as one publisher said "if he is not slapped down, that is when things go pear-shaped". To which we can add - "particularly if he is allowed to choose the wording himself".

Be honest. When you see an insertion looking for a "hit" song, just how many hopefuls do you think are going to read that and say - "Well, I myself do not have any hit songs in my repertoire, so I better just ignore this notice"?

That's right - none. Instead, 99% of readers will be convinced "They're talking about me", and soon, 4950 songwriters will be wending their way to the post office with their little packages in hand - convinced that they are the only writers to be so doing.

But they're not of course, and a few days later, XYZ Music, which could easily cope with its normal five CDs a day, will collapse under a mass of packages, never to surface again. (Or else, XYZ will manfully attempt to listen to all 4950, before quietly dumping the bulk down an alleyway at dead of night, along with the corpse of the employee who suggested the scheme).

Either way, in XYZ, we now have a company which will not be placing another advert, for a long time to come - if ever. The problem is - songwriter notices can be so generalised as to be useless.

Yet, music publishers do know what they want. They want "hits" - but beyond that they are often not very specific - their usual response being that "I will know it when I hear it".

So many advertise generalities, and end up with truck-loads of banalities. And soon they too are disenchanted with the whole process, and glad to go back to the tried and trusted methods of getting new songs in the door.

So, given that, what are you to do? Ignore tipsheets?

Well, no. Even vague tips can be useful, if only to let you know who is so desperate that they have to advertise. And of course, often, the canner companies will have been specific about what they want and how they want it, and it may be that (by coincidence more than anything else), you will actually have something which matches their exact requirements.

But tipsheets apart - every songwriter must have a structured plan geared to submit so many CDs to so many companies on a weekly basis, because rest assured - there are plenty of active publishers out there who keep a low profile, who never advertise, and who do not get huge numbers of CDs each day - but who are as hungry for hits as anybody else.

What's more, they are far the people more likely to actually listen to what you have sent in than either those giant conglomerates who get hundreds of CDs weekly, or the smaller firms who having advertised for songs, are now as sick as parrots that they ever agreed to place that stupid insertion in the first place.

So - even though there have been a spate of collapses in the tip sheet industry - how are the survivors faring?

Well, there are a number of publications and websites out there,

which still offer tip or placement services, and these are the better-known ones.

Prices are taken from the websites, but should be confirmed before ordering. Also conversions (from dollar to sterling or vice-versa) are approximate so do not depend on them being the same when these words were penned.

- **SongLink International** (UK) Established 1993, SongLink lists new and established artists looking for material. Also, lists writers looking for collaborators and features industry news and links to industry events, and more. One year costs £240.00 (US \$383.00). <http://www.songlink.com/>

- **The Bandit A&R Newsletter** (UK) Bandit publishes details of music companies world-wide which are in the market for new acts, songwriters and masters. One year costs £67.00 (US \$105.00). <http://www.banditnewsletter.com/>

- **New On The Charts** (US) Established 1976, New On The Charts provides information on who's on the charts now in all genres, with cross-referenced contact info on the artists, producers, managers, record labels and booking agents etc. of each hit. Offers a Publishers Tipsheet listing artists who need songs and a Soundtrack Newsletter for listings of film/TV music leads. To subscribe, songwriters must verify at least one US nationally released recording of their song. Annual subscription \$365 plus \$45 for International Mailing (UK £257.00). <http://www.notc.com>

- **Row Fax** (US) Country tip sheet published 48 times a year by Music Row Magazine and sent every Friday. For professional songwriters only. Entries include artist, record label, producer, recording date and song description details. Address and contact information is not given (their argument apparently being that if you're a professional, you'll already know that). One year \$185.00 (UK £115.00). <http://www.musicrow.com>

- **Pitchsheet.com** (US) Though done online this service is more like traditional pitching in that it's active. Streaming audio files are sent to an industry user's password protected A&R Private Listening Room where one can hear songs or artists in response to listings that are e-mailed beforehand to subscribers. Annual fee \$150.00 (UK £94.00). <http://www.pitchsheet.com>

- **Parade Of Stars** (US) Mainly country music listings, established 1972. Parade Of Stars membership includes bi-weekly producer/artist listings and bi-weekly labelled artists listings. Cost \$129.00 (UK £81.00) per year. <http://www.songwritersparade.com>

- **TAXI** (US) Independent Artist & Repertoire company, established 1992. TAXI specialises in giving artists, bands, and songwriters access to people in the music business who have the power to sign deals. Annual fee \$299.95 (UK £187.00). <http://www.taxi.com>

- **SongQuarters** (US) A&R tip sheet for music publishers, songwriters and record producers who seek to place music with recording artists, film, TV. Annual fee \$395.00 (UK £242.00). <http://www.songquarters.com>

As you can see, the above are divided into more or less two types of operation (with some over-lapping) - straightforward publications or sites listing acts or publishers looking for songs, such as SongLink, Bandit, Row Fax, Parade Of The Stars, and Hit Quarters, and on the other hand, song submission services, such as Taxi and PitchSheet.

So do they work?

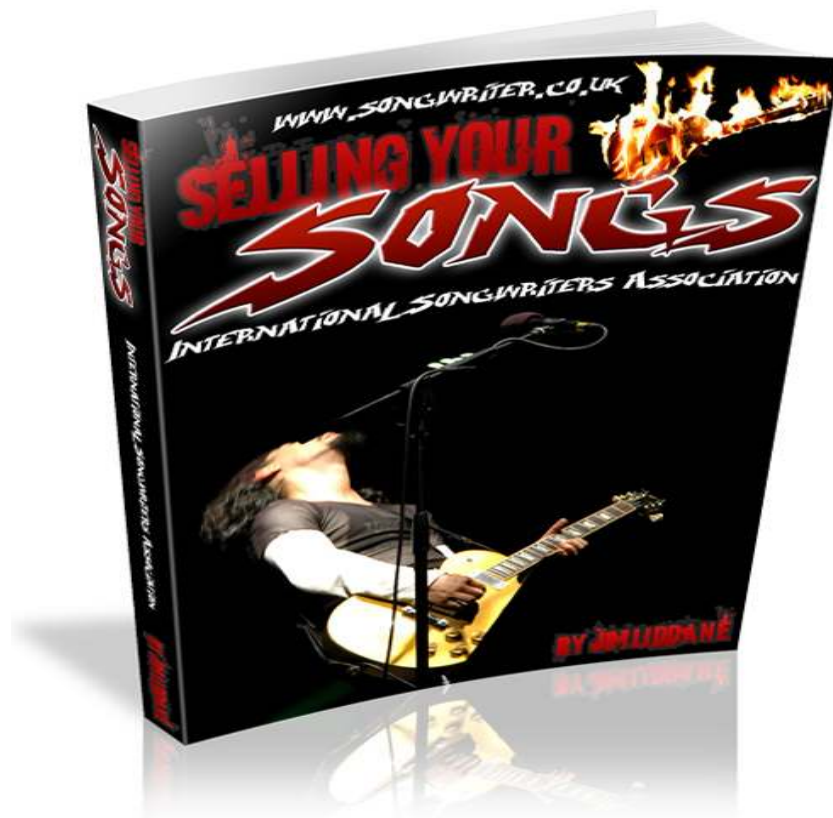
Well in theory, they should, and indeed, Bandit (for example) is highly-regarded as being a must for the up-and-coming band, and for the performing singer-songwriter.

But having interviewed quite literally, hundreds of professional songwriters over the years, we can remember very few (if any) established writer, who used tipsheets on a regular basis (or indeed at all). However, we did note quite a number of publishers who were subscribers to one or two of the sheets.

Most writers depended on building up their contacts, and interestingly, one writer said to me - "If I need to know who is looking for songs, I ask my publisher. That's what he's supposed to know all about anyway".

Not a bad piece of advice!

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