

The Songwriter's Guide to Recording Professional Demos



by
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Introduction

Welcome to “The Songwriter’s Guide to Recording Professional Demos.”

This book is based on a relatively recent realization on my part...

In short, it occurred to me that after 20 years as a songwriter, producer, engineer and studio owner and after working with hundreds of clients on literally thousands of demos, I actually had an opinion on how to make the demo process easier and more effective for my songwriting clients. I believe there are certain practices and behaviors that if observed can make the demo process less stressful and more productive regardless of whether you’re a first-time songwriter or a Grammy-winner.

The first time I brought one of my songs to a professional studio to be demoed, I was a nervous wreck. I had just moved to Nashville from Northern California and wasn’t familiar with the songwriting demo process. I only knew how hard I had worked on my own artist project and how many takes (ugh, soooo many takes) I needed to get an even remotely decent sounding performance. I was worried about whether the session players/demo singer would like the song, whether I’d done enough work on my own to give the proper direction to everyone involved and I was *definitely* worried about studio time and money. When it was done and I saw how quickly and beautifully true pros handled the interpretation and recording of my song, I realized that not only was my money well spent but also that this is what I wanted to do for a living. By the way, a good recording is an investment. Even now, almost fifteen years after it was recorded, the demo still stands up.

Click the song title below to hear how it turned out.

[*Don’t Look Down*](#)

The seven chapters that follow will take you through everything you need to know about the process of having your demo professionally recorded. Starting from finding a studio and pre-production, I’ll progress to the actual recording, working with session musicians and singers, mixing

and, ultimately, how to get your songs heard once you've got your finished product. By knowing what to expect as you move through the demo process, you'll be better equipped to handle each individual step as it comes. The more you know in advance, the more relaxed you'll be and the more enjoyable the entire experience will become.

Although I'd never, ever discourage anyone from getting their own recording equipment and learning how to record their own songs (after all that's *exactly* what I did), this book deals specifically with using professional studios, session musicians and singers to get a high-quality, pitch/licensing-ready demo. My assumption is that if you're serious enough about your songwriting to be reading my book, you're serious enough to understand that in order to make money from your songs, you have to treat the recording process like the business decision it is.

As I'll discuss later, you are the expert at writing your songs and no one else can do that for you. However, if you're not willing to devote the time (and money) necessary to become an expert recording engineer/session musician, you need to invest in the people who are already experts at this part of the process.

This book is a guide to help demystify the process of working with the appropriate experts who can make the recording of your song competitive at the highest levels of the music business. Feel free to read it "cover to cover" or to simply use individual chapters as a reference as the situation warrants.

Enjoy and best of luck with your music!

-Cliff

www.cliffgoldmacher.com

p.s. I still work every day as an engineer, producer, session musician and consultant. Don't hesitate to drop me a line if you've got questions/comments about this book or you're ready to take your demos to the next level.

[Email Cliff](#)

Why Use a Professional Recording Studio

Who's the Expert?

You're a songwriter. It's what you do. It's what you've trained yourself to do through countless hours of study, practice and effort. Your songs are yours and no one can write them for you. In other words, you've become an expert at writing your songs. That's exactly how it should be.

However, if you're going to treat your songwriting as a business, then it's in your best interest to employ experts at every level. Writing a great song is the first and most important part of the process but a high quality, well-performed demo of your song comes a very close second. Unless you've devoted as much time to learning the art and craft of recording as you have to your songwriting, you will be doing your songs and your career a disservice by attempting to record your demo yourself.

We've all heard the argument that a great song is a great song and anyone with ears should be able to "hear through" any recording no matter how rough. To my way of thinking, this is the music industry equivalent of being set up on a blind date with a person who may very well have a heart of gold but who doesn't bother to shower. You've only got one chance to make a first impression with your song and given the competition out there, it had better be a great first impression. You might even meet a music industry person who can genuinely hear through a rough recording, but if you're planning on showing your song to a variety of artists, managers, producers and A&R reps as well, it's never safe to assume that anything less than a first-rate recording will do. By "first rate" I don't mean full-band or elaborately produced, I simply mean your song should be recorded and performed by professionals even if (especially if) it's a simple guitar and vocal.

To hear what a first rate guitar/vocal demo sounds like, click below.

[I Never Let You Go](#)

How to Find a Good Recording Studio

One of the most daunting aspects of the recording process for most songwriters is simply finding the studio that is right for them. Word of mouth in the songwriting community and the recommendations of your performing rights organizations (BMI, ASCAP & SESAC) are great places to start. My suggestion is that you treat this part of the process just like you would any business decision. Gather as much information as you can and base your decision on where you think you'll get the best service and, of course, the best results.

The Studio

With the advent of improved recording technology and affordable, high-quality equipment, professional recordings can be made almost anywhere. Recording is no longer the exclusive domain of the big, multi-room complex. However, there are a few things you should consider before choosing a studio for your project. First and foremost is sound quality. Ask the studio owner/engineer for a demo of something that's been recorded in their studio. You can be more specific still. Ask that the music on the demo be in the style of the music you're planning to record. For example, if you're making a country demo, it doesn't matter if the studio has a great sounding R&B demo because that won't necessarily translate into the country equivalent. Every genre of music requires a specific skill set that the players, singers and producers have to have in order for the recording to sound authentic. This is not to say, for example, that a studio that does country demos can't do jazz demos, (players, singers and producers can have more than one skill set) but you'll want to be sure to hear a studio's work in your particular song's genre to confirm.

To hear what I mean, click the song title below to listen to country star, Reba McEntire's, piano player and Van Halen front man, David Lee Roth's, bass player playing a jazz ballad.

[*My Mother Would Like You*](#)

Secondly, make sure you're comfortable in the space where you'll be working. Although working in a big, beautiful studio can be inspiring; it can also be intimidating. You're going to be spending a lot of time in this place, make sure you feel at ease there so that you can relax, work effectively and enjoy the process.

The Engineer/Producer

It's not only the studio that you'll be spending time in but also the engineer/producer (often the same person) whom you'll be spending time with that matters. You'll want to make sure you're comfortable working with this person as you'll be entrusting them with your music. A few things to look for in an engineer/producer include organization, patience and focus. The more experienced and professional they are, the more you should feel like they have your best interests at heart and that they want nothing more than to give you the best product you can possibly have. There should be no ego whatsoever involved no matter how accomplished/experienced this person may be. A simple reminder for those of you who are new to the game...it's not the engineer/producer's role to judge whether the song is good or bad. The assumption is, and should always be, that you're there recording your song because you know it's good and ready to be recorded. It's their job to take your song and make a great demo so that it's ready to be heard. All this to say, don't be disappointed if you don't get comments about whether your song is good or not, it's actually not the engineer/producer's place to comment.

I remember very clearly what it was like when I first started writing songs. Every song was my child and any positive comment wasn't quite positive enough and every negative comment was crushing. The only way I overcame these feelings was to keep writing songs. It's a numbers game. The more songs you write, the better your perspective becomes on your own work and the less worried you are about what other people think. Unfortunately, there's no way around this and it takes time to build up a catalog of songs and find your "voice" as a writer. Be patient with yourself and it will get easier. Promise.

The Money

Beware of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. Remember that you're running a business. Investing in your business is an essential part of helping the business grow and ultimately bring you a return on your investment. This does not mean, however, that you shouldn't have a crystal clear understanding of what the associated costs of your demo will be. Always discuss pricing with the studio before you begin working there and remember to ask for an itemization of all fees. The obvious fee would be the hourly rate but it's important to ask what other charges you might be

incurring. This can be anything from a separate engineer charge, costs for burning CDs, or even separate charges for certain pieces of studio equipment. A studio using an hourly rate system ought to be able to give you a fairly accurate estimate for what your overall project will cost. Some studios simplify the process even further by giving you an all-in project fee that is decided up front. It's always better to get all the financial details settled at the beginning of a project so that there are no unpleasant surprises when it comes time to pay.

When I was first starting out in the business, I decided to use a very well known (and genuinely reputable) Northern California studio. At the end of each day of work, I asked for a copy of the day's mixes on DAT (digital audio tape, for you youngsters out there). They happily provided this to me every day for two weeks never once mentioning that they were adding \$50 to my bill every time they wheeled the digital audio tape recorder into the room. Could they have mentioned this to me, sure, but ultimately it was my responsibility to ask what all charges would be up front.

Cheap Can Be Expensive

There are only so many hours in the day. If you're in the early stages of your career as a songwriter, you should be spending those hours working on your songwriting and devising every means possible (networking anyone?) to get your songs heard. However, if you're truly fascinated by the recording process itself and are willing to invest the time and money necessary, then by all means you should learn to engineer and produce as well. There's never been a better time to get involved in recording given the innovations and improvements in recording technology. However, if you think you'll save money by doing your own recordings without investing an equal amount of time in learning how to become an engineer, the end results will hurt your cause more than any amount of money you might save by recording yourself. As I've heard it said, cheap can be expensive.

Let me be clear. I'm not recommending that you go out and spend your hard-earned cash on a professional recording every time you write a song. If you're planning on having a career in music, you'll have to be judicious in how/when you invest your demo budget. But, when you've got a song or songs that are ready for prime time, you should treat them that way.

What to Do *Before* You Go into the Studio

Before the Light Turns Red

Now that you've decided to get your songs recorded in a professional studio, you should do what you can ahead of time to make the recording process as smooth and cost-efficient as possible. Remember, the more prepared you are in advance, the more you can relax and enjoy what should be a truly amazing and enjoyable process.

Song Preparation

It may sound obvious but make sure your song is FINISHED. I can't tell you the number of times I've had clients come into the studio only to start rewriting a part of the lyric or melody. It is significantly less stressful (and quite a bit less expensive) to write a song when you're not paying the studio an hourly fee.

You can also benefit from trying a few rough recordings at home before you get to the studio. The simple act of listening to a rough recording of a song instead of performing it will reveal any weaknesses or issues that need to be dealt with before the studio clock is running. The last of these rough home recordings will become the definitive rough recording.

The Rough Recording

This is any simple, inexpensive recording that you do on a [hand-held recorder](#) or even directly into the little mic built into your laptop. Generally a piano or guitar plus a scratch vocal will do the trick. The key here is not a perfect recording but rather an accurate representation of the melody, lyric and song structure. This means you're not going to come into the session and have to explain, for example, that the chorus is now twice as long or the second verse has been changed to be half as long. Each section of the song should be exactly the same in the rough recording as it will be in the finished demo. Remember, the recording doesn't have to sound great as long as the chords, melody and lyrics are correct. The purpose of this recording is simply to provide the demo vocalist

and session musicians with a recorded version of your song that they can learn from/refer to. Bringing your guitar into the studio on the day of the session and playing the song live for the players is a bit risky. It's a high pressure world in the studio when you're new to it and you might waste time forgetting how a certain part goes or playing something differently from how you'd originally intended it. The rough recording simply takes all of those variables out of the equation.

What If You Don't Play An Instrument?

I know some truly exceptional songwriters who aren't musicians themselves. Unfortunately, it's not enough to create a rough recording of you singing the lyric/melody without a backing instrument. The reason is that there are always several different chord choices that work for the same melody. Not to worry; either you can find a friend/collaborator who can play the instrument and help you identify the chords you're hearing in your head or you can spend a little extra time/money with the producer or a session musician you'll be working with in the studio and do a very simple rough recording with them playing the chords behind your melody/lyric.

The Singers and the Players

Let's start with the demo vocalist. It's always a good policy to get a copy of the rough recording and the lyrics to the singer a week or so before the session. There are several reasons for this. First of all, the singer can let you know what key the song should be in to best suit his or her vocal range. This way, if you end up recording instrument parts before the singer comes in, the players will have the correct key. Secondly, the more time the singer has in advance of the session to learn the song, the less time he or she will take to sing the song when the studio clock is ticking. There's a lot more to working with session musicians and singers and I'll cover all of this in much greater depth in chapters four and five of this book.

What To Bring

When you get to the session, it's wise to have multiple copies of the printed lyric sheet for the engineer, musicians and vocalist. The lyrics should be typewritten, single-spaced and have each chorus written out in full. The reason for this is that you'll be using these lyric sheets to mark spots that need fixing (or spots on certain takes that you like) and having "repeat chorus" written for the second and third choruses won't allow you to take good notes. The better the notes you take on the

lyric sheet while the vocalist is recording, the easier it will be to tell the vocalist what's working and what needs to be fixed.

The session musicians will not need a rough recording or sheet music in advance. They will be learning the song just by listening to your rough recording when they get to the session. You can save a little time by writing a chord chart of the song if it's something you're comfortable doing. If not, the session musicians should have no trouble doing it for you in the studio using the rough recording you bring to the session.

Click the song title below to hear an example of a simple, rough recording.

[*Nothing Left to Love Here Anymore-Rough Recording*](#)

Now click below to hear what this same song becomes in the hands of a professional session musician and experienced demo singer.

[*Nothing Left To Love Here Anymore-Finished Demo*](#)

Conclusion

Once you've done everything you can to prepare, then it's up to the singers and musicians to bring your song to the next level. There's nothing more inspiring than listening to world-class musicians and vocalists record a song you've written. The more you prepare in advance, the more you'll be able to enjoy the experience.

What A Producer Does

What Is A Producer?

The best way I know to describe a producer's role is this analogy: a producer is to a recording as a director is to a film. When it comes to making a film, the buck essentially stops with the director. It's the director who steers the ship working with everyone from the technical editors to the actors in order to achieve his or her overall vision of the movie. It is exactly that way with a producer when it comes to making a recording. Not only must the producer have the necessary technical experience to work with the studio engineer but the musical understanding to help the songwriter client communicate their ideas to the session musicians and singers. In short, a producer provides the experience and necessary perspective to guide a recording from start to finish.

Producer Backgrounds

Producers come from a variety of backgrounds. I'm listing the four most common and what each brings to the process, but, typically, producers have experience in more than one of these areas.

- 1) **The Songwriter** – Since at its essence, a recording is dependent on the quality of the song, the songwriter/producer can be involved in the song selection process. Not only does this type of producer have experience as a songwriter but they can also be consulted to help with questions of song structure, lyric and melody. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, you should already have a decent idea of whether your song is good enough to be demoed. This type of producer is used more in the album or artist project recording than in the demo process. However, if you're early in your career as a songwriter, you might benefit from bringing in this kind of producer to help you critique your songs and decide which ones are ready to be demoed.

- 2) **The Musician** – Here, it's often an instrumental and music theory background that gives this type of producer their experience. They have first hand knowledge when it comes to working with musicians and knowing what instrumental approach will work best in a given situation.
- 3) **The Engineer** – This producer's primary experience comes from actual recording (i.e., placing microphones on drum kits, recording vocals and mixing albums). By becoming an expert in the nuts and bolts of the recording process, an engineer/producer can make the recording process a smooth one for the client.
- 4) **The Music Fan** – This is someone who lives and breathes music and has the instincts to guide artists and session musicians through the recording process without necessarily having had the "hands on" experience of being a songwriter, musician or engineer themselves. They often bring great perspective to a situation where being too close to any one part of the process might bring an unwanted bias to the overall recording.

When bringing in a producer to help you with your songwriting demo, the main thing to look for is not which of the above backgrounds they come from but whether they have experience working with songwriters and songwriting demos. You're hiring this producer for their experience and familiarity with the songwriting demo process so that they can help you achieve exactly the demo you need for your song.

My background is a mixture of songwriter, musician and engineer. I was equally fascinated by the piano and guitar, songwriting and working my little Tascam Four-Track Porta Studio. I used myself as a guinea pig and did hundreds of my own recordings over almost twelve years before I finally got what I'd consider my big musical break. In 1998, [Tom Kimmel](#), a songwriter and former Polygram recording artist asked me to engineer and co-produce a studio album for him. He did this after hearing some of the recordings I'd done for myself and a few friends. Through Tom, I met and worked with some of the true legends of the session musician and artist world including Jim Horn (sax player on recordings for Frank Sinatra, U2 and the Rolling Stones), [Matt Rollings](#) (pianist on recordings for Mark Knopfler and part of Lyle Lovett's Large Band) and twelve-time Grammy winning musical legend, [Emmylou Harris](#), who was one of the most gracious and professional artists I've ever had the pleasure of working with.

Click the song title below to hear a track from Tom's album, Short Stories.

[Can't Get You Out of My System](#)

What Do Producers Do?

When it comes to songwriter demos, producers are there primarily to keep the process running smoothly. It's the producer's experience, relationships with session musicians and singers and ability to guide the songwriter through the recording process that counts.

- 1) **Pre-production** – This includes consulting with the songwriter to explain the overall process and help them, if requested, to select the songs for the upcoming session. It also involves deciding which session musicians/instruments would be best suited to achieve the right musical feel for a particular song. As opposed to an artist project, the key to producing a songwriting demo is to remember what type of recording will put the song in the best light to get cut by artists in the appropriate musical genre.
- 2) **Instrumental Recording/Arrangement** – Here, the producer works with the assembled musicians and helps direct their performances in the studio in order to achieve a cohesive sound for the recording. Also, a large part of this role includes translating the songwriter/client's requests and concerns into a language that the session musicians and singers can understand and respond to effectively.
- 3) **Vocals** - Finally, because the typical music listener responds first to the voice of the singer, one of the most important roles of the demo producer is working with the session vocalist to help them give their best, most sincere performance of the client's material. It is extremely difficult for even the most experienced vocalists to have any perspective on their performance while it's happening. As a result, the producer, in consultation with the client, becomes the final decision-maker on when a vocalist has done their best work for the given song.

One of my favorite parts of producing songwriter demos is enjoying my client's excitement vicariously when they hear the rough versions of their songs turned into beautifully polished

recordings. The “before” clip below is a perfect example of a client’s simple guitar/vocal recording. This performance provides everything necessary for the demo singer to learn the melody and the musicians to chart the song and play their parts. For the record, it’s not necessary to write out parts for any of the players. As we’ll discuss in greater depth in chapter four, these guys and gals know exactly what to play to fit the genre of the demo.

Click the song title below to hear the “before” version of the demo.

[Does She Make You Laugh-Before](#)

Click the song title below to hear the “after” version of the demo.

[Does She Make You Laugh-After](#)

How Do I Find A Producer?

Generally speaking, word of mouth in your music community serves as the best, most organic way to find a producer right for your project. If you’re new to a community, you can always consult the performing rights organizations (ASCAP, BMI & SESAC) or a local songwriting organization. They often will have lists of reputable producers available for hire.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, it’s a good working relationship and the trust between songwriter and producer that makes for the best results. Be sure that you not only like a producer’s work but that you also feel comfortable working with them. You’ll be spending a lot of time with this person and trusting them with your songs, so make certain you find a producer who is not only experienced but also willing to give you and your music the attention necessary to get a great recording.

Working with Session Musicians

The Players

Why do professional recordings sound, well, *professional*? There are a number of reasons including high quality microphones, pre-amps, an experienced engineer and a well-designed studio space. But one of the single most important elements in a great-sounding, professional recording is the performance of the session musicians. There is a reason that the job of the session musician exists. It's these musicians who use their talent and studio experience to play just the right thing in just the right way and create a polished, professional recording.

Shouldn't I Be Able To Do This Myself?

While I am a big proponent of wearing as many hats as you can in your musical career, there are certain areas where it makes much better sense to rely on the experts. Specifically, if you're not an experienced studio musician, I'd highly recommend using someone who is. It's extremely important that you take ego out of the equation. There is no shame in having someone else play on your demo. The key is to remain as objective as possible and to remember that a songwriting demo is supposed to put your song in the best possible light in order to sell it to prospective artists or place it in films and TV shows. It is not supposed to be proof of your studio musicianship. Recording your instrument in the studio requires an entirely different skill set than playing live. For lack of a better description, studio recording is more like music surgery than a musical performance. While you might be comfortable playing guitar in your living room or even on a stage in front of hundreds of people, it's an entirely different ballgame to sit in a four by six-foot booth wearing headphones listening to a clicking sound. Giving a note-perfect, dynamic and in-time performance in this kind of unnatural setting requires a special set of skills.

Isn't It Cheaper if I Do It Myself?

We all have to keep an eye on the bottom line when it comes to our recording budget and, as a result, there is the temptation to save money by playing on the demo yourself. The problem with

this method is that often it will take an inexperienced musician twice as long to get a viable take as it would a pro. One of the many advantages of using session musicians is that they are not only good at what they do but they do it very quickly. The price you pay to hire a session musician can translate into savings on studio time compared to playing the part yourself. Being fast in the studio is useful for another reason as well. When a session bogs down with take after take, it starts to feel a lot more like work. When things go quickly and smoothly, they stay musical and relaxed. Don't discount the need for a session to stay enjoyable. My experience has been that everyone does their best work when the atmosphere in the studio is light and productive.

To give you an example of what I mean when I say session musicians are fast, let me tell you about [Jim Hoke](#). Jim is one of Nashville's musical treasures. Jim has played on albums for Mark Knopfler, Jimmy Buffett and Alan Jackson among hundreds of other music notables. Jim is a multi-instrumentalist in the truest sense of the word. Some of the instruments he plays at world-class level include harmonica, accordion, baritone, tenor and alto saxes, flute, clarinet and even pedal steel. A few years ago, I hired Jim to write an arrangement for and play all the horn parts on a rock/soul project I was producing. From the time Jim walked in the door, unpacked his horns, heard the song for the first time, wrote the arrangement and played all the parts, it took one hour and ten minutes! That's what I mean by fast. Not to worry, I've enclosed a link to the song Jim played on just a few paragraphs from now.

Great Expectations

When it comes to recording a demo, it's essential that you keep your listening audience in mind at all times. In the music industry, there is a certain level of "polish" that record labels, publishers, managers and producers have come to expect from the demos they receive. By bringing in the same musicians that play on thousands of songwriting demos and major label record projects, you'll be giving these industry types what they're used to hearing. We've all heard from time to time industry professionals say that they can "hear through" your rough recordings. My recommendation is NOT to take that chance. You've only got one opportunity to make a first impression and you should give yourself every advantage. Also, even if you find the rare industry professional willing and able to hear through a rough recording, you'll hopefully be pitching this song to a number of industry people many of whom will be expecting a professional sounding demo.

The Care and Feeding of Session Musicians

When it comes to working with session musicians, there are a few things to keep in mind. First of all, if you're not comfortable writing out a chord chart, professional session musicians are perfectly capable of listening to your rough recording and writing out their own charts. For them, charting is quick process that should take no longer than 10-15 minutes and is almost always included in their fee. Then, when it comes time for the musicians to play, always suggest that they try it their way first. There are two reasons for this. First of all, you've hired them to make your demo sound great so you should give them a chance to go with their instincts before you offer any direction. Secondly, by letting them do what you've brought them in to do with a minimum of interference, you'll create goodwill that will go a long way towards the overall vibe in the studio. In almost every case, what the session musicians come up with will be better than you ever expected. HOWEVER, if you're still not getting what you want after they've tried it their way, you're 100% entitled to politely ask them to try it the way you were hearing it. The ONLY appropriate response from a session musician to your request is "absolutely."

I'll never forget the first time I worked with [George Marinelli](#) in the studio. George is a Grammy-winning, founding member of Bruce Hornsby's band, The Range, and currently tours as Bonnie Raitt's guitarist. He's also played with James Taylor, Jackson Browne and many others. I knew George was exceptional from having seen him play live but I'd never worked with him in the studio. On this particular occasion, I brought George in to play on a client's ballad. He listened to the song once while writing out a chart and then played the song down once from beginning to end. The precision, note choice and tone were absolutely stunning. The most amazing part was that this seemingly effortless performance on George's part had a depth and texture to it that revealed itself more every time I listened. By the way, I neglected to mention that this same bona fide rock star who has played with some of the greatest artists of all time, always shows up fifteen minutes early for sessions and stays after to chat and get to know the songwriter. This is what I mean by world-class.

Click on the song below to hear Jim Hoke's horns and George Marinelli's electric guitar.

[Sweet Lady Sunshine](#)

Remember They Work For You

It can be intimidating to work with such talented musicians, but remember, they're working for you. One of my favorite expressions is "the best ones have nothing to prove." When you hire pros not only will they be great at what they do but they should be a pleasure to work with as well. There is no reason to hire even the best session musician if he or she has a bad attitude. This is extremely rare but if it happens, I'd recommend never using that musician again. There are way too many wonderful, friendly and talented session musicians out there to ever settle for one who isn't a pleasure to work with. So if you've never used a professional musician on your songwriting demo, do yourself a favor and try it out. You're in for a treat and you'll certainly end up with a great demo.

Bring the Recording Studio To You

With the advent of the internet and streaming audio technology, it is now possible to not only hire the finest session musicians that Nashville has to offer, but also to listen in real-time and full-fidelity from wherever you are in the world as these players record your songs. One of the busiest parts of my business is bringing together songwriters (living sometimes thousands of miles away) with session musicians like Jim and George to record their songs. By streaming the audio from my Nashville studio to anyone with a computer and a high-speed internet connection, I make it possible for my clients to participate in their sessions without having to travel to Nashville to do it.

Click on [RecordingStudio2U](#) to find out more.

Working with Demo Singers

It's All About the Vocal

As songwriters, our intention is to communicate an emotion and a message in our songs. I believe the single most important vehicle to express both the message and emotion of a song to its listeners is the vocal. Fellow songwriters and musicians may relate to the detail and quality of the musicianship on a recording but *everyone* can relate to an amazing vocal performance. For example, while everyone knows the name Frank Sinatra, only true music buffs know the name Nelson Riddle even though he was responsible for some of the most exceptional musical arrangements on Sinatra's recordings. Since the purpose of a songwriting demo is to sell the song to someone else, you should choose your vocalist carefully and consider the advice below in order to have an easy and enjoyable time listening to your song performed by a session vocalist.

Why Can't I Just Sing My Own Demos?

There are several conditions that need to be met before a songwriter is the right choice to sing his or her own song demo. First, the songwriter must be an experienced studio vocalist. This means someone who's recorded not just one or two of their own songs but dozens and dozens of songs for not only themselves but for others. Second, the songwriter must have the appropriate style of voice for the intended song pitches. In other words, a songwriter may be an experienced pop vocalist but might be trying to do a country song demo. In this case, no matter how good a singer the songwriter may be, he or she is the wrong choice. It all has to do with what will put the song in the best possible light to get it recorded by another artist. Also, the money the songwriter intends to save by singing him or herself, in my experience, is lost in either the added studio time to get the performance right or in the final product not being ready for prime time. There are plenty of good reasons for a songwriter to sing his or her own songs. Studio experience, an artist project and an alternate style of demo are some of them. But when it comes to preparing a song demo for pitching at the highest levels and in a specific genre, it's my experience that a demo vocalist is almost always the proper choice. This is not something to take personally, some of the greatest

singer/songwriters in music still choose other vocalists to sing their song demos if it serves the song.

I'm an ok singer. Just ok. But I can remember the first time I heard a truly great singer record a demo of one of my songs. It wasn't as if I wasn't hitting the notes, there was just that perfect combination of natural tone, phrasing and magic dust that the demo singer provided that I couldn't. After that, it was a no brainer. When it came time to demo one of my songs to pitch I hired a demo singer. It didn't matter if I'd performed the song live or had recorded it on my own project, I knew that in order to sell the song to the people I was hoping would cut it, I had to use a pro.

Click the song below to hear me sing it.

[Twenty-Nine-Cliff](#)

Click the song below to hear how a professional demo singer does it.

[Twenty-Nine-Demo Vocal](#)

These rules apply across a all musical genres. I had the opportunity to write with a superb jazz piano and organ player named [Larry Goldings](#) (James Taylor's pianist for almost a decade). When we'd finished the song, Larry did a quick vocal to capture the essence of what we'd done. Then Larry introduced me to [Carolyn Leonhart](#). Carolyn's not only an award winning jazz vocalist in her own right but also happens to tour as a backup singer with Steely Dan. Give these before and after versions of our song a quick listen to see what I mean.

Click the song below to hear Larry singing the scratch vocal of our song.

[Only Smoke - Scratch Vocal](#)

Click the song below to hear Carolyn's final vocal of our song.

[Only Smoke - Demo Vocal](#)

Finding the Right Singer for the Job

OK, now that you've decided to go with someone else to sing your song, there are a couple of characteristics to look for in a demo singer. First and foremost, you're looking for a singer whose

style is similar to but *not* identical to the artist or artists to whom you intend to pitch your song. The reason for this is simple. If you find a demo singer who can mimic exactly the sound of a particular artist then you've effectively limited your pitch to one artist. Unless you're incredibly lucky (and incredibly good), this is not the most cost-effective way to approach creating your song demo. It's better, for example, to use a more generic, great-sounding tenor country vocalist than a dead ringer for Garth Brooks. The plan, by the way, is to end up with a demo/vocal performance that opens up a variety of pitch opportunities within a given musical genre. We'll cover how to go about pitching your songs in chapter seven.

Don't Kill The Messenger

While I'm not a not a male chauvinist by any stretch of the imagination, I'm going to impart a small, unwritten rule about whether to choose a male or female vocalist on a song whose lyric could be sung by either a man or a woman. If you only have the budget to record either a male or female version of your demo, always choose the male vocalist. To put it simply, it is easier for a female artist to imagine herself singing a song demoed by a man than it is for a male artist to imagine himself singing a song demoed by a woman. To be clear, I'm not saying this rule applies to all songs. This only applies to songs where the lyric is *already* one that could work for either a male or a female artist.

Let's take [Andrea Zonn](#) as an example. Andrea's not only a first-rate singer, violinist and violist (she's toured and recorded with Lyle Lovett and James Taylor) but also an exceptional artist in her own right. When Andrea made her album for Compass Records, she found a song written and demoed by [Tom Kimmel](#). The song, "Pages," is exceptional and when Tom sings it with his weathered, masculine voice it works great. However, Andrea was able to hear though Tom's performance and imagine herself singing it as well. As I had the privilege of being involved in both recordings, I thought I'd show you an example of Tom's original and Andrea's cover.

Click the song below to hear Tom's original recording.

[Pages – Tom Kimmel recording](#)

Click the song below to hear Andrea's interpretation of the male vocal recording.

[Pages – Andrea Zonn recording](#)

What to Do Before the Singer Comes In

As I mentioned in chapter two, it's always in your best interest to provide the singer you've chosen with a rough recording and copy of the lyrics before the session. By rough recording, I mean the simplest of recordings using one instrument (guitar or piano) and a vocal. This can be done into a hand-held recorder or directly into your laptop and emailed as an mp3. Recording quality is not the important part. Feel free to sing/play yourself even if it's not the most polished performance in the world. The key is that the song structure, melody and lyric must be exactly what you want the singer to learn.

Click the song below to hear an example of what constitutes a perfectly acceptable rough recording.

[Nothing Left to Love Here Anymore-Rough Recording](#)

Most singers will want to have the rough recording at least a week prior to the session date. There are several reasons for this. First, the singer will need to provide the musician/musicians playing on the demo with the key that the song should be tracked in. Just because you've written a song in a particular key doesn't mean that it's the best key for your session singer. It's the session singer's job to know his or her own voice well enough to choose the key that puts your melody and lyric in its best light. Second, this gives the singer time to learn your melody and phrasing so that by the time they get to the studio they know your song well enough to only need minor corrections. This is designed to make the session run smoothly and, ultimately, to save you time and money. There are some rare exceptions where a demo singer is so good and so busy that he or she only has time to learn your song after they get to the studio. This is acceptable *only* if it takes them fifteen minutes or less to learn your song. I've worked with singers like this and they truly are exceptional. However, it is not acceptable nor is it professional for any demo singer to spend more than this amount of time learning your song in the studio. Either they've had time to learn it before or they're quick enough to do it without wasting your time.

Speaking of coming in and getting it done, let me introduce you to my friend [Tim Buppert](#). Tim is the kind of demo singer who can walk into a studio, listen down to a song three or four times, mark up a lyric sheet with his own version of performance notes and then sing the song like he's been singing it his whole life. His vocal performance conveys all of the emotion in a lyric and often

uncovers subtle phrasing and melodic gems that were barely there in the rough recording. When it comes to harmony vocals, Tim can (and does) sing additional harmony parts in the time it takes to set up the harmony vocal track in ProTools and press record. These skills didn't come to Tim overnight. At last count, Tim's sung over 6,000 demos. Nice work if you can get it.

Click the song below to hear Tim's vocal.

[*My Kind of Beautiful*](#)

Working With A Demo Vocalist in the Studio

The day has arrived. All of the preliminaries have been taken care of, the singer has provided a key, the instrument tracks have been recorded in that key (often with a scratch vocal sung by the songwriter) and it's time for the singer to come in and record. Remember to bring copies of your lyric sheet for the engineer, the singer (just in case they forget the copy you sent them) and for yourself. Also, make sure that every word of the lyric is written out. You'll be making notes on the lyric sheet during the session and having "repeat chorus" written on your lyric sheet won't give you enough detail to make notes in subsequent choruses if you have any.

For songwriters new to the process, working with a singer has the potential to be a nerve-racking experience. You're attached to your song, you want it to sound great and you're also (possibly) a bit intimidated by the singer who has such an amazing voice. First of all, try to relax. Everyone involved wants exactly what you want...a great finished product. It may take a pass or two through the song for the vocalist to get into the proper spirit and to tweak a few of the melodic mistakes they're making. My advice here may sound obvious but I've seen too many examples to the contrary not to mention it. REMEMBER TO BE POLITE!! We're all artists here. It's just as easy to say to a singer, "I think the melody in the first line of the second verse needs to be changed slightly." as it is to say, "Do it again. You sang my melody wrong." My point is that in the heat of the moment just remember that being polite and patient will not only get you what you want but will maintain the goodwill of everyone involved and keep the mood in the studio light and productive.

Another Reason To Hire A Pro

From time to time, a demo vocalist may *slightly* change the phrasing or melody of a particular line in your song. Whether you decide you like this or not is entirely up to you but, remember, part

of the reason you're bringing in a professional demo singer is his or her familiarity with the style of music you're writing and knowledge of how these songs are typically sung. If a singer does this, consider it as value added to the session. There are two things to remember here. First, unless we're talking about a wholesale re-writing of your melody, these are not grounds (nor will the singer ask) to be included as a writer on a song. It's simply an interpretation on the part of an experienced studio professional. Second, and more important, if you don't care for the changes that the singer has made, you are well within your rights to ask *politely* for the singer to revert to your original melody and/or phrasing. The only acceptable response a professional demo singer will give is "absolutely." Remember, they're pros but they work for you.

Conclusion

There is nothing quite like hearing a great session vocalist sing one of your songs. Not only is it amazing to listen to, but also it takes your melody and lyric to another level. You'll hear nuances in your work that you never knew were there. The more you do to prepare yourself for the vocal recording session, the more relaxed you'll be and the more fun you'll have. At the end of the day, not only will you have a beautifully sung version of your song but great memories of the studio and how it all went down.

Chapter 6

The Mix

The Art of Mixing

Once you've decided to up the ante and put your songs out there to get heard and hopefully cut, you've got a lot of decisions to make. One of the last of these steps but certainly not the least is the mix of your song. It's not enough to have a great song. You need a great recording and a strong mix is an essential part of any great recording. For those of you who are new to the game, a mix is essentially the combining (mixing) of all instruments and vocals into a finished stereo recording. The decisions made by the mix engineer include how loud or soft to make each individual instrument and vocal part and where they sit in the stereo spectrum (i.e., in the center or more to the left or right). The art of mixing (and make no mistake, it is an art) is not a skill everyone possesses. While there is no substitute for a dynamic, exciting musical performance, a good mix can enhance every aspect of that performance so that the final sonic result truly makes your song stand out. On the other hand, a poor mix can severely compromise even the best song and performance.

Here's an example of what I mean when I refer to mixing as an art. A friend and cowriter of mine, [Spencer Day](#), recently signed a record deal with Concord Jazz and is taking one of our songs along for the ride. The record label brought in [Nathaniel Kunkel](#) to mix. Nathaniel is an Emmy and Grammy award winning engineer who has worked with Maroon 5, John Mayer and Sting to name just a very few. There's a reason this guy wins awards. The mix of our song is a masterpiece! You can actually hear the bows scraping the strings on the violins, the electric guitars were perfectly balanced and the vocal was as clear, warm and detailed as anything I'd ever heard. On top of that, the whole song just felt more exciting and alive. I mix songs every day to make my living and I was still in awe. There are just some people out there who have the gift.

Click the song below to hear Nathaniel Kunkel's mix from Spencer's Concord Jazz release, Vagabond.

[*Till You Come To Me*](#)

Budget

I get it. Everyone wants to save money. I do too but there are places to save and places to invest. In an effort to keep recording costs down, many musicians have purchased their own recording equipment. This is terrific and there's never been a better time to buy affordable, high-quality gear. As long as you're as passionate about learning the engineering process as you are about your music, you'll do great. Owning your own recording equipment also takes a lot of the pressure off when it comes to experimenting in the studio. Finally, it allows you to record as many takes as necessary to get the performances you want without worrying about the clock. However, one way to make the absolute most of your recorded performances is to let an expert mix them. It's amazing what a talented mix engineer can bring out of a mix that might otherwise get lost or obscured at the hands of a less experienced mixer.

Before You Mix

Before I cover in greater depth what makes a mix good, let's go back to performance for a moment. No matter how great the mix engineer may be there are some things you simply cannot "fix in the mix." To be more specific, there is no way to "mix in" a great vocal or instrumental performance. What makes a performance great might surprise you. For example, sometimes it's what isn't played that counts the most. In my experience, the best studio musicians are the best listeners. What I mean by this is that great players base their instrumental performance on whatever else is going on in the song so that all the instruments work together as a whole to serve the song and NOT their individual egos. Playing too much is the hallmark of an amateur studio musician. Also, the timely use of dynamics (where to play louder/softer or with greater/less intensity) is essential to a mix that breathes and has shape to it. Simply moving up and down a volume fader won't do the same thing. When it comes to singing, all the Auto-Tune and reverb in the world won't give a vocal performance real sincerity and emotion. All this to say, make absolutely certain that the performances are exactly how you want them before you start the mix process.

The Instruments

Getting great instrument sounds in a mix is a combination of many factors. Finding space in the mix for each individual instrument is essential. Without getting too technical, I can say that this

is often achieved through judicious use of EQ (treble and bass), compression (a way of bringing up soft sections and lowering loud sections), volume (how loud or soft each part is) and panning (where in the stereo field- to the left or right-the instrument is going to be placed). For example, the skill it takes to get great drum sounds, marry the kick drum to the bass while also giving the electric guitars room to breathe and sparkle is developed over time and repetition...a lot of repetition. When a mix is done properly, the instruments are exciting to listen to. Each has its place and role to play and when they come together, the song takes on a life of its own.

Vocals

A great mix engineer always makes the treatment and placement of the vocal a priority. Once the instrumental mix is generally where it needs to be, it's time to make certain that the vocal is running the show. A combination of EQ, compression, tuning (actually fixing sharp or flat notes), effects (things like reverb and delay) and volume fader automation (more on this in a few paragraphs) should all serve the ultimate goal of making it sound like the singer is in charge. There are several risks associated with improper vocal placement. If the final mix has too much vocal, then the instruments end up sounding small and weak. However, if the vocal is too soft in the mix, it loses its ability to communicate the emotion of the song. Every genre has its preferred vocal level. In general, pop music has the vocal more integrated into the instruments whereas country music (with its emphasis on the lyric) generally places the vocal higher in the mix. There are, of course, exceptions to every rule but a good mix engineer will know the genre he or she is mixing in and do the right thing for the song.

Critiquing A Mix

If you're lucky, you've been present throughout the entire recording process. The mix is the icing on the cake. This is the time when the instrumental and vocal performances are given their own space and final bit of polish. My recommendation is that you leave the engineer to mix the song and ask them to tell you when the mix is ready to be listened to. This will allow you to rest your ears and come back with a fresh perspective. At this point, with a fresh lyric sheet, listen to the mix from top to bottom several times and take notes. You might even want to take a copy with you and listen on several different "real world" sound systems and (Steve Jobs help us all) even those crummy little iPod headphones. The mix certainly won't sound as good on your seven-year-old car stereo speakers but it should be clear. In other words, you should be able to hear each individual

instrument part and the vocal should be loud enough to hear every word. After you've had a chance to listen extensively to your mix on different systems, give your written notes to the engineer. Be as specific as possible. For example, instead of saying you can't hear all the words in the second verse, you should write, "In verse two, the word "heart" in the second line is too soft." This is the fastest, most efficient way to fix your concerns with a mix. The more methodical you are the easier this process will be and the faster you'll get the results you're looking for.

Mix Automation

As studio technology continues to improve, it makes your life easier when it comes to mixing your songwriting demos. I remember, in the early days of my engineering career, only the most expensive studios had automation on their mixing boards. This meant that if you needed a volume fader turned up or down you had to do it by hand. This was fine as long as you had a hand free but if in certain parts of a song you needed to change more than a few settings on the mixing board, you had to have multiple people with their hands on multiple knobs on the board each with a scripted set of moves to do at the same time in order for the mix to sound right. It was barely organized chaos and I can remember more than once having to go back to the beginning because, for example, I'd forgotten to boost the volume on the electric guitar in the second chorus or lower the vocal in the bridge. These days, almost all mixes are automated by the studio computer which provides the engineer an incredible amount flexibility and control over the sound of a mix. All this to say, an experienced mix engineer with decent recording software and an up-to-date computer can do more now than any state of the art studio could do twenty years ago. The advantage here is also that any slight tweak or change you make is as simple as recalling the old mix and fixing the specific issue instead of having to do everything from scratch. I bring this up so you're aware that you can go back to your engineer and tweak minor details of a mix in order to get exactly what you want while not racking up tons of additional hours of studio time.

Always Get a Track Mix

At the end of the recording process, don't forget to ask for a track (also known as instrumental) mix of your song. This can be useful for several reasons. First, if you ever find an artist who likes your song and would like to try their own vocal on it, you'll have a version to provide them. Second, if you ever decide to change your lyric, you won't have to go in and remix the

song. Third, you might want to record your own vocal version of the song someday. Finally, some film/TV pitch opportunities are looking for instrumental-only versions of songs. It will take your engineer five minutes, tops, to create an instrumental mix if you do it on the spot. If, however, you have to come back at a later date you're more likely to be charged for additional studio time or, worse, your session will no longer be stored on their hard drives. All this to say, always get an instrumental mix of your demo.

Mastering?

Mastering a mixed recording is a separate skill altogether. While this isn't an article about mastering, I'd recommend against mastering your songwriting demos. Mastering is generally done with a collection of songs being put together in an album format. It deals with matching the overall levels from one song to the next, the spacing between the songs and matching overall sound of each track. People tend to assume that mastering means louder but a good mix will be loud and clear enough to stand on its own without the added expense of mastering.

Conclusion

The mix is not a step to be taken lightly nor is it to be rushed. Take your time and even consider taking a few days off between tracking your demo and mixing it. The more rested and objective you are, the greater the likelihood that you'll end up with a mix that does justice not only to your song but the world-class instrumental and vocal performances on it.

Submitting/Pitching Your Songs

So you've written a great song, made a fabulous demo and now you'll live happily ever after, right? Well, kind of... This is the official "chapter after" you've written and recorded your song. There's no doubt that being a great songwriter and having beautifully recorded versions of your songs is an admirable goal in and of itself. However, if you're interested in having your songs see the light of day then your work is really just beginning. Until the people who can actually do something with your song (i.e. music industry professionals) have heard it, your song might as well not exist. I know this sounds obvious but you'd be amazed at the number of songwriters out there who have great song demos that very few, if any, music business people have ever heard.

The Decision Makers

Part of understanding the music business involves being aware of how the people who determine which songs end up on major label releases think. Your job as a songwriter (apart from writing your songs) is to market and promote your music to these decision makers. Most songwriters believe that it's enough to have a great song or songs but the reality is that you have to find people willing not only to listen to your songs and but also to help you get your songs recorded. Examples of these decision makers are music publishers, A&R (artists and repertoire) representatives at record labels, producers and managers and, if you're lucky, the artists themselves. There's no one person who is always the right choice for your song pitch. Often more than one of these decision makers has to be exposed to your song before they decide whether or not it should be recorded. So, what can you do to make this happen?

Networking

Like any business, it's not only *what* you know but *who* you know that gets you ahead. What this means in the music world is getting yourself out there to open mics, writer's nights and any industry events you can find. For those of you in music cities like New York, Nashville and Los Angeles there are an almost endless stream of opportunities. For everyone else, you might have to look a little harder or travel from time to time to one of the cities I've just mentioned. I think it's a

universal truth that this kind of networking isn't always fun, but it's essential especially when you're starting out. Let's put it this way; all things being equal, if you've met someone from a record label or publishing company in a social setting and assuming you've had a nice exchange, there's a much greater likelihood that they'll not only remember you when you call but will also make more of an effort to help you out if they can. The more you're out there, the more people you'll meet and the greater the chance it will pay dividends down the road. I'd also recommend remembering a few basic social skills while you're at it. For example, don't immediately launch into a ten-minute, spoken-word bio when you meet someone in the music industry. It's a much better idea to find out a little something about the person you're talking to by remembering to ask a few questions as well. Also, on a similar note, if you're fortunate enough to get a meeting with one of these decision makers, learning a little something about the person in advance is a great idea. There's this thing called Google. Use it.

Professionalism

Did I mention we're talking about the music *business*? This means it's in your best interest to be professional about how you approach people in the industry. When reaching out to someone in the music industry, call or email first. Make this first contact short and to the point. In other words, let them know why you're calling/emailing (i.e. to schedule a meeting, to see if they're accepting CDs, to ask whether you can submit an mp3, etc.). This is not the time to have a long discussion. If you've been referred by someone they know (see "networking" above) mention this as well. Also, while it's great to be excited and even confident about your material, it rarely pays to tell someone that you've got a "great" song or you're an "amazing" songwriter. Let your music speak for itself. Once you've gotten approval to do so, then submit your song or bring it to the meeting. It's a bad idea to send out CDs or mp3s without first getting approval as they usually end up at the bottom of a pile or even worse. The danger is that the person who hasn't asked for it considers your behavior an intrusion. I'm simply saying that the odds are if someone isn't expecting your material it won't get heard.

If you've never seen the office of an A&R rep or music publisher, I'm here to tell you that their desks, walls and floors are *covered* with CDs. We're talking hundreds and hundreds if not thousands of them. Make sure that your CD is clearly labeled with a few simple elements: Your name and contact information (phone and email), the name of the song or songs and possibly - if it's a song for

an artist - the name of the person you're pitching it to. Also, make certain that every part of the package is labeled. This means put your information on the CD and on the CD sleeve or jewel case. Make sure that if the CD itself gets separated from the case, the information is the CD, too. Also, if you're using a jewel case, make sure there's information on the spine. Remember the part where I said there are thousands of CDs in these folks' offices? When your CD ends up on a shelf with all the others, the spine of the CD will be the only way for them to identify it.

Finally, I can think of no good reason why any submission should be more than three songs. If you're pitching a song to an artist, they're not hoping for a bonus track. If you're pitching to a publisher, three songs is a good way to show them you've got more than one good song without overdoing it. If they want more, believe me, they'll ask. Put yourself in the position of the industry person. If they've got a desk full of CDs to listen to and have to choose between a CD with two songs on it or one with nineteen songs, which one do you think they'll pick?

Persistence...Persistence

I wrote the above heading twice for a reason. Let's say you're fortunate enough to reach someone by either phone or email and they've agreed to let you mail in a CD or email them an mp3. Here's what you should expect...nothing. In other words, it's extremely rare that you'll hear anything back quickly after you submit it. (See "thousands of CDs" above...). As a matter of fact, you should put in your calendar to follow up two or three weeks after you've submitted something. This follow up should be even shorter than your initial contact. Email is probably best for this. A simple email saying you wanted to make sure they'd received your submission is enough. Also, don't be surprised if the response you get back (if you're lucky enough to get one) says they haven't gotten it and would you mind resending it. (See "persistence...persistence" in the above heading.) Resending material is something that you should expect to do. Following up every two to three weeks (unless you're asked not to) is perfectly acceptable if you're polite and to the point. I'm not a cynic and I don't believe that anyone has an agenda to ignore submitted material. I'm a realist and the sheer number of submissions makes it almost impossible for anyone to stay on top of things. Anything you can do to help remind someone you'd like them to listen to your song is in your best interest and, in time, will generally work.

Courtesy

I think it's important to realize that no one in the industry owes you anything. This may sound harsh but it's a vital point. You may very well have great songs and it would be in the best interest of the industry professional you're pursuing to listen to them, but there are a lot of songs out there and only a limited number of opportunities for them. All this to say, if your song isn't listened to right away or even if it's lost or ignored, *don't take it personally*. I'm a songwriter myself so I know exactly how important your songs are to you. It's not easy to submit them for judgment and tougher still to wait around hoping someone will actually listen. However, you'll only do yourself a disservice by being impatient or rude with someone and heaven help you if you get a reputation in the industry for being difficult or unpleasant.

Patience

Given that there are so many artists, songwriters and songs out there vying for a limited number of spots, it all comes down to patience. Patience with yourself as you improve your musical skills and patience with the industry people you're soliciting as they make their way through all of the material in line ahead of yours. My recommendation is to have as many irons in the fire as you possibly can at all times so that you're not waiting for any one thing to happen or *not to happen* as is so often the case. The more people you get to know, the more opportunities you explore and the more submissions you make, the less likely you are to get discouraged and the more likely you are to have success.

There's also a different kind of patience that's incredibly valuable. This is the patience to understand that since you're planning on being a songwriter for many years to come, you can (and should!) take years to develop and cultivate relationships. Just because someone isn't in a powerful position in the music industry currently doesn't mean that they won't be in the future. Often it's the people you meet when you're both getting started in the music world that end up being your best contacts.

My favorite example of this is the sweet little receptionist for a friend of mine at one of the performing rights organizations who now runs the film and TV department for a major music publisher. These days she's no longer making photocopies. Instead, because we have a history together, she's setting me up to write with platinum-selling artists for their projects.

Conclusion

Thanks for reading “The Songwriter’s Guide to Recording Professional Demos”

My primary goal in putting together this book is to help remove the fear and uncertainty that come from the songwriter’s inexperience with the demo process. The more you, the songwriter, understand your role and responsibilities, the more you’ll enjoy the process and end up with exactly the recording you hoped for if not better. Of course there is no substitute for going through the process yourself and to that end, I’d highly recommend getting started as soon as you have the song or songs you feel confident are ready for prime time.

Use this book as a primer before your first session and then refer back to it often as you get more in-studio experience because, invariably, you’ll pick up on elements that don’t make sense until you go through them for yourself.

To close, I’d like to show you the power of a simple demo. Together with my longtime friend and cowriter, Jeff Cohen, I wrote and recorded a simple piano/vocal demo that resulted in a cut with Universal Records’ Irish tenor, [Ronan Tynan](#). The icing on the cake was that instead of a simple piano/vocal, Universal Records hired London’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to play on the recording.

Click the song below to hear a snippet of the original piano/vocal demo.

[The Light Inside of You-Demo](#)

Click the song below to hear Ronan’s version with the Royal Philharmonic.

[The Light Inside of You-Decca/Universal Records Release](#)

Keep the faith and good luck!

-Cliff

www.cliffgoldmacher.com

[Email Cliff](#)

About The Author

Cliff Goldmacher is a songwriter, producer, engineer and owner of recording studios in [Nashville](#) and [New York City](#). Along with playing on, engineering and producing thousands of songwriter demos, Cliff has had his songs recorded by major label artists across multiple musical genres and he has recorded/collaborated with multi-platinum, Grammy-winning artists from Emmylou Harris to Lisa Loeb.

When he's not writing songs, Cliff is a freelance writer and contributor to [EQ Magazine](#), [Pro Sound News](#) and a number of music websites and blogs.

To learn more or to see how Cliff can help you with your next recording project go to www.cliffgoldmacher.com.



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Song Credits:

- 1. Don't Look Down**
 - a. Writers – C. Goldmacher & T. Thompson
 - b. Artist – Templeton Thompson
- 2. I Never Let You Go**
 - a. Writers: J. Randall, J. Wiggins & D. Worby
 - b. Artist – Jon Randall
- 3. My Mother Would Like You**
 - a. Writers – C. Goldmacher & T. Kimmel
 - b. Artist – Heather Rigdon
- 4. Nothing Left To Love Here Anymore**
 - a. Writers – F. Christian & M.E. Morganteen
 - b. Artists
 - i. M.E. Morganteen – rough recording
 - ii. Melissa Cusick – final demo
- 5. Can't Get You Out of My System**
 - a. Writers – T. Kimmel, M. Lille & T. Prasada-Rao
 - b. Artist – Tom Kimmel
- 6. Does She Make You Laugh**
 - a. Writer – J. Ottaway
 - b. Artists
 - i. Jay Ottaway – guitar/vocal
 - ii. Dillon Dixon – demo
- 7. Sweet Lady Sunshine**
 - a. Writers – C. Degenhart & C. Goldmacher
 - b. Artist – Charlie Degenhart
- 8. Twenty-Nine**
 - a. Writers – C. Goldmacher & F. Koller
 - b. Artists
 - i. Cliff Goldmacher – before
 - ii. Dillon Dixon – after
- 9. Only Smoke**
 - a. Writers – L. Goldings & C. Goldmacher
 - b. Artists
 - i. Larry Goldings – rough recording
 - ii. Carolyn Leonhart – final demo
- 10. Pages**
 - a. Writers – T. Kimmel & J. Yates
 - b. Artists
 - i. Tom Kimmel – male version
 - ii. Andrea Zonn – female version

11. My Kind of Beautiful

- a. Writers – G. Becker & C. Goldmacher
- b. Artist – Tim Buppert

12. Till You Come To Me

- a. Writers – S. Day & C. Goldmacher
- b. Artist – Spencer Day

13. The Light Inside of You

- a. Writers – J. Cohen & C. Goldmacher
- b. Artists
 - i. Dillon Dixon – piano/vocal demo
 - ii. Ronan Tynan – finished master