



Developing your **OWN STYLE**

**Even if I've never met you
I know things about you already.**

1. You want attention.
2. You want people to listen to you,
3. To watch you,
4. To come see your gigs,
5. To book you for performances,
6. To buy your recordings,
7. To respect you,
8. To understand you,
9. To love and accept you,
10. And to validate your experiences.

Maybe not all of these things apply to you, but probably many of them do. These exercises will help you identify what your goals and desires are, and leave you with some practical skills to keep on improving your performance and achieving your goals.

You set the goals you wish to achieve. Only you can decide what you want and, if you're alive and awake, you'll be constantly reassessing and modifying those goals. What's right for you at one time may not be what is right for you at another time. This is the essence of being creative. If someone else is determining your goals or you are not specific enough, you can be an excellent musician, entertainer, business person, but you will not be an artist. Being an artist involves expressing your own uniqueness.

**Some skills that you will need
to develop as an entertainer are:**

1. Accurate self-evaluation
2. The ability to observe and see things concretely
3. The ability to visualize so you can try out ideas in your head
4. Enough technical expertise to know what can be done
5. Enough technical skill at your craft to accomplish your goals.

To develop as an entertainer and an artist you also need:

6. The willingness to “be in the moment” to take advantage of opportunity
7. The desire to share and explore feelings and ideas
8. The willingness to hang out in the “not know” chair
9. Energy, focus and vision.

In addition it's also helpful to have these organizational skills:

10. Knowing how to get and keep gigs.
11. Knowing how to get music together. , i.e charts, arrangements, etc.
12. Figuring out how to practice what you need.
13. Time management.
14. Marketing and self-promotion.
15. Writing a set list.
16. Ability to control destructive tendencies like fear, depression and anxiety.

Jazz is about personal expression.

Even though you are all musicians and all interested in performing, your tastes, background, thoughts and emotional responses are entirely different from one another. These different qualities are the things that make you unique and are what you have to offer as an artist. Some people are “feelers”, and are primarily interested in communicating emotion. Some are thinkers, and are more interested in communicating ideas. Some like to let off steam, some like to relax. Although you are a complex person, as an artist you will not be all things to all people. And, as you change and grow, so will your artistic expression. This exercise is a starting point.

1. What kinds of music and what artists do you enjoy listening to? List 5 performers that you listen to regularly and when you listen to them. At home relaxing, doing a physical activity, having friends over, practicing? Describe what you like about them.
2. Where do you go to listen to music? List 5 venues that you have been in to hear live music in the past year. Who went with you? Describe who was in the audience?
3. List and describe 5 venues that you would like to perform in. (nightclub, concert hall, church, etc.) Be specific about where. (Plush Room, Yoshi's, Sweetwater, Warfield, your local watering hole.)
4. What is your primary goal as a performer? Do you have political ideas that you want to express? Do you want to educate your audience? Do you want to provoke your audience into some kind of action? Do you want your audience to feel something specific, such as inspired, romantic, energized? Do you want them to get up and dance? Do you want to explore musical ideas?
5. Who do you want your audience to include? Think age group, tastes, background, interests, gender, etc.
6. What do you like to play? List 10 songs that you would like to play.

7. Describe your style as a performer. Are you a working class rocker, upscale crooner, athletic brazen hussy, casually elegant vamp, gangsta, well-dressed intellectual? Choose 3 words that you might use for marketing your "style." Cool, calm, comfortable; hot, sweet, and oh so young; etc.

**Try this exercise adapted from the book
"Getting Noticed, A Musician's Guide to Publicity and Self-Promotion."**

Take a pencil and paper and find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.

At the top of your paper write something like this: "I'd like to be seen as..."

Now, list the qualities and attributes you'd like to have. It doesn't matter whether you have them, or are likely to acquire them. In brainstorming you don't try to be realistic. And don't worry about being silly, nobody's going to see the list but you.

Maybe you've always wanted to play rock and roll on a stage swirling with smoke-machine fog and elaborate special effects, you want to be a rock star. Or maybe you'd really like to be at the NorthSea Jazz Festival playing "out jazz" in a pair of worn-out jeans with the hottest cats around. Or maybe, you'd like a steady gig at one of your favorite clubs in your own home town. Or maybe you want to play in a small cabaret in New York City dressed in a beaded gown. These ideas, wishes hopes, and dreams should be on your list.

Does your music lend itself to sophistication, or uncontrolled frenzy? Would your audience expect you to be disciplined or unrestrained. Should you be refined or macho? Do you see your self as an innovator or are you carrying on a tradition? Do you jump, twist and shout when you play, or is your music quiet and understated.

This list will be unique to you. The idea is not to create a false image, but to work with the one you already have, to refine it and become aware of it.

Think about your audiences, the ones you have and the ones you'd like to have. Consider the people who book you. Think about your music, your talent, your general approach to life, your business goals. Write down all the ideas that pertain to the way you'd like to be seen. This will be your image list. Keep it. You'll use it from time to time.

Where are you today?

This is not a “me-bashing” exercise. This is a map for setting your goals, improving your performances and developing concrete ways to achieve the performance you want to create. BOTH our strengths and weaknesses are part of the performer we are today. We need to identify strengths as well as weaknesses, and concentrate on both. As a performer, evaluate your progress in these 4 areas.

Appearance:

Including costumes, comfort on stage, energy, physical fitness, eye contact, and staging: all the elements the audience “looks at.”

Material:

This is your musical repertoire. Is it varied? Does it reflect you: your technical abilities, your interests, and your feelings? Do you have appropriate material for the kinds of gigs you do and the kinds of gigs you would like to do? This includes ‘patter,’ how you introduce yourself and your songs to the audience. Material is the theatrical “meat” of your performance.

Musicianship & Skills

This includes your ability to execute your ideas, your technical mastery as a musician and actor. This also includes vocal attributes such as tone quality, pitch accuracy and security, rhythm, phrasing: the elements that we “listen to.”

Style:

This includes all of those qualities difficult to describe; emotional delivery, ability to make us “believe,” ability to entertain and engage us on a personal level. Style often is a result of how well we know ourselves and understand what we are trying to project. Consider the “style” of performers you admire. Describe the “style” of 3 well-known performers.

Now, list your strengths. How can you improve upon those strengths?

Weaknesses? How can you improve on those weaknesses?

How would you market your performances and your music?

Purchase several magazines. Some of them should be music magazines like JazzTimes, Downbeat, Pulse, etc. One should be a fashion magazine like GQ, Vogue, Elle, one a lifestyle magazine like Town & Country, Food & Wine, Martha Stewart, etc., and one should be relevant to a hobby that you enjoy such as fly fishing, motor car racing, computing, gardening, making paper maché Easter decorations or traveling.

Observe how marketing affects the type of ads that you see. In the music magazine how are your favorite artists portrayed? Which ads are attractive to you. What colors, images are they using? Which ads might prompt you to try the product, buy the CD, go to the show. What styles, colors, etc. project something you'd like to say about yourself?