

## Get Up, Get On And Get Off: The Early Bird Catches The Record Deal!

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By Sheena Metal

Imagine this...you're in the local hospital's pre-op ward waiting for the removal of your pesky rupturing appendix. You wait and wait in side splitting agony while your doctor chats it up with the nurses, gathering phone numbers from the hot ones. After what seems forever, he gets you prepped and begins the surgery. What should have been a 20-minute procedure turns into two hours. He cracks jokes and talks about his cherry red Ferrari, while you're lying unconscious with your abdomen split open. Finally, you're sewn up and ready for recovery but super surgeon and his crack anesthesiologist are having a heated discussion about the science of their golf games and have seeming forgotten you're passed out underneath them with tubes stuck in every orifice. If this were your surgery experience, you'd freak out, sue the hospital and your hot-shot doc would wind up cleaning bedpans at the state convalescent hospital.

Sadly, like our skirt-chasing doctor, many musicians think that the consequences of their actions are immaterial and treat their audience with the same lackadaisical disregard that the before-mentioned doctor treated his poor patient with. These selfish creative types show up to gigs late, set up at their own leisure (roughly the same pace that a 100 year-old tortoise would run the Boston marathon), play as long of a set as they please (regardless of their designated set time) and break down/clear the stage at their own whim with little or no regard to the club's schedule.

However, if you asked any of these artists, they would say that they consider music to be their career...and shouldn't a career be treated with the same importance and professionalism whether you're a budding rockstar or an established surgeon? It should, but often it's not and bands then find their reputations are tarnished with labels like: slow, lazy, and irresponsible simply because they seem unable to get their show on (and off) in a timely manner. Get branded as a slovenly flake and watch the music industry folks jump ship faster than the rich ladies on the Titanic.

The following are a few tips that will help you to get up, get on and get off in a timely, professional manner that will impress the powers-that-be and leave you fans wanting more:

1.) Have Everything Set Up Before You Set Up---It's not like you just found out you were playing five minutes before. Gigs are booked days, weeks or months in advance so there's no reason not to be well informed and well equipped prior to your arrival and set up. Guitars and drums should be tuned, drum kits and guitar pedals set up and dialed in, and song lists printed and distributed so that set up time is minimal. Once the stage is free, a professional band will simply haul their gear onstage, plug it in, and do a few last minute tweaks before they're ready to rock and roll. The ancient tortoise rockers, however, will plunk the road cases down on the stage and then force friends, fans and industry alike twiddle their musical thumbs in anticipation while each piece of gear is pulled out, unwrapped, wiped off, place into position and screwed in slowly but surely. Truthfully, it's about as interesting as watching paint dry without the guilty pleasure of getting high off the fumes.

2.) Sound Check/Line Check Is Not A Mini Concert---You may view your sound check as the concert before the concert but you're not making any friends dragging out your sound check to an hour and a half while bands are lined up out the door waiting to set up their own gear and check their sound. Same goes for the line check. You may be surprised to know that audiences aren't all that excited to sit and listen to you work out your live sound in front of their eyes and on their time. Save the lengthy tune-up and checking for the Making Of The Band video. Get your levels quick and get to rockin'!

3.) Plan Out Your Set Time Well Before Your Set---The key to a tight set is the prep work that goes on before the night of the gig. Many artists believe that the longer they're onstage the more the audience gets revved up, but there is something to be said about "too much of a good thing." Plan out your set, time it and then time it again and make sure that it comes in a few minutes under your designated set list time. Little passive aggressive tricks like cramming in two or three extra songs at the end of the set or coaxing your friends into screaming for an encore only serves to enrage your sound man and confuse your crowd and extensive tuning and chatting amongst yourselves and audience members in between songs is just plain tedious. The tighter your set is the more professional it sounds to the ears of your audience and the happier you'll make your bookers, promoters and club owners.

4.) Tear Down Should Be The Quickest Of All---If you thought your set up was quick, your band's tear down should be lightning fast in comparison. So much time is wasted every night at a music venue as musicians dawdle after their sets, drinking and chatting with friends, while their gear lies piled up onstage, preventing the next artists from getting set up. Pick up your instruments, haul them off stage, and take them outside or into the green room. There you can wrap your gear up, clean it off, and pack it away into cases and into your cars. Then, it's time to toss back a few beers and gab with the masses until closing time, without interrupting the flow of the evening.

Imagine this...you're in a local club waiting to check out an act your label has sent you to scout. You wait and wait, growing more bored and more drunk while the band you've been sent to see chats it up with the women in the room, giving t-shirts and CDs to the really hot ones. After what seems like forever, the band takes the stage and begins their set. What should have been a 30-minute showcase turns into an hour or more as the band plays a loose set, stopping often to tune, complain about the sound, yell to the bartender for drinks and crack jokes with select audience members; while you sit unimpressed trying to get a feel for the band's style. Finally, their set ends and you wait to approach the band on behalf of your label but these super rockstars are still onstage wrapping up endless cords and wiping down each piece of gear while they chat with each other about how much their set rocked. If this were your A&R experience, you'd give up waiting to speak with these lazy musicians, go back to your label and tell them to forget about this particular band and these hot-shot rockstars will wind up working at Starbucks until they go on Social Security. This doesn't have to happen to you. Learn to get up, get on and get off. You'll soon have the reputation as an easy-to-work-with, professional, reliable band. After all, you never know who might be in the audience to see you on any given night.

Sheena Metal is a radio host, producer, promoter, music supervisor, consultant, columnist, journalist and musician. Her syndicated radio program, Music Highway Radio, airs on over 2,400 affiliates to more than 126 million listeners. Her musicians' assistance program, Music Highway, boasts over 10,000 members. She currently promotes numerous live shows weekly in the Los Angeles Area, where she resides. For more info:

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