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1. INTRODUCTION

The dictionary definition of band is a group of people getting together for a common purpose. In music, the concept of a band means much more than that.

The first official "bands" in popular music were big bands, which in the 1930s and 1940s were collectives of horn players, guitarists, percussionists, and singers who played swing jazz. (Actually, bands were around even earlier, given John Philips Sousa marching bands, military-style bands, and jazz pioneers that existed around the turn of the century.) But big bands had too many members to travel easily across the country, so rhythm-and-blues and newer jazz musicians reduced the number to roughly four or five people per band. This configuration was more flexible and affordable, and the trend continues today.

The first rock 'n' roll bands arrived in the 1950s, notably Elvis Presley and his three-man rockabilly combo, guitarist Scotty Moore, bassist Bill Black, and drummer D.J. Fontana. As the music grew, the bands expanded—The Beatles pioneered the classic pop quartet, with two guitarists, a bass player, a drummer, and four members who could sing. Rock, in addition to country, folk, blues, bluegrass, and pop, has since gone through many permutations, from a lone singer such as Joan Baez to a 27-piece harp-choir-guitar band such as The Polyphonic Spree. There are no rules on this subject; choose as many or as few members as you need to properly get the music across.

Sometimes bands have an obvious star, who is often also the creative talent, and the rest of the musicians will step into the background. Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, and Lil Jon & The East Side Boyz are among the examples from pop-music history—early on, the sidemen accepted their roles as supporting players. In these situations, the star gets top billing on club marquees, while the band develops into a loyal coalition of players who take orders from the leader.

Another type of backup band involves a well-known frontperson who hires musicians to bring his or her music to life. Next time pop star Christina Aguilera comes to an arena in your town, notice the people behind her—although it may not be obvious from the audience, they're a salaried band hired to keep the music going. (Sometimes they'll play the same role in a recording studio.) But some backup bands form out of longtime friendships with the leaders, sticking with them as they climb from obscurity to stardom.

These kinds of bands are worth studying: Which musicians play solos, and when? What instruments sound good together? Can you hear the keyboardist all the time? A great way to learn broad band concepts like tempo and dynamics is to pay attention to how the professionals do it.

The players in any of these backup bands probably started exactly where you're starting now—with a few friends who think it'd be cool to be in a band. These professional musicians are proof that if you work hard and do all the right things, from booking club shows to maintaining a mailing list, you have a chance. Perhaps success in a self-contained band, in which each member has an equal role in the music and decisions, awaits you. Or perhaps you're destined to play your bass in a band led by somebody else. Both of these "working musician" configurations are equally respectable—and fun.

At this stage, your best opportunity to form a band is in a self-contained group of musicians who plan to pick a style, rehearse, and perform together. You'll do all the fundamental band work yourselves without hiring outside people. (Once you get bigger and need help, the hiring will begin.)

A self-contained group can be incredibly rewarding. (Or incredibly painful, if you fall in with the wrong combination of people.) Whether you stay together for three weeks or an entire career, band members make emotional connections with each other and can stay friends forever. If they're really lucky, they'll wind up like U2, a group of Irish schoolmates who managed to stay together as a profitable and rewarding band for two decades and counting.

Once you form a band, it won't take long to realize what you're doing isn't easy. The music may come easily to you, especially if you're starting out with basic, three-chord rock, pop, country, or blues, but concepts like teamwork, cooperation, chemistry, and soul are much more challenging to master. To do so, keep in mind that a band playing together as an entire unit is far more effective than everybody soloing at the same time.

Band Types

These days, there are more kinds of bands playing more styles of music in more configurations than anyone could possibly count. Some are party bands, playing upbeat versions of familiar rock 'n' roll songs to get people dancing. Some are wedding bands, playing a specific roster of standards predetermined by the bride and groom. Some will play original music, written and performed by the band members, in an attempt to fill clubs and sell compact discs.

It's not important, yet, to know exactly which of these configurations, if any, you'd like to be. Try to let your style evolve, rather than defining it so rigidly that there's no room for experimentation or dissent. The Rolling Stones started out as a blues band, performing Muddy Waters and Chuck Berry songs, but have evolved over the decades into perhaps the most successful rock 'n' roll band in the world.

Do you have to be good-looking to be in a band? No! Check out pictures of Aerosmith singer Steven Tyler, ex-Cars leader Ric Ocasek, the Stones' Mick Jagger, and certain weird-facial-haired members of the Backstreet Boys. Not the hunkiest men in the world. But they all had a certain *je ne sais quoi*, a stage presence or charisma that made them effective and desirable as front men for bands.

Remember, too, that the image of the pop-star hero you're trying to emulate may be heavily manipulated by the time it reaches you on a CD cover, poster, or Internet page. Don't let looks intimidate you. If your band makes terrific music, it will be inherently attractive to people.

Your image will come naturally as the band progresses. Some performers have drastically changed their looks in order to present dramatic images—Marilyn Manson, for example, toiled in bands for years before becoming famous in white makeup, bright red lipstick, and creepy contact lenses. Tons of successful musicians, from David Bowie to Madonna to Britney Spears, have changed their appearance regularly to help sell their music. You can try it, too.

Many great musical movements have arrived with corresponding fashion scenes. When The Beatles became internationally famous in the 1960s, they pioneered the extreme notion of men with long hair. Punk bands in the late 1970s created their own clothing and hairstyles, with accessories such as mohawk hairdos and safety pins. More recently, pop singers like Mariah Carey, Pink, Britney Spears, and Christina Aguilera have drawn attention to their music by wearing very little clothing. If anybody in your band has some fashion sense, consider changing the band's look to get attention.

One of the first questions you'll need to tackle is, "How many musicians should be in the band?" Often the answer will be obvious, as you'll have three or four people who show up to practice prepared to sing or play certain instruments. But you may have to make the membership decision based on your collective musical vision—duos sound drastically different from quartets, and it's worth knowing the pros and cons of each configuration.

Duos have a rich tradition in pop, rock, and other genres, from The Everly Brothers to Simon & Garfunkel to The White Stripes—but they're limited. Many duos wind up hiring bands to flesh out the music behind them, or in the Stripes' case, hiring a bass player to complement their vocal-guitar-drums lineup. A trio, favored by such rock stars as guitarist Jeff Beck, the Goo Goo Dolls, and Nirvana, is a sturdy configuration that avoids "too many chefs" syndrome.

But perhaps the ultimate rock-and-pop lineup is a quartet, usually with drums, bass, guitar, vocals and, if the singer plays an instrument, perhaps a keyboard or second guitar. It may not seem like much, but when all four band members play together, they can create a powerful sound (or a horrible racket, depending on how good they are). Classic quartets include The Beatles, The Who, The Sex Pistols, The Clash, X, The Replacements, Jane's Addiction, and the Foo Fighters.

You can have as many musicians as you want, of course, as long as the lineup doesn't start to mess up internal communication.

Goals

At first, when you form a band, the goal is to have fun playing together. But after you've done this for a while, and considered the idea of regular rehearsals or performing before live audiences, it may be time for the group to sit down and determine its goals.

Do members of the band fantasize about being major rock stars? Do they want to play parties on the weekends? Quit their day jobs and make a living at music? At a certain point, it may help to make a chart of where you are, where you want to be, and how to get from here to there. This process requires communication among the band members, so it may be time to start meeting (in addition to rehearsing) on a regular basis.

Making a living in a band is an extremely difficult trick, which usually requires a long trip up the ladder from parties to weddings to club gigs. But if you have the commitment, you'll have a chance. The band members will probably have to spend at least a few months working regular jobs (or attending school) while rehearsing nights and playing on weekends.

In fact, some musicians spend their entire careers as "weekend warriors," changing clothes Friday after work and heading to club gigs. Many professionals enjoy the complementary nature of these two careers.

Shooting for fame isn't nearly as relaxing, although it can be incredibly rewarding. If the band is determined to be stars—which means, perhaps, touring different parts of the country, hiring a manager, and signing with a record label—the road is long, difficult, and fraught with barriers. Playing once or twice on the weekend won't be nearly enough.

Remember that making music, at least at first, is a low-paying proposition. Don't delude yourself into thinking you'll rehearse for a few weeks, land a club gig or two, and never have to work a real job again. Many musicians toil for years before they reach this point. You'd be surprised how many well-known band members continue to work day jobs.

2. HOW TO MANAGE YOUR BAND

Congratulations! You've made it past the stage that splinters many a fledgling band—finding a musical partner, setting rough goals, and figuring out what kind of band you are. You may have even started regular rehearsals. But where do you go from here?

If you're a traditional electric rock band, it may be time to find a rhythm section. Or you might want to add some new musical elements, like a second guitar player or a keyboardist, for texture and depth. Either way, the trick now is to mesh disparate musical visions into one cohesive whole and try to locate band "add-ons" who'll contribute their own particular styles and idiosyncrasies. As you start to define a "set list" and think about performing somewhat regularly in public, you may need the perspectives of talented, imaginative new members.

The important thing is to avoid being too dogmatic. If your favorite band is the Donnas, and all you want to do is play Donnas covers, you may have to compromise to accommodate a Celine Dion-loving singer and Red Hot Chili Peppers-loving bass player. Only after each band member embraces diversity and starts to value other members for their unique musical personalities will the band develop a group identity and make cohesive music. Any type of music, played by band members listening to each other and working toward the same goals, can be cohesive.

Technically, jamming disparate musical visions together can be a difficult trick. For example, if your guitarist loves to imitate folk singer Ani DiFranco while your bass player cranks Metallica up to 11 on his spare time, you'll have to do something about the combination of soft acoustic guitar and gigantic bass amplifier. One of these two players—preferably both—will have to make a change. Be magnanimous about it. Be the band member who volunteers to turn down his or her amp so as not to drown out the acoustic guitarist. Be the classically trained opera singer who translates complex sheet-music passages to the self-taught drummer.

Communication

As you grow and develop, you'll spend long hours in close contact, and will have to learn to communicate and compromise in order to stay together. Learning to play your instrument really, really well is important, of course, but so is getting along.

The bottom line of communication is staying open to other people's ideas. Allowing personal resentment to fester is the fastest way to kill a band, so do your best to avoid it.

One way to communicate effectively, in terms of playing music as a group, is to write everything down before you start. If everybody can read music fluently, great—that will make rehearsals easier. More likely, though, at least one of your fellow musicians won't have music-reading skills. So you'll have to transcribe the lyrics and print the chords in such a way that everybody can understand them. Make the charts simple—"A for four beats, then E for four beats, then back to D for one beat" may be the most efficient way of communicating musically, in a language everybody can easily understand. A slightly more complex type of chart is the head arrangement.

Solo?

As artists from John Mayer to Jewel have discovered, being a full-fledged member of a band may be too constrictive or complicated. You may have such a distinctive artistic vision that it's impossible to find a bass player or guitarist to go along with your complex ideas. Or personality-wise, you may be so set in your ways that you just can't compromise to get along with other musicians. The sooner you figure this out, the less frustrated you'll be.

One way to proceed as a solo artist is by hiring a backup band. As leader, you'll oversee a group of professional musicians paid to perform according to your instructions.

The other configuration is solo artist. That's just you, and probably your instrument, with nobody else to cover up your mistakes on stage. Obviously, in this situation, you're in complete control. You can play whatever solos you want, whenever you want, without throwing off a drummer's timing or stepping on a guitarist's showcase. A solo artist may find it easier to land certain kinds of quiet wedding gigs— particularly during the ceremony—or appear at coffeehouses.

Solo artists' expenses tend to be considerably lower than band expenses. You probably won't need the amplifiers to get your sound across. And you won't need cumbersome transportation options to carry yourself and your instrument to the gig. Then again, solo artists tend to get paid less than bands.

Whether you front a hired band or not, you'll have to be pretty talented as a musician to justify a solo career. (Some well-known artists, such as The Beatles' Ringo Starr and the Backstreet Boys' Nick Carter, were never successful on the level of the bands they left. Of course, Beyonce Knowles of Destiny's Child went on to huge success as a solo artist.) Even if you're good at your instrument, you'll need to work on new show-business skills such as charisma and stage presence to succeed with any kind of longevity.

Members

Unless you have the good fortune of having siblings who play bass, drums, and guitar, or unless you're married to your musical soul mate, you'll have to go out and find band members. This process may be as easy as hooking up with the person who sits next to you at music class or the next-door neighbor who admires your Velvet Underground LP collection. More often, though, it's a long, drawn-out process. Many bands, including Yes and The Red Hot Chili Peppers, can't seem to solidify a consistent lineup even after they become successful. So be prepared for some hard work and frequent changes of personnel.

Classified Ads

Unless you can draw from personal talent wells, such as friends' broken-up bands or school music classes, the search for new band members often begins with the classified ads.

If you do go the classified-ad route, always request that people send you a demo tape—that way you can prescreen candidates and only meet with the musicians that you are interested in. And always be professional and polite. In a local music scene, you never know when you'll encounter someone later.

Bulletin Boards

Even cheaper than classified ads are community bulletin boards. These are all over the place, especially in college towns—check kiosks at local outdoor malls, boards in student centers, entrance areas of record stores, libraries, bookstores, community radio stations and, coffeeshops.

Take a chance and scrawl an eye-catching ad on colorful paper. Include those little tabs at the bottom people can tear off so they don't have to copy down your phone number.

Be sure to scan the ads that already exist. If you're a metal band covering Limp Bizkit, Metallica, and other macho headbangers, you may not want to post at the campus Classical Music History Association. Then again, maybe you will—you never know where you'll find the person who perfectly fits your music.

Groups

Taking music lessons can be a great benefit, both to you and the band. If another member is a little more advanced than you, and it's difficult to keep up with him or her, you can advance a couple steps via private training.

Music lessons also give you networking opportunities. Your teacher, who is more experienced, is better connected locally, and probably has performed in a few bands, may know other students who'd fit your needs. The teacher may also suggest other contacts, or even local bulletin-board opportunities, for you to try out. In a pinch, this person may even be willing to step into your band temporarily until you find the right person.

Group music lessons, with more people, obviously present more opportunities.

Another common way bandmates find each other is in high school or college band classes. You may be playing second violin and strike up a conversation with the tuba player about how boring the class is. "We should rock" is a common invitation to start a band. So why not?

Internet

Be creative and aggressive when using the web for this sort of thing. Perhaps locally written blogs, or personal homepage diaries, contain gossip about bands looking for members in your town. Maybe your high school has an online bulletin board where you can post a bandmates-wanted message. Maybe an established band's site, like metallica.com, has bulletin-board threads dealing with Metallica-loving musicians in certain parts of the country. Cast your net widely in cyberspace.

Auditions

Once you've identified a prospective bandmate, the next step is to get together and play. An audition, another word for a job interview in the entertainment world, will give you a feeling for how well this musician can play. Perhaps more importantly, it will help you get to know the player personally—remember that the most talented musician in the world may not get

along with the rest of the band. Conversely, the most easygoing person in the world may be far from the greatest musician. Consider both angles when hiring.

In rock history, auditions have been both famously elaborate and famously minimalist. In early 2002, Limp Bizkit embarked on a highly publicized quest for a new guitarist, auditioning literally thousands of regular Joes at guitar stores all over the country. Some applicants waited in freezing outdoor temperatures for hours. More than a year later, though, the popular rap-metal band simply hired a ringer singer Fred Durst knew from an established band, Snot.

At the other extreme, The Who didn't even know that they needed a replacement musician until a kid named Keith Moon approached the band after a show and declared himself better than their existing drummer. He started hammering away with the band and they asked him to show up at the next rehearsal. He kept showing up, and even after The Who had become superstars, nobody ever said, "You're in the band."

Try to stay focused on your needs as a group. If a guitarist shows up and blows you away with fiery heavy-metal leads, and you're a quiet folk-rock combo, don't get "new car fever." Tell the person you'll come to see his concerts someday, but he just isn't right for your band. You're looking for a musician, ultimately, who will stick with you for perhaps months or years—maybe even longer, if you follow The Rolling Stones so make the decision intelligently.

Talent will almost certainly be apparent. A serious band candidate will be able to play with you, rather than against you—not only in tune, but in time. He or she will know the difference between a verse and a chorus. This person will understand the subtleties of dynamics, or when to play soft and when to play loud. The ultimate bandmate will know to lay back when the singer sings and not rip off a loud, impressive solo in the middle of somebody else's verse.

Just as job interviews rarely indicate definitively whether a prospective employee will fit into the corporate culture, a musical audition won't screen for nebulous issues like compatibility. Play with your potential bandmate several times if necessary, but if you're really serious about this person, hang out with him or her in other settings.

Go out together for a cup of coffee. Have dinner, see a movie, attend a football match, or naturally, hear other bands. Do things as a group. Through such rigorous "screening," you'll probably find out whether this person will fit in with the rest of the band.

When they've just started, many bands will hire an easygoing friend who doesn't even know how to play an instrument—and teach him or her along the way. Perhaps the most famous example was Stu Sutcliffe, a hipster friend of The Beatles' John Lennon who knew such little bass that he stood with his back to the audience. The Pixies' Joey Santiago learned lead guitar, The Sex Pistols' Sid Vicious learned bass, and The Breeders' Kelley Deal learned rhythm guitar—instruments they'd never played—while their bands became famous.

Rejection can be traumatic for both the rejecter and the rejected. If you're unlucky enough to be in the latter category, get used to it. The music business will reject you frequently, whether it's kicking you out of a band, keeping you out of a club, keeping you off the radio, or keeping a record label from signing you. Don't take it personally. It isn't a conspiracy. It's just the way people do business. Learn from it and move on.

Your first musical rejection may come in the form of a failed audition. This can be extremely stressful, especially if the band expressed so much interest that they took you for a cup of coffee or a movie. In such cases, the rejection probably has nothing to do with you personally, or even the way you play. Another band member's mother may have insisted her niece become the bass player. Or maybe somebody else owned a car and you didn't.

Once rejected, try to ask questions if they're appropriate. What did and didn't the band like? Would it be possible to re-audition in the future once you've learned certain songs? Then again, if somebody in the band just didn't like you personally, or if you have history with a band member's significant other, it'll be almost impossible to glean constructive criticism. So move on.

Rejecting an applicant may be just as stressful and depressing for the band members themselves. They may have really liked a certain musician but ultimately couldn't hire him or her for some of the reasons we've described.

Rejecters should be honest but gentle. Obviously, "You're crap, so pack up your gear and go home" is never an acceptable thing to say. Not only will it needlessly depress your applicant, it could give your band the reputation of abusing prospective members and being difficult to work with. This can make a difference later on, when you're trying to earn auditions with club owners or record labels. In the music business, even just the local club scene, gossip is prevalent and everybody's trying to damage your reputation somehow. Don't give anybody fuel by being a jerk for no good reason.

Musical Styles

Choosing a musical style is one of the first major decisions you'll make as a band. Sometimes it's simple: Everybody in the band listens to the same rock radio station, likes the same rock songs, and therefore agrees to play the same Aerosmith and Maroon 5 covers. Usually it's more complicated: The drummer grew up worshipping James Brown, the guitarist is a Tool kind of guy, and the bassist likes Irish folk ballads. (This latter combination may actually be more original and interesting than the Aerosmith scenario.) Regardless of what style you settle on, you'll find plenty of easy-to-play songs to start the band's repertoire. No genre of popular music is too difficult for a beginning band to master—even jazz is often based on basic pop standards.

In the early days of pop music, genres were easy to define. Rock 'n' roll meant Elvis Presley and, later, The Beatles. Folk meant Joan Baez and Pete Seeger. Blues meant Muddy Waters and old Robert Johnson records. Jazz was John Coltrane, country was Loretta Lynn ... you get the picture.

These definitions have expanded, almost to the point of meaninglessness, over the decades. "Rock" today refers to punk band Sleater-Kinney as well as pop diva Britney Spears. Thus, marketers, writers, radio programmers, and the musicians themselves have found it necessary to break down the genre into dozens of hair-splitting subcategories: hard rock, classic rock, punk rock, hardcore punk, pop-punk, emo, rap-metal, funk-metal, punk-metal, and so forth. Your options, when deciding on a genre, are all or none of the above. And feel free to invent your own.

Rock

Whether you believe Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, or somebody else invented the style in the 1950s, rock 'n' roll music began as an exciting merger of white country-western music and black rhythm-and-blues. It has more or less stayed close to that original definition, although the "rock" category has expanded to all sorts of non-Elvis-like sounds.

Generally, the minimum number of players in a rock band is three. The core rock-band configuration is usually guitar, bass, drums, vocals. Rock music is mostly played in the standard 4/4 time. For each of these rules, however, you can probably name 100 exceptions.

As rock matures and ages, it splinters. During the mid-1970s, for example, New York City's The Ramones, and then England's The Clash and The Sex Pistols, decided rock was boring and needed to be simultaneously simplified and sped up. Thus, they invented the faster, shorter punk rock genre; over the years, younger bands like Nirvana, Green Day, Rancid, and Sum 41 picked up the style and added their distinctive personalities.

Alternative rock began in the early 1990s, when Seattle grunge bands Nirvana, Pearl Jam, and Soundgarden took punk rock's inspiration and turned it into something heavier. As grunge began to catch on at MTV and traditional rock radio stations, others copied the style—Bush and Stone Temple Pilots made grunge more palatable to larger numbers of listeners. As more and more bands jumped into the format, radio stations and record labels marketed it as alternative rock, or an alternative to the mainstream. (That this kind of rock was the mainstream didn't matter.)

Metal is loud, deep, and often obsessed with gothic fantasy images of death and destruction. Its inventors were Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin in the late 1960s and early 1970s; later, Motorhead, Iron Maiden, Metallica, Anthrax, Megadeth, Pantera, and Korn would add their idiosyncrasies. As various bands expanded the genre, metal became hyphenated—Slayer will always be thrash-metal, whereas you could call Limp Bizkit rap-metal. In the 1980s, pop bands with big hair juiced up metal's catchy melodies and invented what's now called hair metal: Bon Jovi, Poison, and so on.

You can play all of this rock stuff with rudimentary musical skills. Beatles bassist Paul McCartney, famously, never learned to read music. Joey Santiago, guitarist for Boston's influential Pixies, picked up his instrument the day that he joined the band and learned as he went along. Although we'll stop short of saying it's better not to know how to play your instrument, we believe passion and soul are far more important than technical musical ability.

Folk

Like rock, folk is a catch-all category that can cover everything from Nigerian drummers to American protest singers. So named because of its "music for the people" spirit, folk began as a network of sea chanties and field hollers passed down from generation to generation. Its major renaissance came in the 1960s, when political-minded "folkies"—Baez, Bob Dylan, Tom Rush, Phil Ochs—filled New York City coffeehouses with acoustic guitars.

That's not to say folk groups necessarily have to be political. Since the 1960s, the definition of folk has come to mean "a soft-spoken singer or singers with original songs and acoustic

guitars"— James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Shawn Colvin, and Dar Williams fit this broad category.

Groups can play folk music—The Weavers and The Kingston Trio are some of the most influential artists in the genre—but more common configurations are solo artists or duos.

The style is similar to rock, in terms of tempo and chords, although folk is usually a little slower and a lot quieter. The songs also tend to be personal, told from the narrator's first-person perspective or telling the classic story of John Henry the steel-driving man or the shady Philadelphia lawyer. As with rock and country, if you know three basic guitar chords and how to keep time, you can play folk.

Country

Country began, informally, as old-timey tunes in the Appalachian Mountains and other rural areas before the turn of the twentieth century. Like folk, country's origins are in self-taught, sing-around-the-fire songs passed down through word of mouth among friends and family members.

Beginning in the late 1920s, when the recording industry started to mature, singers such as Jimmie Rodgers, The Carter Family, Roy Acuff, and Hank Williams Sr. became stars in the genre. They sang in high, lonesome tones about living tough lives and finding relief in God, travelling, and drinking (although not necessarily in that order).

Over the years, country would shift in many different directions, from big-band-jazz-inspired western swing in the 1930s to the heavily produced, pre-rock 'n' roll "Nashville Sound" in the 1940s. One offshoot came from Kentucky mandolinist Bill Monroe, who with his Blue Grass Boys invented an influential, soulful sound known as bluegrass. One of Elvis Presley's early rock hits was a hopped-up version of Monroe's "Blue Moon of Kentucky."

In the 1970s, The Byrds, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Gram Parsons, and Poco merged two genres, creating country-rock, which proved influential in the early 1990s. Garth Brooks, Clint Black, Alan Jackson, and others streamlined this sound into massive record sales and huge superstardom. With Faith Hill and Shania Twain turning country into pop, the sound continues to evolve and—for better and worse—turn away from its hillbilly roots.

To play country or bluegrass, do you have to be from Kentucky? Of course not. But you need to know those three basic chords we keep talking about, and preferably have a good, soulful singer—many country stars are individuals, backed by an anonymous band.

Today's country, like rock, can pretty much sound like anything—Nashville's Steve Earle plays it like early 1970s Rolling Stones, Chicago's Waco Brothers turn it into punk, the late, great Johnny Cash sang the occasional Nine Inch Nails song, and Shania Twain is more like a pop diva than a country crooner. Bluegrass, however, is almost always played in the traditional manner, with rickety vocals and a band of mandolinists, fiddlers, and soft, acoustic instrumentation.

Blues

A purely American song form, blues began in the early twentieth century as an informal series of slave shouts and field hollers. The blues' roots are in Africa, where the music travelled to other countries via the slave trade; the music's brutally honest expressions of suffering and joy eventually influenced all levels of popular song.

Early blues were generally played on acoustic guitars, harmonicas, and washboards, by then-unheralded giants such as Charley Patton and Robert Johnson. The myths made the music richer: Johnson was one of several Mississippi Delta singers to have ostensibly sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads. They played at juke joints and house parties; folklorists sporadically tracked them down for recordings.

By the 1940s, many southern bluesmen joined the mass African American exodus from the South to industrial cities a little farther north. Muddy Waters wound up in Chicago, where he pioneered blues on electric instruments; John Lee Hooker took his "stomp" to Detroit; B. B. King landed in Memphis. Their recordings were vital precursors to rock 'n' roll.

Today's blues performers are usually traditionalists; some do the sitting-on-a-stool, singing-with-a-guitar thing, while others ape Muddy Waters and learn to play guitar in an electric band. They almost always use the 12-bar blues as a musical foundation—this refers to a repetitive structure using three particular chords.

A little music theory: To learn chords in the 12-bar blues figure out the I, IV, and V notes of any given scale. For example, if you're playing in the key of C, go up the scale to the first, fourth, and fifth notes—which would be C, F, and G. Thus, the C, F, and G chords are the three you'll play (generally speaking) in the C blues.

Once you know this pattern, you can play almost any blues standard—from "Stormy Monday" to "Sweet Home Chicago"—and lots of country, folk, and rock, too.

Jazz

They say Buddy Bowlen invented jazz in New Orleans in the 1910s, although no recordings of him exist. Pianist Jelly Roll Morton, also from New Orleans, staked his claim to the "inventor of jazz" title a few years later, turning pop standards into rich boogie-woogie originals.

Jazz is by nature improvisational, so the musicians solo regularly and often make up the song as they go along. As jazz has grown and changed dramatically, players such as saxophonists Lester Young, Charlie Parker, and John Coltrane; trumpeters Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis; guitarist Charlie Christian; bassist Charles Mingus; and pianist Thelonious Monk have become legendary innovators.

Originally, jazz was usually played in the New Orleans Dixieland style. Armstrong came along and gave it personality. Later, it morphed into big-band swing orchestrated by black bandleaders such as Fletcher Henderson and Count Basie, but, by World War II, it was turning into pop music played by white talents Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller and their big bands.

By the 1940s, Parker and Davis eschewed the rulebook and created bebop, a more free-form, soloist-centered style that built on the framework of blues and pop standards. After that,

important figures such as Coltrane, Mingus, Monk, and Ornette Coleman laid the foundation for modern jazz, which has almost no rules at all, just instinct and soul. Another strain is smooth jazz, like that played by Chuck Mangione and Kenny G., which is usually a melodic, radio-friendly version of traditional jazz standards with lots of soothing solos.

Jazz is a little more difficult to play, and certainly to master, than three-chord rock, blues, or country. Jazz combos—trios, quartets, or more, all the way up to multi-musician big bands—require at least one talented soloist. And the rhythm sections must know how to do more than simply keep a "one, two, three, four" beat; like classical music, jazz is often performed in complicated time signatures.

That's not to say you can't play jazz. Many standards, from Parker's "A Night in Tunisia" to Davis's "So What" are written in basic blues and pop arrangements. But your goal, as a jazz group, should be to eventually excel as a collection of soloists. Often, jazz groups form out of jazz-club jam nights or school orchestras.

Hip-Hop

Hip-hop began in the late 1970s, as New York City DJs took existing funk and disco songs, sliced up their beats, and chanted over the resulting grooves. The first major hip-hop song was The Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," in 1979, and artists such as Kurds Blow, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Run-D.M.C., LL Cool J, Public Enemy, Queen Latifah, N.W.A., Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, Outkast, and Eminem followed.

Hip-hop took punk-rock's "do it yourself philosophy to an extreme. Although the rappers had to have a gift of gab and a certain amount of poetic skills, none played a musical instrument or followed any traditional song structure.

The "musicians" of rap are DJs, which isn't to say the disc jockeys you'd hear on radio stations. These sonic gurus pioneered the "two turntables and a microphone" approach, scratching vinyl records and turning samples, or snippets of classic funk and disco tracks, into completely new songs.

To start a hip-hop group, you'll need at least one lyricist, a DJ with a sense of rhythm and a strong record collection, and perhaps a dancer or two. As with rock, hip-hop stage moves are distinctive and stereotypical: Every emcee (lead rapper) at some point tells a crowd to "put your hands in the air and wave them like you just don't care!"

Note that while rap groups began by breaking down the traditional band concept, many performers these days tour with live bands such as the Roots.

Like every other pop genre, hip-hop has splintered into a million pieces. Gangsta rap grew out of Los Angeles band N.W.A.'s early 1990s imagery of guns and fighting back against police brutality. Jazz rap comes and goes, with groups like Digable Planets and Gangstarr showing how seamlessly classic jazz and modern rap fit together. Trip-hop is a spacier, more dance-club-oriented spinoff, exemplified on Tricky and Portishead CDs.

Although techno music doesn't sound much like hip-hop, the instrumentation is often the same. Growing out of warehouse dance parties in London, Detroit, and Chicago in the early

1980s, techno creates repetitive, loud, dance-able noise from turntables, drum machines, and these days, computers.

Briefly nicknamed electronica in the late 1990s, techno is what you'd usually hear at an all-night rave party. Its best-known artists include Moby, Orbital, and Paul Oakenfold.

Pop

Pop, short for popular music, is technically "whatever people are buying." It has come to represent Top 40 music from Olivia Newton-John in the 1970s to Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys in the 1990s. Today, aspiring singers flock to reality-TV shows. Rarely do pop singers form bands; they stay home and work on their voices and try to "make it" via talent shows and music-industry Svengalis.

Power-pop bands were allies of punk-rockers in the 1970s, and tried to reduce rock songs to their essence—short songs, short solos, unflashy singers, and punchy, powerful lyrics. Songs like Nick Lowe's "I Love the Sound of Breaking Glass" and Dave Edmunds's "Girl Talk" sound simple but they're deceptively hard to play well and require much rehearsal.

Songs

To start out, you'll want to play basic songs in the genre you've picked. If you're in a funk band and aspire to play any gathering where people dance, you'll have to know Kool & the Gang's "Celebration." If you're in a blues band, you'll have to know "Sweet Home Chicago." Every genre has its signature song, and every band in that genre must be able to play it.

Having said that, it's worth thinking about long-term goals as you figure out what songs to work into your "we can play that" list. If you aspire to perform original material and make CDs for a record label someday, you won't want to get pigeonholed as "that band that plays Kool & the Gang." Of course, if you aspire to make money on the wedding-and-party circuit, "Celebration" will work just fine.

Initially, unless you're like Jim Morrison and have notebooks filled with brilliant, unheard poems, you'll want to play familiar covers. Everybody in the band probably knows the lyrics already, they're easy to learn, and fans, when you have them, will react enthusiastically. Plus, the more covers you play, the more you'll learn about universal chord changes, lyrical twists, and song structures.

For now, you may want to avoid originals. Once you've mastered a dozen cover songs, it may be time for somebody in the band to introduce original material. Until then, your focus should be on working together as a group and learning each other's musical nuances.

Originals add several new elements into the song-learning process—particularly ego, as the new writer may not yet be prepared for the band's critical feedback. But that's not to say you should never introduce new material. You should; when the time is right, it may take the band to a new level.

Name

The best band names are always short, simple, and easily memorable: Oasis, Blur, Kraftwerk. Often they're preceded by "the": The Beatles, like Buddy Holly's The Crickets only with a "beat"; The Rolling Stones, named after Muddy Waters's classic blues song; and so on. In any case, the most important thing is to pick one that's fairly representative of the music you play.

Another serious consideration is whether you can register your band name as a domain name on the Internet. Although you can easily get an alternative website address, at this stage it may be just as easy to change the band's name.

Don't get obsessed with cleverness. Again, simplicity rules. Pick out characters' names from famous books. Ask your Aunt Byrxegeus if she'd mind if you borrowed her name. One band named itself after The New York Times' science writer, Gina Kolata (and wound up with bonus publicity when another writer interviewed the real Kolata about her namesake band).

To speed up the process, there are tons of Random Band Generators on the Internet. But perhaps the best way to generate a name is to relax, sit on comfortable chairs (outside your rehearsal space), and start throwing ideas around. Remember, in brainstorming, there's no such thing as a bad idea. Come up with a list of 100, and then narrow it down.

- *Toad the Wet Sprocket took its name from a Monty Python sketch.*
- *"Chumbawamba" is what one of the Ewoks, in Return of the Jedi, exclaimed while falling over.*
- *Duran Duran is the villain from Barberella, doubled.*
- *The Sex Pistols grew out of the London punk-fashion store "Sex," then added Pistols to sound dangerous.*
- *Despite rumors to the contrary, Pearl Jam is named after singer Eddie Vedder's grandmother, Pearl, who apparently made jam.*
- *Pink Floyd is an amalgam of singer Syd Barrett's favorite blues musicians, Pink Anderson and Floyd Council.*
- *... And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead is reportedly a prayer to Mayan corn gods.*

The Everyday Life in the Band

Every successful band member leaves behind a long resume of unsuccessful bands. Before Pearl Jam had anything close to a hit record, members played in Green River, Mother Love Bone, Mookie Blaylock, and several other short-lived collectives. And that's just one of millions of examples. At some point, you'll probably play in a band that breaks up, too. So, it's time to start thinking about how the band will stay together in the long run. Which means

hanging on to the musicians who are as serious and driven as yourself and weeding out the musicians who are in it exclusively for the post-show parties.

A band is like a marriage. (So in theory, more than 50 percent of them end in divorce...) All the musicians will spend so much time together—rehearsing, performing, dreaming, scheming, handling the business—that they'll feel they're in a long-term relationship. And just like husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends, band members must figure out how to deal with each other in constant close quarters.

The usual relationship rules apply: Try not to get too picky; don't take things too personally; subvert your ego to reach a collective goal; and, perhaps most important at this stage, figure out your role in the band. Then stick to that role as best you can, whether it's a personal, getting-along-together kind of role or a musical, play-a-certain-chord-at-a-certain-time kind of role.

A key component of marriage is commitment. The day you join a band and the day it breaks up are often memorable—a lot like a wedding or a divorce. You may feel elated that first day, and emotionally spent on the last. As with marriage, it's important to learn to commit and to know, if necessary, when to move on when the sad time comes.

Following we list several general personality types in bands. Of course, you can't reduce complex musicians to simple stereotypes, and these rough categories can't possibly cover every band character. It's not necessary to obsess over recognizing the "comedian" or "friend," although it's usually important to pick a leader. If the band functions smoothly, and the music is progressing, chances are you've got a strong, complementary mix of personalities already.

The Leader

It's possible you're the leader and must start making decisions and generally setting direction for the band. If you're not the leader, learn to subvert your ego and acquiesce to the leader's decisions. At the least, give him or her a chance.

A strong leader helps direct the group in a specific musical or business direction. If this person has true leadership skills, he or she will consult the group for its input and make decisions, easy or hard, that make everybody feel valued and important. A weak leader may create resentment and disharmony—and if such behavior continues, you may have to start the difficult process of choosing a new leader.

The leader will most likely be the hardest-working member of the band. Among the leader's duties are negotiating with neighbors over where and when to hold rehearsals, researching songs and lyrics and presenting them to the band, casting the tie-breaking vote for rehearsal time if members' schedules conflict, halting rehearsal to ensure that everybody's input is heard, and arriving early to a gig to determine where and when to set up the equipment.

Who gets to be leader? Again, the band's "alpha personality" will usually just emerge naturally. If you have to sit around and figure out who the leader is, you're probably in a democratic band which is not always the best. A good leader will naturally earn respect. And the rest of the members are usually glad to accept leadership: "Just tell me when to be there" is a common refrain.

The leader doesn't necessarily have to be the best or most experienced musician in the band—although sometimes that helps. To be effective, he or she has to work hard, take initiative, make decisions, and be aware of others' feelings.

The leader will have to do certain things individually: signing any kind of contract, collecting the money the night of the show (because the entire band can't show up in the club office), and conducting media interviews (because reporters often have trouble focusing on multiple voices).

Some situations, though, demand a group vote:

- Whether you'll play a gig at a certain time and place (and for a certain amount of money)
- Certain financial decisions that affect everybody, such as opening a band bank account
- Whether to make a large group purchase, such as a PA system
- Choosing a band name
- How to disperse money from gigs, recordings, and so on
- Set-list disputes
- Choosing common goals

James Brown, the legendary Godfather of Soul, was notorious as a bandleader for maintaining control and order over his musicians. Some called him "militaristic," as he required each member to wear a three-piece suit, fined late employees, and scolded musicians who arrived with crooked ties. He paid the price for these dictatorial tendencies in the late 1960s, when several hot young members, including the great bassist Bootsy Collins, left to become famous in other bands.

The Talent

In the early Rolling Stones, if singer Mick Jagger was the leader, guitarist Brian Jones was the talent. (Sadly, Jones drowned in his swimming pool in 1969.) He was the heart and soul of the band, the guy who introduced country and Indian influences, suggesting a sitar bit in a certain song when nobody else would have possibly thought of such a thing.

The talent has just that—innate musical or show-business sense. This musician pushes the creative envelope and often winds up as the primary songwriter. During rehearsal, the talent will often make germane musical suggestions and encourage other members at precisely the right times. He or she might suggest a six-string bass instead of the usual four-string on a particular song—and might be right.

The Arranger

Traditionally, an arranger is the behind-the-scenes person who sees to it that many disparate musicians play in harmony. Famous arrangers include Paul Shaffer, bandleader for the Late Show with David Letterman, and Nelson Riddle, who conducted the orchestras for Frank Sinatra's classic Capitol recordings in the 1950s and 1960s.

In your band, the arranger most likely has a little more formal musical training than everybody else. This person understands the basics of music theory, knows a few extra chords and can help, say, quickly transpose a song in the key of C to an easier-to-sing key of E.

Without an arranger type, bands can sit around for hours trying to help an untrained guitarist figure out a flatted-seventh note.

The Friend

Although the leader has the authority to tell others what to do, often the friend has the credibility. This easygoing personality type may be the only person who can kindly explain to the bassist that he consistently wears black clothes covered in dandruff to the gig. Or politely tell the singer he's flat.

The friend helps everybody get along. In a way, this person is the liaison between band members. If the drummer isn't speaking to the singer, the friend will take both characters out and communicate messages until finally coaxing them back onto speaking terms. Factions and camps are inevitable in every group, and the peacekeeping friend is invaluable to bring them together.

The Funny Guy

Bands have a nasty habit of taking themselves too seriously. The exception is the comedian, who's always quick with the one-liner and prepared to make even the angriest musician laugh. This character is almost always "on," and knows the difference between laughing at and laughing with other people. Drummer Keith Moon famously played this role to excess in The Who—and took it a bit too far, as he died of complications from drug and alcohol abuse in 1979.

Schedules

Nothing kills a new band faster than scheduling conflicts. We have no easy solution to this problem. The best you can do is be flexible and prioritize. If the band is more important to you than swim class, and three of the other four members can practice only during your swim class, consider canceling pool time. Before discussing times with everybody else, block off large chunks that are good for you and be willing to give something up. Invest in a date book.

If rehearsal is at 8 P.M. every Tuesday, don't show up at 8:20. Occasional explained absences are understandable, but consistent erratic behavior is a good way to wreck a band—or, at least, get yourself kicked out.

Activities you'll probably have to schedule on a regular basis include the following:

- Rehearsal (and more specialized rehearsals such as vocals and rhythm)
- Band meetings
- Gigs (plus loading in and out)

Band Issues

Now is the time to dream. Do you want to perform at stadiums someday? Sign with a major record label? Open for Linkin Park? Be Linkin Park? Or just play around town, stay together for a while, and then look back on the good old days?

All of these goals are reasonable. But if people in the band disagree on them—especially without communicating their desires—it can make even the smallest decision difficult.

Now might be the time for a band meeting, where everybody can discuss ideas and determine who agrees with whom. Once you've written everything down, take a vote, or allow the leader to make the final decision. Your goals will change as the band progresses, but for now it's helpful to know whether you're in it for the fun or the fame.

Eventually, as your band learns how to communicate and holds several successful meetings and rehearsals, you'll develop a framework for constructive criticism. Again, don't make it personal. If you want the bassist to know he's not playing in time during the second chorus, separate that issue from the issue of fighting with him over your girlfriend.

Try to break down every issue into a separate, bite-size discussion and stay focused on that. And stay focused.

Also, it's the little things that often break down group dynamics. Resist the urge to fold your arms, or worse, roll your eyes, when somebody else is talking. When addressing another musician, avoid "you" statements—"you're doing that wrong," "you're stupid," and so forth. Best to stick with "I" statements—"I feel perhaps this isn't sounding right." It's okay to be blunt on rare occasions, but keep in mind basic concepts of respect, kindness, and communication.

Group dynamics is a fancy psychology term for "several people getting along together." Researchers and business analysts have tons of theories for how to do this, but as usual, the basics apply. For example, don't let difficult issues linger; deal with them quickly and openly, at band meetings. Keep personal issues separate from musical or business issues. Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Psychologists have studied group dynamics for decades, and one prominent theory comes from researcher B. W. Tuckman in the mid-1960s. (Doomed rock bands of that era, such as Buffalo Springfield and The Beatles, probably could have used his help.)

Tuckman identified the following five stages of group dynamics:

- Forming, or trying to avoid conflicts and keep things simple while beginning the task at hand
- Storming, or dealing with competition and conflict as members get deeper into the task
- Norming, or starting to get along with each other and function smoothly as a unit
- Performing, or beginning to achieve your goal as a group
- Adjourning, or breaking up the group altogether

The trickiest progression here is from storming to norming, and Tuckman recommends listening as a key transitional device. In other words, try to give up your personal baggage and

ego issues. Figure out who the other band members are and why their needs are important. If everybody learns to do this consistently, jumping to the performing stage will be simple—and perhaps you can avoid the adjourning stage.

The most exciting Tuckman stage, for your purposes, is performing. Often, after the band hashes out its personal issues, that's when the best music starts to emerge. You'll be able to play your parts without resentment or frustration, satisfied that you'll get to solo as much as you want and you may reflexively find yourself humming along to the chorus. This is often the most rewarding point in a band's career, and the experience may stick with you forever.

Every sports team has one or two big stars and several other guys who do their jobs extremely well. Consider the Chicago Bulls of the 1990s—they won six basketball championships, largely due to the amazing talents of Michael Jordan. But several other players performed key roles: John Paxson hit a key three-point shot to win the 1993 championship series, and Ron Harper provided crucial defensive punch for the last three titles.

Bands function the same way. Bruce Springsteen may be a gigantic rock star and major talent, but his organist, Danny Federici, provides just the right sonic touches on several different songs, and drummer Max Weinberg keeps the beat big and steady and always avoids the urge to upstage his mates. Booker T and the MG's, The Band, and Crazy Horse performed similar roles for, respectively, Otis Redding, Bob Dylan, and Neil Young. In other words, the front person doesn't have to shoot the big shot on every play. It's the final product—the group product—that's important.

Al Kooper, who played keyboards on Bob Dylan's 1960s classic "Like a Rolling Stone" and has been in many prominent rock bands, including Blood, Sweat & Tears, has his own group-dynamics theory. He compares bands to a stack of books on a table, with each book representing one musician. If you pull certain books out as far as they'll go, the stack will be wobbly—but it will often remain standing. This is a dangerous way to run a band, with various characters stretched as far onto the fringe as they can go. Kooper recommends stacking the books evenly, so everybody's easy to get along with.

Personal Issues

It's often necessary to "change parts" as a band progresses. Sometimes this decision will be obvious: If nobody in the band can read a note of music, and you're having trouble transposing keys or staying in tune, you may want to recruit a ringer. Conversely, somebody in the band may have unsalvageable music skills or may just not fit the group's personality. At this point, for the good of the band, you'll have to make a move—and the decision is often difficult.

Mark Rubin, bassist for the punk-bluegrass trio Bad Livers, advises bands to choose members based on how well they get along with other people. You may discover the greatest musician in rock history living in your town, but if that person has serious problems getting along with other people, it may make more sense to hire the mediocre musician who everybody likes. Group dynamics can be that fragile.

Rock and pop bands have often changed members on the route to fame. The best-known example is The Beatles, who fired Pete Best and hired Ringo Starr in the early 1960s. Country's Dixie Chicks, who began as a down-home bluegrass band, fired two original

members, hired singer Natalie Maines, and sold millions of records. And Destiny's Child went through several different configurations before settling on its hugely successful R&B-trio format with singer Beyonce Knowles as the star.

Once the band has rehearsed and maybe even performed a few times, you may want to broaden your palette. Keyboards can add color, texture, and density. More simply, if you're playing a wedding, you may want to hire a saxophonist or other horn player for big-band-dance-style numbers or similar special requests.

There are excellent nonmusical reasons to add players as well. If the band is filled with flamboyant, difficult personalities, it may behoove you to find a down-to-earth, laid-back type to keep everybody grounded.

3. GET STARTED

Plugging in your gear and starting to play is one of the most exciting milestones in a band's history. Have fun with it.

Instruments

How much do instruments cost? A better question might be "How much do you want to spend?" In most price ranges, almost any brand, style, or condition of musical instrument is available. The guitar you buy for £15 in a pawnshop won't sound as rich as the one you order for £2,500 from a catalog, but both will play the same songs. Subtle sonic nuances probably won't matter as much when you're just learning to play an instrument.

The pawnshop doesn't have to be your only option, even if there's not much money in the budget. "Student" instruments, or guitars, drums, and keyboards designed for beginners, are reasonably priced. And used instruments, found online or through local classified ads, are often bargains.

Buying a musical instrument is a little like buying a car. If you're careful and shop around, you can usually get a good deal. However, you always risk ending up with a lemon.

Begin with the classified ads, in the local alt-weekly or daily newspaper, all of which have substantial sections titled "musical instruments." There's no shame in buying a used instrument. Just make sure that you test it out before buying, and consider bringing a superior player along to make sure there aren't any dead spots.

Also, talk to friends or relatives who have old instruments left over from their days in bands. They may be pleased somebody's putting their old guitar or snare drum to use. As you become more serious with the instrument, and in the band, you can upgrade to a higher-quality product. It's always possible, though, that you'll never want to part with the 1960s Telecaster you rescued from your uncle's dusty attic.

Almost every city has at least one music store, so start hanging around and befriend the clerks. They're generally musicians, and while their agenda is to sell high-priced instruments, they're usually honest about what's worth the money.

Pawnshops can be excellent sources of old instruments, but buyer beware. It's easy to lose the negotiation with a practiced haggler, and the pawnshop owner probably won't be quite as nurturing toward young band members as local music-store clerks.

As with any kind of merchandise, shop around. Try to avoid "new guitar fever," imagining yourself in a classic Jimmy Page pose as soon as you encounter a Gibson Les Paul. The more you're aware of instrument prices in general, the less likely you are to succumb to unreasonable markups.

The retail price for musical instruments tends to be considerably higher than the basic wholesale price. This means there's often plenty of barter room. Good salespeople, especially if you're a regular customer, might be willing to give you a deal.

Budget for the accessories. If you buy an electric guitar, you won't be able to hear anything without an amp. And neither one of those things will work particularly well without the proper cords to connect them. In addition, most guitarists will probably want to buy electronic tuners and perhaps some effects pedals.

Amplifiers, or amps, give electric instruments sound—and can make them as loud as you want. You'll need them for most rehearsal and gig situations, and they can be expensive, so shop carefully. And be ready to spend the rest of your band-member career loading them in and out of vans and venues.

Amps come in a wide range of sizes and prices. Guitarists' amps are perhaps the most elaborate—one of the most famous brands is Marshall, which sells amps anywhere from £500 to £1,200. You can also opt for a mini amp, also called a practice amp or studio amp, for considerably less money—as low as £50 for some models.

For best results, every player should use an amp specifically designed for his or her instrument's needs. A bass player should buy a bass amp, for example. But often singers and guitarists can economize by plugging their microphones and guitars into the same amps. If you plan to do this, make sure the amp you buy has enough inputs. Music-store clerks can show you what gear works best for this approach.

Finally, the drummer needs sticks and a throne, a special stool that stands up to years of loading and performance abuse. And you may want to pay a few bucks for an old music stand so everybody at rehearsal can see the song lyrics. None of this extra stuff is costly, but it can add up if you buy it all at once.

Playing

Usually, you won't choose an instrument. It'll choose you. If you grew up enjoying piano lessons and prefer putting your fingers on keys rather than guitar frets, you'll probably stick with piano or organ. If you can't tap your foot in time to any given song, you probably won't be the drummer. If you have the need to be the center of attention, you probably won't be the bass player (unless you're Sting or Paul McCartney). And if you've got a good ear for melody, you may be destined to be a guitarist or keyboard player.

Often, band members choose their instruments out of necessity. If four high school friends converge to form a band, and three play guitar, you may have to dig up a set of drums. Or you may be the only person whose voice doesn't crack above middle C, in which case you're the singer. Even if you've never played an instrument before, it's possible to learn as you go along. The key, though, is to go home and practice as many hours as possible. Picking up your bass only once a week during rehearsal will stunt your musical growth and frustrate the other members.

Many bands come up with strange configurations because of their members' particular musical skills. The Doors, for example, recorded several influential albums in the 1960s and 1970s with no bass player—keyboardist Ray Manzarek handled the low notes. The rock trio Morphine crafted a unique sound out of two-string bass, saxophone, and drums. In other

words, just because you lack a traditional rock or pop instrument, that doesn't mean you can't play rock or pop music.

Guitar

Guitar players, in most bands, can be lead or rhythm players—the former takes many of the solos and provides a song's melody, while the latter falls in with the bass player and drummer to flesh out the rhythm. If you're considering picking up the guitar, you should have a decent sense of melody, fingers that can adapt to many tricky string-bending permutations, and at least a slight desire to be in the spotlight. For most bands, the focal point in concert is the singer, but guitarists get almost as much attention.

Guitarists are also often the backbone to the band, the least replaceable players when things get tough. Although the singer usually gives a band its unique voice, the guitarist is the fundamental building block of its sound. Once you've located a good one, don't let him or her go.

Drums

The drummer's job in any band—well, except for improvisational combos where the drum may be a solo instrument—is to maintain the tempo. If it goes too fast or slow, it can throw the rest of the band into disarray. So the drummer's responsibility is considerable. If you find yourself drumming on chairs and phone books, or keeping up with elaborate radio-song tempos using your hands, legs, and the steering wheel, it may be your perfect band role.

Drummers also need to stay in good shape, as they handle the most physically demanding job. The first several times you play the drums, you may feel muscle pain in your arms, legs, and back—and may develop blisters on your hands until calluses develop. (Music stores sell special drummers' gloves to prevent this affliction.) Blisters also afflict guitarists and bass players, but not with the regularity of drummers. Keep a stock of Band-Aids nearby.

Bass

The bassist complements the drummer in the band's rhythm section and fills in the low-frequency range of the band. The rhythm section sets the groove, on top of which go guitars, keyboards, vocals, and other solo-oriented instruments. Although bass players take occasional solos—check out John Entwistle's classic lines in The Who's "My Generation"—their job is almost always to stay in the background.

Bass players should avoid delusions of grandeur. Despite anomalies such as Sting and ex-Beatle Paul McCartney, both of whom are also accomplished singers and songwriters, bass players tend not to be rock superstars. If that's your goal, consider switching to guitar or vocals.

Keyboard

Keyboards, a catch-all term referring to pianos, organs, and synthesizers of all types, perform essentially the same function as guitars. They solo when it's time to solo, and lay back and play little complementary riffs while the singer handles the verses and choruses.

What distinguishes the keyboardist from the guitarist, at least on stage, is a distinct lack of mobility. Where guitarists can jump around and kick their legs in the air while playing, keyboardists are normally trapped behind their instruments. So it's much harder for a piano player, say, to become a band's charismatic star than it is for a guitarist. Again, there are exceptions: Pianists such as Fats Waller, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Billy Joel, Elton John, and Ben Folds have become huge superstars by leading bands.

Others

When adding instruments beyond the bedrock vocals, guitar, drums, bass, and keyboards, try not to let them get in the way of your basic sound and framework. It's fun to experiment, but frills can be distracting and convoluting. At least at first, expand your sonic palette in small doses—maybe the drummer can pound a cowbell to the beat. Maybe the keyboardist can play the accordion. Think about what the song needs, and make adjustments accordingly.

Practicing

Four basic activities will help you improve your musicianship: group rehearsal, individual practice, lessons, and playing live. And they should complement each other. After rehearsing a new song or riff with the band, go home and practice it over and over until you can play it by memory. Plunge into practicing difficult passages.

Playing live will help the band get immediate feedback, figure out what to work on, and fix weak passages quickly. But you may not yet be in a position to play regular live gigs.

Just as athletes usually can't go from good to great without an experienced coach, musicians normally can't become accomplished without a decent teacher.

Finding a traditional music teacher is pretty simple—they're all over the phone book; faculty at your high school or college can probably make solid recommendations; and some schools offer lessons as part of their music programs. Finding a rock, blues, jazz, pop, or hip-hop teacher may be a little more difficult.

Piano players might take an excursion to a club or hotel lobby where the longtime local boogie-woogie master holds court. After the set, approach the musician and ask if he or she gives lessons—the receptive response may surprise you. Ask around at school; a jazz-orchestra teacher may know local blues-night veterans willing to give lessons. And check bulletin boards at record stores, bookstores, and coffeeshops, as well as local websites.

How do you know if a teacher is any good? Sit through a lesson or two. If you're interested in rocking out to Limp Bizkit and Led Zeppelin, and the teacher wants you to endure scales for two hours a week, it may not be the right situation. (Still, don't scoff at music-theory instruction; it may not pay off immediately, but in the long run you'll be surprised at how much it improves your playing.)

Screen teachers the same way you'd screen a new car. Find out who else they've taught and what kind of music they like. Ask about experience. Cost may play a role in your decision. Try to get a sense of pieces you'll learn as you progress—although you'll want to be exposed to different musical styles, playing what you like is important.

Roles in the Band

Your role in the band, to a great extent, will be determined by the instrument you play. The drummer and bass player, traditionally, are in charge of laying the rhythmic foundation, on top of which other instruments provide melody, harmony, and flourishes. The drummer and bass player tend to be steady, reliable, and nonshowy—characteristics that may translate to the players' personalities.

(There are exceptions, of course: Keith Moon of The Who was one of the flashiest drummers and drummer-personalities in rock history. And thanks to rockers such as Cream's Ginger Baker in the late 1960s, drummers are almost required to play long solos during concerts. Bass players, sometimes, too.)

Guitarists and keyboardists are more likely responsible for the melodies. A lead guitarist flies above the rhythm, playing solos rather than perpetuating the beat. A rhythm guitarist works in tandem with the bass player and drummer, fleshing out their beats with a fuller sound. Keyboardists tend to plug into the mix where necessary. The Doors didn't have a bass player, so organist Ray Manzarek handled the low frequencies with his left hand; most keyboardists, however, trade solos with the lead guitarist.

The singer, of course, is responsible for the words, and rarely solos unless he or she is known for Whitney Houston-style vocal histrionics. In those cases, moaning, groaning, and yodeling is standard procedure. In general, the singer's role is to hold the song together by providing the story and the lyrical continuity. The rest of the band members should follow his or her lead as the song progresses.

4. HOW TO REHEARSE

Where and When?

Where? Wherever you can. It's often difficult to find a rehearsal room, especially if your music leans toward loud guitars and thudding drums. Parents and neighbors may balk at the noise, so you have to be creative—and willing to give something in return. Volunteer the band for garage cleanup duty in exchange for two weeks worth of practices. And check with any neighbors in advance for opportune times.

When? It depends on the band members' schedules. At a minimum, we suggest one two-hour session a week—the better you want to be, the more you should rehearse. Nighttime rehearsals are often the most convenient for everybody, but they're not required. Try the morning, before school or work. Or two or three lunch hours per week.

The single hardest thing about planning rehearsals is setting up the schedule. Invariably, the singer's best day is the bassist's worst day. But once you set up the schedule, stick to it. (If a change becomes necessary, make it together, then stick to that.) If it's every Wednesday at 8 P.M., don't show up at 7:30 or 8:20. Be on time. Nothing's worse than keeping an eager band waiting.

The perfect basement—or garage, bedroom, or backyard—is one the owners will let you use for free. Beyond that, it should have plenty of space for each band member, and enough electrical outlets to accommodate many amps.

Often it's not so much a matter of finding the perfect rehearsal room as creating one. If you're in an apartment building, and your rehearsal time happens to be smack in the middle of EastEnders or the FA Cup final, be sensitive to neighbors' needs. Maybe you can muffle the drums by putting towels over them, or use soft mallets instead of sticks. Maybe everybody can rehearse with headphones. Or instead of using your gigantic Marshall Stack amplifier, plug your guitars into a tiny practice amp. Sometimes the solution is as simple as moving to another room.

Communication, as always, is crucial. Here's a conciliatory thing you can tell the neighbors: "Every Wednesday night from 7 to 9 it may be a little noisy in here. If it's too noisy, just let us know and we'll adjust." Better yet, work with them to find an opportune time. Nobody wants to squander useful rehearsal time and energy on cat-fights with unsympathetic neighbors.

Whatever rehearsal space you use, make sure it's properly ventilated. If there's a propane heater, don't hang blankets or egg crates or other flammable soundproofing unless you're sure the heater functions properly. Have a fire extinguisher on hand, and know how to use it. And remember all the stuff your parents told you about garage safety: Don't start the car with the door closed and so forth.

About renting: Early in your band's career, the cost of rehearsal space—from £5 an hour in a cheap warehouse to £100 an hour for a luxurious room with a PA system—will probably be prohibitive. But if you have that kind of money, and all your free-basement leads have fizzled,

check the local paper. Often, classified ads will list rental spaces. And if you live in a big city, try the musician's union, which has experience linking bands with rehearsal spots.

Short of that, again, be creative. Maybe the local high school music teacher will let you use the facilities during an off period of the school day. Try the youth center or even the local church.

How?

Improvisation is fun, and you might be the kind of band that wants to agree on a musical key and solo, solo, solo. (Some big-time bands, including the String Cheese Incident and Phish, have made entire careers of this.) But at a certain point somebody—maybe you—will inevitably say, "How about if we learn some songs?" In some bands, the collective answer might be: "Nah!" In others, the musicians may be just as bored as you are and crave structure.

The hard part is agreeing on what kind of structure. To start playing basic rock, blues, folk, and pop songs, start with the lyrics to the songs—and perhaps the chord changes. (These days, almost every popular song is fully transcribed on the Internet; use the Google search engine or broad-ranging websites such as lyrics.com.)

When using preprinted lyrics and chord transcriptions, it's not necessary to have music-reading ability. (Although sometimes it helps.) If everybody in the band knows three or four particular chords, you'll have an endless repertoire, from rock classics like The Kingsmen's "Louie, Louie" and Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" to country and blues standards like Leadbelly's "Goodnight Irene" and Robert Johnson's "Sweet Home, Chicago."

Band communication is crucial. If one guy insists on Limp Bizkit's "Break Stuff" and another can't live without playing "Kum Ba Ya" on stage at least once in his lifetime, you'll have to compromise. Indulge each person with a favorite until, after many rehearsals, the band becomes good at certain songs and not so good at others. (This will become obvious.) At that point, reshuffle.

In Tune

"Why doesn't it sound right?" is the most frustrating question a rehearsing band can ask. Especially if the question comes up after every song, for hours at a time. Usually the answer is simple: "Because somebody is way out of tune." Tuning takes just a few minutes—less time with experience—but can prevent hours of irritation.

An electronic tuner costs as little as £10 (or as much as £100) and is a worthwhile investment. In the old days, guitarists used tuning forks and plucked individual strings until their ears told them they were on target. Today, a tuner smaller than a cell phone will lead you to the right pitch using LED lights. Tuners are simple to figure out, and you can even turn off the amp and tune in silence, using your eyes rather than your ears.

Before you start rehearsal, take time to tune up. And if you play piano or drums, be patient and avoid the distracting urge to fiddle around while the guitarists tune up.

It sounds so simple: Decide on a musical key and have everybody play in that key. But...what if the guitarist prefers E and the pianist can only play in C and F? What if everybody enjoys B-flat, but you insist on playing Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman," which, according to your sheet music, is written in A?

The basic rule is to let the singer pick the key. Otherwise, he or she will have to strain and the song will sound terrible. Guitarists and pianists can always learn new chords, but inexperienced singers comfortable in C will have a hard time switching to D-flat on short notice.

If the band insists on playing a more complicated song, tricky chords and all, you may want to table it until the members have had a chance for individual home practice. Learning a new song at group rehearsal is valuable, but learning how to play a new chord tends to be a one-person activity—and will likely frustrate the rest of the group. Start with songs you all can play, and grow from there. Guitar tabs can help all the musicians, not just guitarists, figure out what chords to play when.

Structure

A song is like a story, with a beginning, middle, and end. Bands, unlike individual writers, have to agree on how to approach each of these segments. In most bands, the drummer begins a song—by clicking sticks together in the agreed-upon 1, 2, 3, 4 tempo. Often, however, the guitarist will end the song by lifting up the guitar neck to get everybody's attention, and then dropping it down for "cut!"

Then again, in some bands, the singer or accepted bandleader will be the point person for these details. Either way, you'll have to accept the decision—unilaterally ending a particular song yourself, even if you think it has dragged on long enough, is likely to create tension in the band.

These details, of course, must be frequently rehearsed for smooth execution.

Eventually, after slogging through these decisions and rehearsal repetitions, you'll start to become more comfortable with each other. Experienced bands begin to communicate with a sort of telepathy, using eye contact and other unspoken cues to coordinate instinctively. If you're in the mood for a band field trip, try to catch a veteran band in concert—watching Pearl Jam or The Rolling Stones communicate nonverbally is a rich learning experience. You can pick up the same knowledge—although it won't be nearly as fun—by watching concert DVDs.

Mixing

Although every musician uses the same palette of notes, keys, and chords, different musical instruments speak different languages. Inexperienced keyboardists hate to use too many black keys, while inexperienced guitarists are uncomfortable stretching their fingers from one difficult chord to the next. And it's often hard for a guitarist to recognize what a keyboardist is playing, and vice versa.

Communication, as always, overcomes these concerns. It may take a minute in practice for a pianist to transpose a song he knows in C to a song that better fits the singer and guitarist in

B. (Transposing means converting a set of chords from one key to another; many electronic pianos will do this with the push of a button. Otherwise, the musician will simply have to write down the new set of chords.)

It can't hurt for musicians to learn other instruments. A drummer who knows a little guitar will better understand certain musical cues—if the rhythm accelerates after a key change, for example, the drummer will more quickly adapt to what's going on. Similarly, there's nothing more frustrating for a pianist than a guitarist who says, "Just watch my fingers and do what I do." Basic guitar lessons can help. But that's not a necessity; communication is.

The regular group rehearsal shouldn't be your band's only rehearsal. Each musician should plan to spend several hours at home learning new parts and smoothing out kinks. And the bassist and drummer may want to schedule separate "rhythm-section rehearsals" to lock down the groove. What will they do? Play the songs. It'll only make things better when the guitar player arrives for regular rehearsal. Similarly, "vocal-only rehearsals" are effective for bands that emphasize group harmonies.

Rhythm

Rhythm, or tempo, is as easy as counting and feeling the beat of the music. Your drummer will certainly want to learn about time signatures—rock-and-country-time 4/4 or waltz-time 3/4, for example, which fundamentally define a song's rhythm. But the rest of the band will have to align itself to the drummer's speed and avoid dragging or rushing.

If everybody counts to four at the same speed, your band has itself a rhythm. If this seems impossible, you may want to invest in a metronome, a small automatic musical counting device, but as mentioned earlier, this can lead to restrictions and frustrations. A better plan might be to let the drummer play the groove alone for a bit while the rest of the band counts silently.

Most songs, by acts ranging from Frank Sinatra to Dashboard Confessional, are built on these basic elements:

- The verse, as with a verse in a poem, is where you lay out your lyrics and essentially tell the song's story.
- The bridge is exactly what the name implies—the link between the verse and the chorus.
- The chorus is a more repetitive summary of the verses, or if you will, the "sing-along portion" of the song. It often contains the hook.

These elements won't appear in every song—sometimes you'll encounter a classical, jazz, hip-hop, or just plain experimental piece that ignores such structure altogether. (Nirvana, to name one popular rock band, actively mocked this structure—one of the band's early 1990s tunes was called "Verse Chorus Verse." The song was surprisingly traditional.)

The hook is whatever makes a song stand out and appeal to people. It may be a melody, like a bluegrass band singing "you are my sunshine, my only sunshine." Or it may be a catchy guitar riff, like AC/DC going deedle deedle deedle dee at the end of every verse in "Back in

Black." Hit songs, especially those on the radio, almost always have prominent, repetitive hooks.

By playing other people's songs, you'll get a feel for traditional verse-chorus-verse structures—and maybe get some ideas on how to structure your own material later on.

Arrangement

Arrangements are basically what you do with the verses, choruses, and bridges. They're the blueprint of your song, and once the band decides how to put one together, everybody must stick to the plan. Unless you're playing experimental, purposely dissonant jazz, the pianist can't decide to take an impromptu break while the guitarist is in the middle of a solo, or it will throw everyone off.

The Role of the Leader

Rehearsals may be going pretty well—you've found a place to set up, you can play a few songs all the way through without mistakes, and the jams are sounding tighter and tighter. So why not do it like this forever? Because at some point, to progress creatively or even financially, you'll have to become more sophisticated.

The first step in this direction is choosing a leader. Certainly it's possible to function, as a group, without a leader. But then who settles the arguments? Who picks, or writes, the songs? Who decides which gigs to play?

Choosing is perhaps too strong a word. Somebody in the band will probably emerge without discussion as the leader. You'll recognize that person when he or she starts making assertions, like, "I think we should play this song" or "What if we started trying to play in public?" or "Here, I've written a few of my own lyrics for us to try." There is nothing inherently wrong with this; if one person wants to assume the responsibility and extra workload that comes with being the leader, why not give that person a shot?

If you're a competitive person, or if you just can't stand following orders, a certain amount of resentment toward the leader is natural. But give the new leader a chance. Maybe the decisions will be pretty good, and maybe vision is just what the band needs. If the would-be leader becomes too controlling or manipulative, you can deal with that later through communication and compromise. Or, yes, firing.

Some bands are purely democratic, which means everything that happens goes up for a vote. Feel free to try this approach. Everything—where to park the van outside the gig, who collects the money from the event organizer, who writes the thank you note to the neighbors for not complaining about the loud rehearsals—goes up for a vote. As you can imagine, this process can be quite cumbersome.

There's a certain amount of democracy to every band. Every member should be involved in important financial decisions (like whether to open a band bank account or hire a manager), for instance. But it's easiest for one person to set a direction, and too much input can confuse or cloud the issues. Endless debate kills any band quickly.

More often than not, the leadership role just sticks to somebody like a magnet. If you find the rest of the band coming to you with questions, whether they're musical or business matters, you might be the leader. If you wind up doing little things nobody else does, like buying supplies for rehearsal, or proposing a rhythm-section rehearsal, you might be the leader. If that's the case, accept the role. You can make decisions, but don't be mean. Benevolent dictators are the most effective dictators.

You're in a band, a unit, a group, a marriage, so don't let little things eat at your ego. If it's your job to play a little guitar bit between two verses of a song, do that. Don't act like you're the talent who's slumming until something better comes along.

Have we mentioned communication yet? The best way to figure out your role, if it's confusing, is to ask. As the keyboardist, maybe you aren't sure whether to augment the bassist by playing along with your left hand. Ask the bassist or the leader. Bring issues out in the open—during calm moments, rather than stressful ones—and discuss them until you're satisfied. This is a key component of successful marriages.

In a rehearsal situation, defer to the leader. But if anybody feels he or she needs to rehearse a part again, speak up. Just pay attention to the structure of the rehearsal. Deal with a particular song while you're working on it. If you've long since moved on to the fourth song, it'll only frustrate everybody if you return to the second.

"Hey, I've got to learn this one a little better—can we take it up again next week?" is an appropriate thing to suggest. That way, you don't have to muddle through several frustrating versions of a song. Of course, if you're playing that song at a gig the following night, it behooves you to practice until you get it right.

Taping

It's essential, if the band wants to improve, to tape a rehearsal and require each member to sit down and listen. Self-critique sessions are invaluable, but only if everybody remains constructive. Don't make these criticism sessions personal.

Certainly each band member can borrow the playback tape and listen with more scrutiny during personal time. But beware of tampering with fragile group dynamics. If one musician takes the tape home and returns to say the bass playing isn't in time, and the defensive bass player says, "prove it," you're in danger of upheaval. Individual listening can help correct unrecognized problems, but it should supplement the group critique sessions, not replace them.

5. FINANCIAL ISSUES

If it were up to us, your band wouldn't have to play its first few shows for free. And we'd see to it you received guaranteed £100,000 advances on multi-city concert tours, with all expenses paid. But the reality is your early gigs will be in the "leisure-time activity" category rather than the "paid professional" category.

As with almost every other business, bands have to pay dues. In the small picture, the initial gigs can be tiny affairs, such as friends' parties, high-school dances, and maybe tiny coffeehouses or nightclubs. But in the big picture, they're valuable first steps toward exposure and, yes, money. If you're diligent and keep the band together for a long time, these small steps can lead to bigger ones.

The main reason you won't make any money at first is because your band is still an unproven entity. A nightclub booker won't take a chance unless you've shown you can draw crowds of beer drinkers. A wedding planner won't take a chance until you've generated a few recommendations from other wedding planners. Nonetheless, maybe your mother's company is planning a party and can pay £50 for live entertainment. And after the show, maybe the company's CEO will be willing to write a recommendation, or talk to another CEO about yet another party. Again, small steps lead to big ones if you stick with it.

For an entry-level band—that's you—£50 gig at a company party isn't a bad deal. Neither is a £80 gig at a small club. These scenarios obviously won't make you rich, as you'll have to deduct expenses and divvy up the money among the band members. (This helps explain why some musicians spend their entire careers as solo artists.)

After a gig or two, though, you may have a little bit of leverage to negotiate for a higher salary. What salary should this be? Have a number in mind when you deal with potential clients. Figure out how much it'll cost to play your gig—regular expenses include gas, guitar strings, drumsticks, gaffer tape, and possibly, renting sound and lighting systems. In a perfect world, your gig salary will cover these costs and leave the band with spending money.

Nonetheless, until you're a big star, it's generally better to make a little less money and get the gig. Stubborn negotiating has its place, but don't shut yourself out of an opportunity, especially if you know the club booker or wedding planner doesn't have much of a budget to play with.

Do you need a contract? Ultimately, yes, to protect yourself. If the club doesn't do contracts as a matter of policy, consider writing one up yourself: "Crash Cat Boogie Cat will play on this date and receive £50 at the end of the performance." Some clubs will refuse to deal with contracts, which is a shame, but if you're interested in playing the gig, you may have no other choice but to submit. Wedding and bar mitzvah planners are likely to pass you a contract, while less formal party planners and many clubs almost never do.

Scrutinize every contract you receive. Under optimal circumstances an attorney should read over any contract that spells out more than the basic time, place, and salary.

To secure your first party, dance, or club gig, you'll need to begin networking. Talk to everybody you know who might need live entertainment.

For dances, approach the local high school student council or a nearby university's campus activities board and ask about upcoming events. Ask if those entities can pass information about your band to the proper committee.

To secure party gigs, spread the word more broadly. Order several flyers, with little perforated tabs at the bottom, announcing your band for hire. Put them up at record stores, campus radio stations, city kiosks, and whatever public bulletin boards you can find. Clever advertising expressions never hurt: The musical description "polyethnic Cajun slamgrass" took Boulder's Leftover Salmon a long way.

Club gigs are the result of auditioning, so you need connections and a reputation to land an audition. Be prepared for less-than-optimum circumstances. Your first gigs may involve playing for free on a Sunday night.

The "Accountant"

It's not absolutely necessary to appoint a band member to handle the finances. But it sure helps. As with many other roles in the band—the leader, for example—who will be the money person may well become obvious. He or she is scrupulously honest, can balance a checkbook, and earns the trust of the entire band. Although an MBA degree isn't a prerequisite, business savvy and negotiating skills are a bonus.

The band's "money guy" (or gal) takes on time-consuming and important responsibilities. Serving as a sort of band treasurer, the money person collects all the money from gigs, writes checks for group expenses, and takes care of band bills. Ultimately this person maintains a checkbook, whether it's out of a personal account or a central band account, and makes certain that the band never bounces a check. Keeping a budget—the gig paid £50 on a certain night, £2 went for gas, £5 went for equipment, and the rest was profit—is always handy. Ideally, the fund grows according to the paid gigs you play.

Everybody should keep an eye on the money person—it's your money, too!—but ultimately the money person should be trustworthy enough that you don't have to watch him or her. And remember the band treasurer is taking on tons of extra work and responsibility, so don't give him or her too much grief. Also, the band treasurer should never have to front personal money to pay for expenses; this road leads to frustration and resentment and could ultimately break up the band.

It goes almost without saying that no band member gets to dip into the collective fund for individual purposes. No matter how hard up you are, it isn't "your money."

Goals

Financial goals, for a band, can be as simple as opening a bank account or as complex as investing in the stock market with the band's collective funds. Early on, if you're playing parties, your immediate goals will be to cover expenses and have a little beer money left over. If you're playing weddings or bar mitzvahs, the salaries may be a little more lucrative, so perhaps you'll supplement your existing yearly income with a regular cash stream. Or maybe

you'll want to quit your day job and play in the band full-time—and, someday, make millions with a record contract. Either way, as we noted previously, it's important for the band to discuss these goals periodically.

Manager?

A manager—at least, a good one—takes care of almost every band detail save the music-making itself. He or she can be your most valuable ally, a well-connected businessperson who will give answers to questions like "how come we didn't get the merchandise settlement yet?" and "when's the gig?" This person should be experienced, helping you wade through the music industry on several levels, and give you straight-up advice that will advance your career. Such a person is hard to find, especially at first. For now, you may have to settle on a trustworthy, somewhat business-savvy friend, relative, or even band member. Eventually, when you start to make money, the band can upgrade.

The standard deal for rock managers is 15 percent of the band's gross (though it can vary from 10 to 50 percent). So if you make £100 for a show, £15 of it goes to the manager—which means a paid manager may not make sense yet for the band. If you start grossing £50,000 per show, definitely, hire a manager. And maybe two or three.

An entry-level band—which is to say, musicians who've played a few gigs at most and have been together a few months or less—probably can't afford a paid manager. Until 15 percent of your salary per gig is worth something, a professional won't be interested. It's possible you'll get lucky, or just be really, really good, and a manager will catch your show and want to work with you right away. These things happen in the music business. But don't count on it.

Still, somebody has to deal with the band's boring business stuff. Staying in touch with party planners, negotiating gig salaries, and collecting money can be a pain, but in addition to saving the band money on a paid manager, the do-it-yourself manager will learn how to do the job. When it's time to hire a manager, that person will know what to look for.

A drawback to the do-it-yourself approach to band management is it may take away from your music-making time. Try not to let this happen. Art and commerce intersect in many ways, but your guitarist-manager shouldn't be so busy working the spreadsheet that he or she can't make it to practice.

What does a manager really do? When it's time to book a gig, somebody has to sit down with the intimidating concert promoter or wedding planner and attempt to get a reasonable amount of money for the band. These negotiations aren't usually complex, at first, but they do require finesse, conversational skill, and perhaps courage. If the band wants £200, and the club owner offers £100, it's difficult to say, in a nice way, "No way, you're screwing us, we need more." But such is the lot of the band manager.

Early in the band's career, you probably won't have much leverage, which means enough clout to significantly influence the negotiations. Joe's Local Band, which hasn't played many gigs and has demonstrated little ability to draw a crowd or media coverage, won't have the leverage to ask for much more than the promoter offers. R.E.M., on the other hand, can expect to get almost anything it requests. It can never hurt to ask for more money, but if you desperately want the gig, at least at first, you'll have to compromise.

Terms are the basic details of any gig you play. How much money will you make? How much time will you be onstage? How many breaks do you get to take? Do you have to play any specific songs? Can you videotape the band? Do you have to bring in your own sound system? All these questions are part of the negotiation, and while not everybody is out to bamboozle you, some people are.

A good manager, in addition to having the time and energy to simply do the work, has a built-in "B.S. detector." This person won't be seduced when the club owner drops the salary below a reasonable level but accounts for it with "one free beer per musician." A good manager will also have the instinct to know when to stop—you never want to alienate your boss or burn an important bridge—even if the deal isn't perfect. These skills come with time and experience.

On a smaller scale, your negotiating partners will probably be honest, regular folks who just want to create a good event. For dances, it could be the representatives on a college activities board or high school student council. For parties or weddings, it could be your next-door neighbor, or someone from a local banquet hall. For extremely large events, such as a large theater, arena, or stadium show, you'll deal with a big-time concert promoter. But that'll come much, much later in your band's career, if at all.

Club owners—or, in many cases, bookers or promoters—are not generally "regular folks." They're usually honest and straightforward, but keep in mind these people make their livings dealing with all-night beer drinkers, bouncers, and rowdy crowds. They tend to be a little tough.

They also tend to be aggressive, high-energy, and busy. On any given night, a club owner has 8,000,000 things to do—making sure the bar is stocked, keeping the fire marshal happy, denying entrance to underage patrons, and so forth. To deal with them effectively, meet them at their pace. As with any business negotiation, it helps to connect on their level. Is a particular club owner a classic-car collector? Maybe you have some knowledge of these topics and can work your uncle's 1954 Austin Healy into the conversation. To a point, "schmoozing" is an acceptable and honorable way to develop a business relationship. There's an art to it.

Promoter

While a promoter may own a venue and serve as a booker in some cases, this character generally books bigger shows—national attractions in the ornate downtown theater or the sport arena. Generally, working for a promoter is a step or two up from playing in clubs.

Promoters also make important decisions about opening acts. When a national star comes to town, the promoter may want to warm up the crowd with a hot local artist. Often this decision is a matter of simple math: If the local band consistently draws 200 people to its shows, and the promoter needs to sell 200 tickets to fill up the venue, that local band may be perfect.

Booking Agent

A booking agent sets up gigs for your band to play. This person will have experience and connections that a do-it-yourself musician or manager can't possibly match. You may, for example, want to play in Liverpool but can't get an "in" simply by sending your demo to clubs and following up. A good booking agent will know all the connections and have experience dealing with them—and may score you a gig by making a few phone calls.

Are you ready to hire one? Use the same math you used for hiring a manager. Most booking agents take 10 percent of your profits. If you're making £100 per gig, and a booking agent takes £10, and you have £30 in expenses, that leaves £60 to split among four band members—just £15 each. So no, under that scenario, you aren't ready yet.

As with a manager, it's best to find someone who "gets" your music. A booking agent whose clients are Pink and Lenny Kravitz may not understand your band's predisposition toward country-punk songs inspired by Lefty Frizzell and Son Volt. This agent probably won't know the right clubs in which to book your music. So make sure you get references and do some research before signing any contract.

How can you find one? The same way you'd find a good manager. Ask friends in bands. Ask the slightly larger band for whom you've just opened a local show. Managers and booking agents tend to gather at these things to catch more than one band at once. But it's also smart to network, schmooze, and work the crowd for connections.

You can, of course, send your demo tape and press kit to big-time booking agents throughout the country. And you may get lucky, or bowl somebody over with your talent. But unsolicited packages are a tough way to go and lead to a ton of rejections. Best to have a connection first.

Lawyer

Ultimately, if you plan to stay in the music business in the long run and hope to draw larger and larger crowds, you'll need a lawyer. Unlike a manager or booking agent, this specialist won't be involved in the band's day-to-day operations. But any time you have to sign a legal document, from a club contract to a record-label deal, you'll definitely want advice from a lawyer. But use these experts sparingly, because they can charge hundreds of pounds an hour.

First and foremost, lawyers can protect you from legal problems down the road. If the nightclub you play has a fire, somebody gets injured, and the club owner tries to sue the band, you won't want to scramble for counsel at the last minute. (The fire scenario hardly ever happens, but you never know.) If a label scout shows up at your gig and wants to sign you right away—again, a rarity, but a welcome one—you'll need a lawyer to peruse the paperwork. Also, lawyers can provide an introduction to record labels and help you "shop" for a deal.

Although the "do-it-yourself" approach works reasonably well, at first, for managers and booking agents, the members of your band can't possibly generate adequate legal expertise on short notice. You'll need to hire an expert.

6. ABOUT GIGS

What level of gig do you want? Initially, the answer to this question is "any gig you can get." If you're determined to play exclusively original material, you may not attract a lot of people looking for wedding and party cover bands. Conversely, if you're strictly a cover band, you probably won't line up the artier gigs at local coffeehouses. Be realistic. Don't overreach and contact the promoter who books Aerosmith into the local arena. But don't underestimate your potential and simply invite two or three friends to hear you play in your drummer's backyard.

Until you generate a reputation, which could take months or even years, you'll probably have to play some of your town's smallest venues—like tiny campus clubs, coffeehouses, and friends' parties. You may be tempted to leapfrog these joints and go straight for the bigger-time clubs, but lightning rarely strikes like that.

Until now, your band has been relatively isolated, rehearsing in private spaces and allowing only friends, relatives, and the musicians themselves to hear the songs. So your only critiques have come from people who are predisposed to be optimistic and encouraging. (Not to say that's a bad thing! Early support from friends and family is crucial to your collective self-esteem. But at some point you'll need to move to the next level of feedback.)

To determine how good you really are, you'll need constructive criticism. Start this process by taping your rehearsals. Playback is an excellent way for the musicians to decide what parts they need to work on. But it's also instructive to pass your tape along to more discerning people—music teachers, friends in other bands, people you know who work for clubs or radio stations, or maybe, if you're adept at ripping songs into MP3s, random strangers on the Internet.

Before you play in public, you'll want to nail down the basics of continuity and flow (essentially, the art of not sounding choppy); keys and tempos (playing together in the same harmony and rhythm); and, most of all, listening to the other band members.

Once you've accepted your identity, whether it's a wedding band or a club headliner, you'll have more focus and a better sense of what songs to pick and what bits to re-rehearse. But that doesn't necessarily mean your band has to keep that identity for the rest of its career. After rehearsing for two months and accepting one bar-mitzvah gig, for example, you may wind up with other bar-mitzvah connections. But you won't have to be a bar-mitzvah (or bat-mitzvah) band forever (unless you want to). At any point, whether it's a month or five years from now, you can try to write original songs.

But being realistic will help your band's collective psyche. If you've played several weddings in a row and you've gotten good feedback (and a paycheck!) every time, try not to be frustrated that you aren't on the fast track to becoming the next Good Charlotte. (That may happen later.) Do what you're good at, bide your time, and work on expanding in your own direction.

Parties

The party band, to put it simply, knows how to rock the house. It specializes in danceable, up-tempo, familiar material—from the Kingsmen's "Louie, Louie" to the Village People's "YMCA" to Billy Ray Cyrus's "Achy, Breaky Heart" (complete with line-dancing instructions). The party band will rarely succumb to the temptation of rolling out experimental, original material. (That's for another time and venue.) It will be prepared to honor fan requests as long as they're upbeat and encourage people to dance.

If you become successful as a party band, you'll be hired at schools, private events, fraternities, sororities, pep rallies, and plain old house parties. The key to landing gigs is in exposing your band name wherever possible—from campus bulletin boards to local newspaper classified ads. Word of mouth is incredibly important on this level. You won't get gigs if people don't know you want them.

And by all means, have fun with party gigs. Whether they're your financial base or just a "slumming" exercise until you find the resources and experience to write great original material, perform them with enthusiasm. If you're bored, the crowd will know it. Get into the party vibe and throw yourself into the songs—wear costumes, string cheap strands of holiday lights across your amplifiers, and make jokes if you think it will enhance the experience. It can't hurt to attend shows by other party bands. Singer-songwriter Jimmy Buffett puts on a classic party show, complete with skits, masks, dancers, and calypso rhythms. Rapper Snoop Dogg may be lewd, but his onstage manifesto is to make everybody in the crowd jump and shout. "Jam bands" such as Phish, String Cheese Incident, and Leftover Salmon are adept at making huge masses of people wiggle uncontrollably. You may not want to emulate these exact types of music, but study the performers' moves and styles.

Weddings

Playing weddings is a little like playing parties, only you'll probably have to please a much wider audience demographic. Whereas a party is usually a bunch of people who work for the same company or attend the same school, wedding crowds range from 88-year-old, Glenn Miller-loving great-uncles to flower girls obsessed with Elmo.

Your challenge is to prepare a set list broad enough to satisfy everybody. You'll need to know the standards, of course, so buy plenty of Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, The Beatles, James Brown, and Ray Charles CDs. You'll also need to know several audience-participation standards, from the Chicken Dance to the Macarena, plus ethnic traditions like the Hora (Jewish) and Tarantella (Italian). And keep an eye on the contemporary pop charts; if a band like the Backstreet Boys has had a No. 1 hit for the last six months, don't get caught unprepared when the bride's sister begs you repeatedly to play "I Want It That Way."

The more songs you learn for a wedding situation, the better. A wedding isn't like a party, where it generally doesn't matter what you play as long as it's upbeat. Attendees will be particular about their favorites. It's acceptable to politely refuse a request if it's obscure, but under no circumstances should you not be prepared to churn out the Village People's "YMCA" or Benny Goodman's Louis Prima-penned "Sing, Sing, Sing" (and yes, you can play that one without horns).

You'll also have to be more organized than usual to play weddings. At these events, it's not like you can just load in your gear, start at the designated time, play your songs, and leave. A

harried bride, groom, family member, or planner will undoubtedly want to meet with you well in advance of the big day and may have very specific song requests and schedule demands. The first three or four songs at the ceremony, for example, are usually special dances for the couple and certain family members and friends. And you'll have to pause at particular times to allow for toasts. Beyond that, you'll have to pace the set list in such a way that the older attendees dance first to the slower, more traditional songs. As it gets later, generally, the younger crowd will stick around and demand faster, more contemporary hits. Either way, pay close attention to the crowd and have the flexibility to alter your set list as circumstances dictate.

A bar mitzvah is a rite-of-passage ceremony for 13-year-old boys in the Jewish faith. (A bat mitzvah is the equivalent for girls.) Often, local bands are asked to provide the background music—just as they are at other ceremonies. Like weddings, these gigs can be lucrative and fun, and formal enough that you shouldn't show up in sandals and T-shirts. (Again, check with the planners beforehand regarding the dress code.) Generally these events aren't quite as micromanaged as weddings, so you have a little more freedom to improvise the set list. (And at least for bar mitzvahs, your dominant audience is likely to be undiscerning 13-year-old boys.) But be ready for anything.

Nightclubs

There's nothing wrong with playing weddings, bar mitzvahs, and parties for your band's entire career. But if you aspire to write original material and perhaps get a record deal or some radio airplay, the next step is almost certainly clubs.

Clubs are places where people go specifically to hear music. Often, they charge admission. Often, they make their money off liquor and food sales. Not always, though. Some clubs don't or can't serve alcohol and are therefore accommodating to a much wider range of ages. To prepare for the club circuit, you'll need to do two things: Get better as a band, which means tightening up your cover versions and writing a few solid original songs; and network with other local musicians and club owners. The entrance exam for club gigs is often an audition, and when that opportunity comes around, be ready. Almost every famous band you can name started out playing one club or another.

Own Gigs

If no wedding, party, bar mitzvah, or club will have you—yet—consider organizing your own gig. Where do they hold rave parties in your town? Maybe you can rent out the same warehouse, set up your gear, and advertise the show via flyers and handbills.

You can set up and play almost anywhere, pending local crowd-control laws and fire-marshall approval. Does your band rehearse in a basement or backyard that would fit a few dozen spectators? Start a party, and book your own band as the headlining act.

And don't forget to invite all your friends and relatives. They may well be the supportive core of all your early concerts, and they're likely to stick with the band as it gets bigger and bigger. Don't take these "early groupies" for granted—they may be the difference between a crowd of 5 strangers and an energetic crowd of 50 or 75 fans.

7. THE SECRET WORLD OF CLUBS

There are as many types of clubs as there are styles of music: supper clubs, catering to the older, Frank Sinatra-loving crowd; youth clubs, where underage high school and college students congregate when they can't get in anywhere else; dance clubs, which blast thumping electronic music well into the night; live-music clubs, your band's most likely outlet; bars, large and small, which often have all-ages nights or rope off a specific area for nondrinkers; and others catering to many different clienteles.

Some live-music clubs serve alcohol; some don't. Some, like the House of Blues, are run by national corporations; others are run by local business-people. Some in your hometown may be so small they can barely fit a dozen or two people. Some may even have ties with church groups or community organizations. Don't exclude any type of club from your list of potential gigs.

Jumping onto the club circuit isn't as easy as merging onto the freeway. You'll have to send demos, follow up with regular-but-not-too-regular phone calls, make personal connections with influential people, and try not to get bamboozled in the process.

Who books the club? How does that person prefer to be approached? Once you identify the booker, manager, owner, or promoter, generally, you shouldn't just "drop in" to say hello and ask for a gig. Your contact is probably busy with other important jobs, like mopping the bathroom or listening to the daunting stack of demo CDs on his or her desk.

So it's time to follow the pitch routine. In short, you'll send a demo recording and press kit through the mail, and then wait a week or two before following up—briefly—by phone. The key is to be persistent without being a pest.

Next, you'll call to make sure that the right person received the package and listened to your demo. When you talk to them, club bookers might say, "Yeah, it's around here somewhere, call back next week." Follow instructions and call back next week. When you call again a week after resending the material, they might say, "I can't find it, send another." Do it without complaint. These people are your band's lifeline, and you don't want to anger them. Or even mildly annoy them.

If they like what they heard or saw on your demo CD or video, an interested club booker will probably want to see you play live, so you may have to participate in an audition. Don't worry, you won't have to memorize any lines or recite Shakespeare to a panel of directors. You'll just bring your key gear—guitars, drums, amps, and a sound system (if the booker tells you the club doesn't have one)—and play your best stuff.

Often, clubs will audition bands on slow evenings, like Sundays, with two or three different acts playing for free. You won't want to get in the habit of giving free gigs, but as you're essentially a nobody on the club circuit, it's probably your only option at this point.

An audition is like doing a truncated show, and you should treat it as such. Do some scouting in advance. Is there an adequate PA system in the club? Will it be available on audition night? Where can you plug in? How big is the stage, and can all the band members fit with their respective gear? How much time will you have to set up and play? (Don't worry, the people

hosting the audition probably won't surprise you by pulling the plug early or letting you go on extra long.)

Plan to perform your best (or best-rehearsed) songs. And remember, you're auditioning for a job, so be presentable. If it's a fancy supper-club type of place, wear a tuxedo, or at least a suit. It's acceptable to wear T-shirts and jeans if it's that kind of joint, but make sure that you and your clothes are clean. (Nobody wants to smell the band from the front row.) And leave the ironic "This Club Stinks!" caps at home.

Depending on the club's management, you might find out whether you got the gig within a few days or a few weeks or months after the audition. Some club owners are amazingly efficient, and when they audition bands for a certain upcoming night, that's the night the winning band can expect to perform. Other bookers may be less decisive, and could sit on your name for weeks until another band's singer catches cold and needs an emergency replacement. Either way, be ready—don't berate the club booker if you don't hear back within a few days of your audition; and if you get the gig, even if it's that night, be ready to clear your schedules.

The Major Players

Once you walk through the door of a club, whether it's for an audition, rehearsal, or gig, everybody is important. Bring your own door-stopper so the ID-checking bouncer doesn't have to hold open the door for every patron. Tip waitresses and bartenders. It goes without saying that you should be courteous and professional toward the people who are considering you. You want everybody in the club to think you're the best band they've ever heard and, equally important to landing a future gig, the easiest one to work with.

Owner

You probably won't see much of the owner during your audition, unless the club is so small the owner has to do the band-booking himself. Generally, the club manager conducts most of the day-to-day business, while the owner makes appearances just to make sure things are running smoothly. If you do encounter the owner, treat him or her with respect—this person could become your boss, even if just for one night. Don't complain to him about the stinky toilets, crappy sound system, or flat beer.

That's not to say you should allow the boss to take advantage of you, either. You're the entertainment, not the help, and should firmly but politely protest if somebody asks you to sweep up before the show.

Booker

The booker, unlike the owner or manager, is your direct contact person. He or she will review your demo and determine whether you're worth auditioning in the first place. The booker will arrange the details of the audition and decide whether you pass or fail. If you get the gig, the booker will hammer out the details—where you set up, whether you should bring your own sound system, what time sound check takes place, and how long you'll be playing.

Club bookers, to make a sweeping generalization, tend to have similar personalities. They're often hyperactive, kinetic music fans whose primary concerns are packing the rooms with fans. (And usually, selling drinks.) Learn to deal with this personality type. Rather than wasting time with sweet talk, take actions—like going onstage exactly when you agree to go on—that make his or her job easier.

Finance

When money enters the picture, your band automatically changes—it becomes, by definition, professional. It also means that you have to deal with new problems. When money is involved, relationships and responsibilities have a way of shifting.

Playing music in exchange for payment doesn't have to be a negative process. If the band agrees on its expected fee, and the "money guy" (or maybe someday, booking agent) does his or her best to negotiate with the club, everybody should be happy in the end. (Unless somebody drinks too much "on-the-house" beer at the gig, but that's a different story.)

You may not get paid at first, even when you start to inch onto the club circuit. Remember: Auditions don't pay at all. And the first time you play a particular gig, depending on a club's policy, you may have to deal with a "pay to play" or free-night-on-a-stage situation. At this point in your career, it's almost certainly worth the exposure.

At some point, though, you'll probably land a paid gig. Some clubs have rigid pay scales, and it'll be difficult for you to negotiate. Others may have "wiggle room," so ask for another £50 or £100 depending on your negotiating confidence.

Be flexible during the negotiations. Landing the gig and getting the exposure may be at least as valuable as the extra £50 or £100 you wanted to receive. It's not that you should never walk away. But you don't have a lot of leverage at this early stage in your band's career.

Beyond the actual gig payment, you may have to hammer out some other details with the club booker. Will you get paid by cash or check? (You'd prefer cash, obviously.) If you sell T-shirts and CDs during the show—or the club sells merchandise for you—does the club take a percentage? When will you get paid? Clubs usually have standard procedures for these issues, but be sure to answer these questions in advance so nobody springs a surprise later.

8. YOUR FIRST GIG

Finally, after months of basement rehearsals and badgering nightclub owners and wedding planners for opportunities, you have a gig. It's Friday night at 8 P.M., which gives you a few days to fine-tune a few songs, load your stuff into the drummer's trunk, and get set up. But hold on—there isn't as much time as you'd think. The small details, from protecting your equipment against theft to buying extra guitar strings, can be overwhelming.

What about scouting the venue? You already know to case the joint first. If it's a restaurant or bar, you can probably drop by a day early for the scouting report. If it's a wedding hall, open only on Saturdays, you may have to call and schedule an appointment several days in advance.

If time permits, plan to attend another concert or two at the same venue. See a band that plays music roughly like yours. Approach that band between sets and ask questions. Befriend the bouncer, bartender, and waitpeople in advance. Tip well!

Make sure you know the answer to the following questions:

- Where are the power outlets, and how many does the club have?
- Where can you park while loading your equipment?
- Where can you park during the show?
- How big is the stage, and will it fit all your musicians and respective gear?
- Is the club generous about sound-check time?
- Do you need to bring your own PA system?
- What nights have the rowdiest crowds?
- Are there certain influential "regulars" you might need to win over? If so, what songs do they like?
- Are the venue managers prompt about payment?

The booker can answer some of these questions, but it never hurts to get a second opinion. While scouting, it probably can't hurt—if it's okay with the club—to pass out a few flyers announcing your gig. Finally, don't forget to figure out where the bathrooms are.

Packing

As a rule of thumb, plan to arrive two hours before your show at a familiar venue. If the club is out of town, or you've never been there, give yourself three hours. We also recommend

compiling a "gig sheet," including the club manager's name and contact information, numbers for other bands on the bill and so on. This will help if you arrive early to find the door locked. Also, ask in advance when the venue's doors are open to the public. If you arrive two hours early, and the club is already filled with people, it'll be hard to walk through the club, let alone conduct your business.

Finally, unless you're meticulously organized (most musicians aren't), prepare a checklist before every gig. Include preshow packing details on the list: Do you have transportation? Gas money? Does the equipment fit? And don't forget to account for the equipment: Include check boxes for guitars, amps, gaffer tape, set list, props, and a clean T-shirt.

Multiple guitars, amps, drums, and microphones—not to mention the musicians themselves—probably won't fit into the bassist's Yugo. Generally speaking, each band member will need a total of one car for himself and his equipment.

Consider borrowing a truck or van from a friend, or finding a cheap one-day rate. Have everybody meet at the rehearsal space, several hours before show time, to load up and caravan to the concert. Allow extra time for crises and van breakdowns. And be especially kind to the drummer, who has the most stuff.

Stage Building

At this stage, it usually won't be necessary to buy your own PA system (short for public-address system). If you regularly play at weddings or venues lacking their own such systems, consider investing in one. At most venues that feature music regularly, however, the club's PA system is likely to be better than yours.

Feel free to scout the club's sound in advance, by checking out a band on another night, or simply contact the sound engineer and ask questions. You can almost always bring your own stuff—a singer's special microphone, for example—and mix it seamlessly with the existing system.

A sound check is the performer's pregig rehearsal, usually at the venue a few hours before the show. Ask the concert promoter or club owner for times and setup details. Even if it's just a few minutes, sound check is an excellent opportunity to test your gear, go over tricky musical chord changes, and generally get a feel for the stage and sound of the room.

Depending on the venue, you might not need to bring your own sound engineer. As with PA systems, the venues that specialize in music probably have their own sound people. Be nice to the club's sound person—a little rapport might make him inclined to tweak your sound so it sounds great. Also be sure to ask the sound person whether a sound check will be available.

As for lighting, cheap rigs cost £250 or less, but who has room for all that stuff in the van? If the venue has even a few lights, ask for permission to aim them on certain musicians. Some clubs will let you affix colored plastic paper over an existing light for maximum psychedelic impact.

Everything you need at rehearsal, you'll almost certainly need at the show. But this depends on the size of the venue. If you practice in a warehouse and the gig is a party, you'll need less stuff; if you practice in a walk-in closet and the gig is a banquet hall, you'll need more stuff.

And although most nightclubs are equipped for live music, a wedding hall or friend's party may position you far from the electrical power source. A 50-foot extension cord and power strip can't hurt.

Set list

A set list is the band's master list of songs for an act, negotiated long in advance and affixed to the stage so everyone can refer to it. When preparing one, remember pacing—follow up several sweaty rock 'n' rollers with a cool-down ballad.

A wedding crowd will want to hear Etta James's "At Last" and Hootie & the Blowfish's "Hold My Hand." A high-school dance crowd will demand upbeat rockers—and mostly hits of the day. Certain songs work in almost every setting. Others, such as the traditional Jewish dance tune "Hava Nagileh" or the Italian "Tarantella," will be requested only under very specific circumstances. You'll learn more songs with experience, obviously, but try to be prepared for anything.

Create your set list long in advance, and tailor it to the gig. If it's a bar or club, you'll want to fill the dance floor as quickly as possible, so stack the beginning with upbeat numbers. If it's a wedding, where you're on after the cake-cutting, start with slow, romantic stuff and build up to the rockers. With experience you'll develop several set-list variations—"party set," "bar set," and so on.

Are you lucky enough to have a signature song, whether it's an original or a cover? If so, play it as often as you can. Twice in the same night, sometimes! Frequently, attendees at the beginning and end of the show won't be the same people.

Band and audience communicate with a sort of telepathy. If people at a high-school dance are having a great time rocking out, leave your hand-holding ballad for later. You can't always rely on your standard set list. At a wedding, for example, determine special requests in advance.

Safety

When hundreds or perhaps thousands of people are packed into a small space, and nobody can hear each other, it's a potentially dangerous situation. So it behooves you to take basic precautions: While loading in before the show, locate all the exit doors and figure out how to get in and out.

The stage, too, can be a dangerous area, given all the cords and wires connected to high-power sound equipment.

When you have equipment plugged into electrical outlets, shocks are always a possibility. For this reason, avoid stepping in puddles onstage, and always try to clean up any spills

immediately. Never, under any circumstances, set drinks on top of amplifiers. And always take your hands off a guitar's metal strings before grabbing the microphone.

Always pack a fire extinguisher in the aforementioned band tool kit. And locate the venue's extinguishers before you play. Even without performance experience, you'll be able to gauge the club's physical condition just by looking at the outlets—are plugs dangling off frayed wires? You don't want to squander an opportunity, but it's not worth your life. You can always wriggle out of a commitment if the situation is unsafe.

Other fire-prevention tips: Don't overload an electrical circuit (thus, the extra extension cords); don't confine amps and other quick-heating sound gear into small spaces; and never place drinks on top of electrical equipment.

Audience

Fans are your friends, not your adversaries. They probably spent good money to hear you play. So don't abuse the crowd with obscure or difficult material. In that spirit, try to accommodate shouted requests; if you absolutely can't play it, kindly say so. "We don't play that—it's a stupid song" is unacceptable in every situation.

Occasionally, though, you'll wind up with an unruly crowd you can't possibly control. If that's the case, often your only choice is to rely on the club manager and bouncers on hand. Befriend these people—and bartenders—long before the show begins. In extreme situations, you can ask for assistance from the stage, via microphone.

On the club circuit you'll encounter a lot of alcohol—probably more alcohol than you've ever seen in your life. The primary aim of beer-serving clubs is to sell beer, and more often than not live entertainment is an afterthought. Or, in business terms, a "loss leader" to lure patrons into the club so they can buy more alcohol.

You'll know instantly, upon playing for a crowd, whether people have been drinking. It's a totally different atmosphere, with normally shy people willing to shout all kinds of things and perhaps become physically abusive. You may run up against a character who has spent the day drinking in the bar and isn't particularly enamored with your distracting loud music. You may also find fans who pester you with requests or don't mind telling you exactly what they think of your music. It's always best to ignore these patrons.

Finally, keep in mind your underage band members may not be allowed to perform in alcohol-serving bars. Watch for all-ages venues, or venues that put on regular all-ages nights.

The fastest way to drown out an obnoxious fan is to count off the next song and plunge right in. Resist the urge to counterattack. The heckler's friends may make up half the audience, so once you've responded, you may have put off half the crowd. And be particularly sensitive at weddings—that drunk guy who keeps interrupting your set with profane toasts may just be the father of the bride—the same father of the bride who is supposed to hand you a check at the end of the night.

Even successful performers experience stage fright on a regular basis—Barbra Streisand, Cher, and Rod Stewart had to overcome serious afflictions on the way to fame. (It's said

Sonny Bono went onstage with Cher because she was so nervous he felt that she needed company; shortly thereafter they formed Sonny & Cher.)

The only cure for stage fright is to get on stage. Being well-rehearsed is a big help. Another effective strategy is closing your eyes, or focusing your attention on your bandmates, for a few seconds before the show begins. Trust the music to carry you through. If the problem is so crippling you're unable to endure it, this may be time for a different kind of career.

Clothes

A beer-and-barbecue crowd will be more than happy to see you in jeans and work boots. A high-end wedding crowd will want nothing less than tuxedos and other formal attire. If you're really the prepared type (and you sweat a lot), an extra shirt may save a lot of aggravation.

Costumes are occasionally effective—early in their career, The Beatles looked even more striking than usual when they donned matching gray suits. You can do this in a simple way, with color schemes: Just arrange for everybody in the band to wear something with, say, red and black on it, or green and yellow.

If you're a guy, you probably don't need makeup. The only scenario under which to consider it involves massive stage lights that are likely to wash out your features. Also, if you're a male in a cross-dressing band (The New York Dolls, David Bowie, Poison, Motley Crue), makeup is an imperative.

Be careful not to overdo the costuming, however. The last thing the beer-and-barbecue crowd—or the fancy-wedding crowd, for that matter—wants is a band dressed in elaborate "glam" regalia. So, know your audience.

Before uncorking any sort of "look," check with your bandmates, who may not appreciate looking like normal people while the bassist with Marilyn Manson platform shoes upstages them.

Women, of course, have much broader rock-history fashion precedents, from the close-cropped Pat Benatar 1980s look (although we recommend against the Spandex tights) to R&B singer Patti LaBelle's elaborate, sculpted hair creations. There are many music picture books available at the local bookstore, and a good stylist can match your vision.

Choreography

If you're an Irish folk-music trio, skip the next few paragraphs—all you need, presentation-wise, is strong music and an occasional rambling story to tell the crowd. If you're a bombastic rock 'n' roll quartet, some choreography may be appropriate. Generally, the larger the stage, the more physical space you have to fill, so it may be worth practicing your James Brown knee-drop in the mirror at home.

It's no sin to steal from the masters. Prowl the stage like rapper LL Cool J. Conduct an arm-flailing guitar "windmill" like Pete Townshend of The Who. Maybe even figure out a few basic group dance moves, like The Temptations or NSYNC.

As for talking onstage, some performers have a gift for it. Early in his career, rocker Bruce Springsteen was a master at telling long-winded, personal stories and making them seem universal. Punk rocker Patti Smith effectively reads poetry between songs. In his solo shows, The Eagles guitarist Joe Walsh tells jokes.

You won't know for sure if you're good at it until you try. At first, avoid this stuff during key moments of the show—if you've finished one rocking song and the crowd responds enthusiastically for the first time, don't destroy the momentum with "so this guy walks into a bar ..." But if things are going well, and the audience seems responsive, a joke, a story, or even "Hello, Dublin!" (which is funnier if you're in Belfast) can be effective.

Design

Pyrotechnics are probably out of your price range at this point. And they're dangerous: Although rock stars such as KISS and Rob Zombie continue to blast them at arenas, many major acts are starting to worry about safety. In early 2003, more than 100 fans died at a small wooden nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island, because of fireworks set off in a claustrophobic, unsafe situation. So for many reasons it's best to keep your effects simple.

Props can be an easy band-marketing device—as simple as hanging a banner behind the stage with your name, logo, and website. (This can be tacky at weddings, however.) If you're invited to perform an outdoor luau, try spending £20 on palm trees, leis, and other inexpensive decorations. Your efforts could very well impress the people who hired you, which is a sure way to get recommendations for future gigs.

The easiest stage decoration is putting the band's name and logo on the bass drumhead—using paint or stencil or taking it to a professional sign store. Anything you can do for "brand identification," as they say in business, helps.

Team-work

A band in many ways is like a sports team. Some members might be superstars—the primary reasons fans arrive at the gigs. Others are team players, who solo when it's their time, but more often stay in the background and prop up the music. Unless you're the designated front person, resist the urge to grandstand. The bassist and drummer, first and foremost, are there to drive the rhythm.

Your band is responsible for doing what you can to pack the place. That means alerting everybody you know—family, friends, co-workers, classmates, other bands. It also means putting up posters and flyers, sending out mass e-mails, making website postings, and trying to get some publicity via local newspapers, alt-weeklies, and community radio stations. And ask the club booker how you can help with the advertising and promotion.

If, despite these efforts, you wind up with just a few people at the gig, don't get discouraged. You've just started, and nobody knows your name—yet. A small audience may seem awkward and humiliating, but it shouldn't deter you from performing really, really well. If you impress those five people, they'll tell five other people. And remember, the bartenders,

bouncers, and wait staff are always listening. They may be your most influential audience. In short, make every show your best show, because you never know what it could lead to.

9. ABOUT TOURING

Getting big in your hometown is a wonderful thing. But it has its drawbacks. If you play too often at local clubs, "familiarity breeds contempt" syndrome may creep in and promoters, bookers, and even fans may decide they have other things to do than hear your band once or twice a week. That's when it's time to travel.

Taking it on the road is perhaps the best investment you can make. It can be grueling, and costly, but if you do it right you'll immediately see growth—perhaps the kind of growth that attracts managers, booking agents, radio stations, and even prominent record labels. Once you've established a home base, it can never hurt to develop several satellite bases.

Before setting up a trip, consider the realities of taking the band on the road. Yes, travel can be a blast—rock history is filled with outrageous road stories—from dramatic accounts of The Who wrecking hotel rooms during all night bashes to those guys from the movie *Almost Famous* singing along happily to Elton John's "Tiny Dancer." What all such descriptions leave out are the countless hours of driving and waiting. Hours and hours of each.

So make sure you're ready. Is this the right time? Are all the band members emotionally—and physically—prepared for a grueling trip? Are you sure you've exhausted your local options? And perhaps most important, will the trip be a boost, from a financial or emotional perspective, for the band? If the answer is yes, or if you can find a quick out-of-town gig perfect for a short, nothing-to-lose road trip, it's time to deal with transportation.

Vehicles

The car (or cars) you've used to shuttle between rehearsal and gig will probably work for shorter trips, but when it comes to more elaborate road trips involving significant distances or several gigs, you'll need to find a more practical means of getting around. Vans tend to be the vehicle of choice for bands on the road, as they can haul a lot of gear with room to spare for several people.

Choose the van carefully, as you'll spend long hours in it.

When you're just getting started, it probably makes more sense to rent a vehicle rather than to cough up the cash to buy one. Besides, until you've tried a couple out-of-town gigs, you won't know whether you'll want to keep doing them.

Read the fine print on the rental-insurance policy. Often it won't cover specific types of property damage or will charge a prohibitively high deductible. And check with your regular auto-insurance policy, which may not cover some trucks. You never know what kind of mishap will happen while maneuvering an unknown highway at 2 A.M. in the middle of a thunderstorm.

Once your band starts making road trips a regular part of its schedule, buying a truck or van may be more cost-effective than renting. Check the classifieds and visit used car lots for the best deals. And don't forget to comparison-shop.

The idea is for you and your gear to fit in a reasonably comfortable way. Be ready to make easy compromises: Do you really need the gigantic Marshall amplifiers? Consider taking smaller amps and, at the gig, hooking them up to the club's PA system using microphones. (Call ahead, of course, to make sure you can do this.) Downsize. Sleeping bags may be handy if you're planning to camp out or crash on a friend's floor—but they might take up crucial space.

Road-trip entertainment is not a trivial consideration. Bring handheld video games and extra batteries. While the band may want to designate a few group CDs for sing-along (or musical study) sessions, headphones are a must for bands whose members have different musical tastes. If you really want to get fancy, battery-powered TVs and DVD players can suck up long hours on the road.

The van will break down. Inevitably, the radiator hose will blow out when you're late for a gig. The best way to deal with this is to have a band member who knows the basics of auto repair. He or she can recognize the problem, take a quick trip to an auto-parts store, and have the van running again in no time.

With the help of your mechanically inclined bandmate, or a friend or family member who knows the rudiments of auto repair, prepare a van toolbox. Screwdrivers, ratchet wrenches, soldering iron, and an extra tire or two are all crucial. But if your van has a unique mechanical characteristic, like an oddball-size fan belt, stuff a spare in the toolbox, too.

Expenses

Once you all pile in the van and head down the road, your costs run up tremendously. Besides the cost of the van, you'll probably have to pay to sleep in hotels and buy your food from restaurants. When you're far from home, you're constantly handing money to somebody. The trick is to plan for those costs and to do what you can to keep them down.

We recommend setting up a tour budget before you even start. Typical costs on the road include the following:

- Food—three meals a day for each person, plus plenty of snacks and drinks
- Parking and tolls
- Hotels
- Gas
- Mobile phone bills, phone cards, or extravagant pay-phone long-distance rates
- Emergency van maintenance (Yes, you will break down on occasion; and even if you're lucky enough to have a mechanic in the band, you'll still require garage service.)
- Extra health and auto insurance if your usual policies don't cover road trips (Check first.)
- Medicine, from basic aspirin to a doctor's appointment if somebody gets sick in an unfamiliar city

Obviously, there are ways to keep these costs down. Bringing a cooler and buying bulk supermarket food is cheaper (and healthier) than eating at McDonald's three times a day. Rather than paying £25 to £50 a night for even the cheapest hotel, perhaps a friend will let

you crash on the couch in exchange for free access to the gig or some other favor. Check the map to see if you can avoid the toll roads, and bring lots of quarters to park at meters rather than paying for an expensive garage.

Once you've determined the potential costs, it's time to figure out whether you can actually afford to take the trip. You'd be surprised by how many bands fail to take this extremely important step. Maxing out credit cards will only hurt you in the future, and possibly break up the band someday.

The fairest, most democratic method is for everybody to chip in—but that may not be feasible given certain members' financial situations. Maybe three musicians can split the costs, and the other can sign a payment plan involving future gig proceeds. But proceed with caution: If one musician is financially beholden to another, this can mess with fragile group dynamics. And if one musician winds up quitting (or worse yet, getting fired), the last thing you'll want is for that person to owe money.

Planning

Where do you go? The easy answer is, "Wherever you can get a gig." But there's more to it than that. The process can begin in two ways: You can pick a city within driving distance (which may be just a few hours for some bands with families and day jobs, or a longer summer adventure for band members with no such commitments) and find a club at your level in that area. Or you can find the club first, through connections or simply locating it on a map, and market yourself to that club.

Some bands use an "exchange system" to broaden their markets to other cities. Bands outside your hometown might let you open for them in one of their strong markets.

In exchange, you'd let them open for you in one of your strongholds. Although competition among bands can be healthy, cooperation is often far more effective.

But be realistic. If the trip is a weekend quickie, you may not have the time or energy to play more than one or two gigs. And study the map carefully—don't make a side trip to Bristol if you're making the Manchester-to-Glasgow trip. That can take you hours out of your way and drive everybody crazy.

Being on the Road

Jack Kerouac's classic Beat Generation novel *On the Road* notwithstanding, the road isn't as romantic as you might think. If rehearsal spaces and local stages seem cramped, imagine stuffing all the same people and gear, plus luggage, into a small van. And on the road, you'll have very little leisure time (aside from long hours staring at the white lines of the highway). The whole experience can make it difficult to keep a positive attitude.

To survive, perhaps the most important thing is to maintain a sense of humor and perspective. Your band is doing a good thing! The out-of-town gig can easily pay off in terms of exposure or even money, but regardless, going on the road with your band is an experience you'll always remember.

It's fine to look to the road as your route to adventure, just don't neglect your health and safety. Shuffle drivers regularly—on a long trip, one driver's shift shouldn't go more than three hours. Night shifts are sometimes inevitable, and someone should always be awake, helping the driver not to fall asleep at the wheel. Make regular stops, not only obvious ones for gas and restrooms, but also for the occasional leg-stretching "Chinese fire drill."

It's hard, especially for young road-trippers, to avoid a steady regimen of junk food. You'll encounter every conceivable fast-food chain and gas-station food store at roadside exits, and it's tempting to load up on chips, cheeseburgers, and coke. Occasional indulgences are okay—even good for morale—but you'll be better off if you make salads and grilled-chicken sandwiches the mainstay of your diet.

"Eat properly on the road!" sounds like the ultimate bossy-parent advice, but it'll pay off for everybody in the long run. If you're in your mid- to late-20s, just as your body's metabolism is starting to change, a steady regimen of chips will fatten you up in a surprisingly short period of time. (It's also hard to exercise on the road—try to squeeze in short runs at rest areas and use hotel workout rooms when they are available.)

Merchandising

Selling merchandise on the road can make for lucrative side income. At the very least, it's a potential way to pay for gas.

Before heading out, check into local T-shirt silk-screening companies. Contact printing companies or local copy shops about stamping your logo onto a sticker, button, or, more creatively, a container for earplugs.

Then pay a T-shirt company to copy off a dozen or two. When choosing the number of designs, determine how much space you have in the van. Twelve T-shirt designs becomes "stuff you have to carry," which means a bigger van and a bigger expense.

Placing merchandise at a gig is an art. During a break, one band we know stacked its merchandise at the front of the stage—a smart move, because people's eyes naturally gravitate to the stage when they're not looking anywhere else. Bring the merch into fans' fields of vision.

10. BAND MARKETING

Word-of-mouth is a great way to get people to your shows. Not only is it effective, it will establish your reputation as a "street-level" or "grassroots" band that hasn't yet registered on the public's radar screen. But eventually you'll want to expand your audience, even if it's just from 10 people to 50, or from the tiny suburban coffeehouse to the hip downtown nightclub. One excellent way to do this is by landing articles—or even brief mentions—about your band in the local media. The process can be intimidating: Busy music writers have eight zillion CDs stacked on their desks, and the last thing they need is another local band pestering them.

You can be the best band in the world, but if people don't know about you, they won't come to your shows. The more people hear about you, the more people will assume you're worth watching—or hiring. To expand, and spread the word, the local media is an invaluable tool.

"Media coverage" is a broad term—for your purposes, it can mean a glowing review in the local newspaper trumpeting the band's talents and achievements. It can also mean a tiny-type listing in the local alt-weekly stating the time, date, ticket price, and location of your upcoming gig. Any mention of your band is valuable. At the very least, it might encourage music fans to come hear your show. But it has the potential to create the kind of buzz that leads to a sold-out show.

About Media

There are two kinds of media: paid and free. Your band can easily take out a paid advertisement in the local newspaper or arrange for a pop-up ad on a web page. But paid advertisements aren't generally persuasive to fans—savvy readers know paid ads have more to do with how much money the musicians have than how good they are. Publicity, the free kind, usually has much more credibility than paid ads.

When planning a show, it's important to do some advance research—several weeks in advance, if possible—and determine how many people you'd ultimately like to attend. If it's 50, and your family and friends total just 25, you'll have to do some publicity legwork.

Ask other local bands to quantify the benefits of certain types of press. Perhaps a short "critic's choice" article in the newspaper's weekend preview magazine can generate about 15 ticket buyers to a small club. Perhaps a calendar listing means five.

Do the math and figure out what you need, and what you realistically can get at this stage. Target those publications that will lead to the attendance you seek.

If the press doesn't bite the first time you contact them, don't be discouraged. For the next gig, maybe the writer or editor will remember your name and be more generous.

Local radio stations, especially the big ones, are publicity machines. You may not have a chance at the nearby, corporate-owned station, which plays exclusively well-known pop artists, but there's probably at least one community or college station in your town. Call the program director and offer free listener tickets to the upcoming gig; you may get crucial DJ mentions on the air. Or offer to play in the station's studio—or hallways—the day of your

show. Such radio networking can also help you build contacts for future publicity; you never know which student station manager will land a job at the commercial station.

Once you've received a taste of publicity, you can use it for many different things. Save the article for your press kit. Then mail the new material to more publications, perhaps in different cities or states. Such clippings can also be a huge help later, if you decide to plan a tour.

Buzz and positive publicity (or even negative publicity, if you spin it right) will attract even more fans—and maybe even the attention of important people in the concert industry. Nightclub owners constantly scan publications for hot new ticket-selling acts, as do record-label representatives, record-store managers, and even other media writers and editors.

"Oh yeah, I think I saw that name" is a great thing for people to say about you. This feeling creates demand for your product, which is to say, live concerts, and helps solidify your status as a working band. It's an investment in your future and, at the very least, a way to ensure you'll get more shows in the short term.

Local Newspapers

Almost every daily newspaper has some music coverage. If you live in a small town, that may simply mean a nationally syndicated update on Hugh Grant's upcoming wedding (or divorce). But many papers have at least one writer who covers the "music beat," and they're often looking to cover a local story. That's you. Pay attention to the long, wide, daily pages of newsprint and all the nooks and crannies that fit music coverage. The tiny-print calendar listings are great for announcing concerts, and if you're creative (playing a charity event for the crumbling local library, say), you might even land on the front page, or in a prominent writer's column.

Although rock critics are usually on the prowl for something new and different, for various reasons they may not be responsive to your pitches. Do a little research to determine who else writes about music—maybe an editor's specialty is bluegrass, or a feature writer branches out into country, or a local freelancer is just looking for good ideas to pitch.

On a basic level, to obtain publicity, all you have to do is call a local publication and ask for it. Often, this is an easy way to wind up in a calendar listing. It's much harder to place a big story or review about your band. To do this, you'll need to sell yourself.

Ultimately, your music is your most effective sales tool. If your band is the second coming of The Rolling Stones, the selling-yourself-to-writers process won't be hard at all. If you have that kind of confidence, and fans are packing your shows and giving great feedback, let the music speak for itself.

No matter how good you are, though, always send material to journalists early—three or more weeks in advance of the event. Writers can't stand desperate last-minute sales pitches—and will probably remember you, for the wrong reasons, afterwards. As the old saying goes, lack of preparation on your part is no reason for an emergency on my part.

Press Kit

The press kit is the leading punch of your promotional efforts. You'll want to send one to every music writer or editor at every publication you're trying to crack. We recommend calling the publications in advance to double-check the recipient's spellings, job title, and address.

A press kit should contain the following three basic elements:

- A biography ("bio," for short), which gives a brief history of the band. It should include members' names (spelled correctly!); year and place the band formed; a pithy quote or two from band members; and relevant or unusual trivia such as an explanation of the band's name.
- A press release or letter announcing the band's upcoming gig, including time, date, and place—and, of course, a contact e-mail address or phone number.
- An 8x10 photo, black and white or color, clearly depicting all band members with their names underneath. Don't forget to print contact information on the photo paper!

Timing is important. Send the package at least three weeks, preferably four or more, in advance of the gig. Sometimes you won't nail down a show date until it's too late for press. If that happens, feel free to send the package, but don't be surprised if you get a cool reception—editors may have already determined what's going in the paper at that point.

Sometimes, in your press kit, you'll want to include a demo. Later in your career, you might wind up recording a professional demo in a studio as an audition for a record deal. But for now, all you need is to communicate to a writer what you'll sound like at the show.

An electronic press kit, or EPK, is a high-tech version of the press kit. Rather than sending the traditional photo, press release, and bio to a media outlet, you'll provide a website containing a bio, digital photos, MP3s, and your video. These press kits can also be a high-tech, professional way of capturing a record-label scout's attention.

Be persistent—without being a pest. It's a fine line. Wait at least a week after sending the press package. Then call the writer's direct number. Rehearse what you plan to say—your name, the band's name, the name and date of the upcoming concert, and a contact number—in case you get voicemail. If the writer or editor answers, be polite and respectful and try to end the conversation before wearing out your welcome.

Sometimes it's effective to learn a little background about the writer or editor you're calling. If the writer does a regular column, you can learn biographical tidbits just by reading. If he or she skis, for example, you can mention the "great snow pack we've been having." But again, don't go overboard. You don't want to waste the writer's time with rambling anecdotes about your own life.

After reviewing concerts all night, music writers tend to straggle back to their desks around midmorning. Then they need about an hour to drink coffee, talk to their editors, and catch up with phone calls and e-mails. Mondays are particularly stressful. Tuesdays (before deadline crush sets in) and Fridays, around 11 A.M., are often phone-friendly times.

If a writer or editor answers the phone when you call, introduce yourself quickly, and immediately ask, "Do you have time to talk?" If they say yes, be brief. If no—a distinct possibility, no matter how rude it may seem—politely ask for a better time to reach them. The "down period" is good information to have. And a journalist is far more likely to remember you the second time.

The easiest way to get on a writer's bad side is by stalking. Leaving a voicemail or e-mail once a week (or, preferably, every other week) is polite and reasonable. Anything beyond that is irritating. Calling several times a day, and hanging up on the voicemail, is risky indeed in the caller ID age.

Finally, e-mail is convenient and cheap. It's also easily deleted. And pitches from bands can look suspiciously like spam. (You know, the annoying form-letter advertisements that clog up your inbox.) We suggest sticking to more personal snail mail, then following up with e-mail only after you've made personal contact with the writer. Even then, keep it short.

Interview

Congratulations! You've "sold" a writer on your music and the publication plans to print a big preview story. They'll run your band's photograph and include lots of quotes from the musicians.

But wait...quotes? Can't they just use the ones in the press release? Nope. Writers need new, fresh quotes, to distinguish their stories from any other story run in any other publication. Which means it's time for an interview.

Interviews are very, very good for your band. They're also fun—who wouldn't like spending a half-hour talking about himself? But you have to do some preparation, or the interview process can be very, very bad. And no fun at all.

You'll want to provide colorful, long-but-not-too-long answers, which means anticipating the questions. A writer will probably ask about your influences, or other artists who've inspired your music. Other common questions include the following:

- Where do you get ideas for your songs?
- What are your long-term goals?
- How did you meet the other band members?
- Why did you choose to play this type of music?
- Do you prefer playing live or making music in the studio?

No matter what, always have something to say—politely—even if the question is awkward, poorly worded, or even under-researched. And avoid answering simply "yes" or "no," even if it's in response to yes/no questions.

Finally, as a new artist, your message may be as simple as "we want people to come to our show!" But if your singer is charismatic and sexy and gets a lot of attention onstage, you also may want to highlight your underrated bassist and drummer. During interviews, you can direct writers to your message in subtle ways. When they ask about how your singer

overcame stage fright, you can say, "It was difficult for him, but our rhythm section is so solid and professional that they give the whole band confidence."

Flyers

Professional advertising and stories in the local paper are well and good, but rock fans have been trained over the past 40 years to pay attention to lampposts, telephone poles, kiosks, and coffeeshop bulletin boards for their concert information. With posters, handbills, and flyers, you can publicize a show inexpensively—and use some artistry and imagination in the process.

Your image can be postcard-size, perfect for distribution at clubs and under windshield wipers; letter-size, for stapling onto bulletin boards and kiosks; or poster-size, for papering at the place you're playing or a prominent wall in your city. "Postering" can be a credible way of circumventing other media, spreading the word to regions and audiences newspapers don't traditionally reach.

So, a flyer is usually an 8.5-by-11-inch piece of paper containing your band's name, photo, website address, and information about an upcoming gig or CD release. Like everything else involving your band, you'll want it to fit into your musical scheme and reinforce your image. A genteel Irish folk band, for example, probably shouldn't borrow from Iron Maiden's classic googly-eyed-skeleton artwork.

Unless you own a copy machine that prints in bulk, you'll probably spend a lot of time in the copy shop. It sounds easy enough, but you'll have to make many important decisions: What colour paper should you use? (Colour is almost always more expensive than black and white.) What type of stock? (Thickest is most pricey.) What colors reproduce the best? How can you lay out the artwork in the straightest, most professional way?

Copy-shop employees will be glad to help answer these questions. But if not, we'll note that white is the most professional color if you're snail-mailing flyers or sending out small handbills as postcards. An obnoxiously bright color like Day-Glo pink or orange is effective if you're posting a flyer on a bulletin board and want to distinguish your concert from the garage sales.

If there's a good chance your poster will hang on a kiosk or bulletin board for weeks or months at a time, go with heavy paper stock. Small handbills, which you might hand out to fans after concerts, should be thin and cheap, because they're likely to be quickly thrown away.

You can also spread the word using business cards. If you order them from a professional printing company, cards will cost in the range of £5 for 250, or you can get a bulk rate of roughly £15 for 1,000. You might be able to shrink your handbill design and print it up in a business-card format. Or you might opt for something more simple—just the band name, one phone number, one e-mail address, and perhaps your type of music.

Stickers are also effective in the rock world. You won't have to worry about using tape and staples, and the designs and logos are yet another way to express your originality. They are, however, very difficult to scrape off.

A good slogan is an indispensable tool in rock music. The Sex Pistols, The Clash, and other famous punks were notorious for their slogans, affixing flyers all over London reading, "White Riot!" and "Hate and War." One of the Pistols' revolutionary, military-lamprooning gems was "Be a man. Be someone. Kill someone. Be a man. Kill yourself."

A slogan isn't a requirement, of course. You can make a perfectly fine poster with just the band's name, time and location of gig, and website address. But if you're stapling a poster to a telephone pole, construction site, or other widely papered location, you'll want to stand out.

Bulletin Boards

Be respectful of the bulletin-board owner (and other users). Don't plaster your material blithely over the flyer begging for the whereabouts of a lost 15-year-old Labrador Retriever. And while you may be tempted to preempt a rival band's flyer in the same location, try to resist. This kind of activity can start a long-term war that will ultimately upset the bulletin board owner. Be courteous. Look for an open spot and don't jam in so many staples or string up so much tape that it's impossible to remove later.

Also, ask for permission first, even if it seems obvious that everybody gets to post whatever they want. In a location without a bulletin board, use one small, not-too-sticky piece of tape so as to not leave gunk on the window or wall.

Bands in college towns face heavier competition than bands in rural or out-of-the-way areas. But they're also blessed with far more promotional opportunities, from (usually) receptive campus radio stations to prominent banner-placing opportunities.

Whether or not you're a student, go on a few exploratory missions around campus. Where are the bulletin boards? What publications exist with prominent classified ads? Is it a grassroots "tradition" that people chalk or spray-paint the sidewalks in certain areas?

Also, study the other band flyers that seem effective on campus. Were they laser-printed? Designed by hand? What works and what doesn't? What information appears most prominently? How do the artistic designs of posters, flyers, and handbills differ? Learn from these artistic and informational decisions and copy the best ideas.

Posters

Some bands simply design a small handbill and, when it comes time to hang up a poster, enlarge it several times. This works, but on super-size posters you may want to take advantage of the extra space and add more art and perhaps written information.

When using a poster as a canvas, you have more space for imagination and creativity. Consider turning the poster into a mini-billboard—and for inspiration, check out corporate highway billboards to see what works and what doesn't. (Hint: Short, terse, and funny or colorful messages are incredibly effective for pedestrians rushing past the posters.)

No matter what else you decide to put on your poster, the following information is essential, but feel free to arrange it in an unusual way: band name or logo; time, date, and location of gig, CD-release party, or other event; contact information; band photo; and website address.

In some parts of certain cities, tacking your posters on lampposts or the wooden areas surrounding construction sites is an even more effective way of spreading the word than local newspapers. In urban areas where people are far more likely to ride the bus than commute on a highway, lamppost-type messages can be effective. But in some areas, litter-law enforcement may be so intense that you never see posters at all.

Guerrilla marketing refers to untraditional means of gaining exposure for a business. Whereas a traditional music marketer buys advertising on a local radio station, a guerrilla marketer might set up his own soapbox in the middle of a crowded street and loudly act out the reasons why his product is worth buying. This approach can be valuable for developing rock bands.

Posting a concert announcement on a lamppost isn't the ultimate act of rock 'n' roll rebellion, of course, but it's a small form of guerrilla marketing. Although the term has become part of corporate strategy over the past 20 years—meaning, loosely, "spreading your message with your own hard work rather than spending tons of money"—it's still effective for grassroots bands. Depending how extreme you want to get, guerrilla marketing can involve everything from spray-painting graffiti at a subway stop to shouting the band's name via bullhorn on a crowded street.

Before indulging in guerrilla marketing, it's best to have a working knowledge of local laws. In some cities stickering and posterizing private property is illegal; if you do it, you could receive a fine or even jail time. (The penalties tend to be even stricter for more permanent street displays such as graffiti.) Rock marketing has a long history of rebelling against these laws with defiantly underground poster and handbill displays. However, in no way do we condone illegal behavior.

Leaflets

Unattached handbills, posters, and flyers can be used as leaflets. Some merchants will let you drop off a stack of them at the front counter, near the cash register, or at the front door, near the alt-weeklies and classified-ad rags. But as this can lead to an unruly mess, many merchants prefer people to post flyers to central bulletin boards. (If a merchant is generous about leaving stacks of flyers around, be sure to keep the area neat and return frequently for cleanup.)

A more effective way of dispersing leaflets involves standing in the street outside a club or theatre. When a band finishes playing, approach everybody in sight to hand out flyers. This is especially effective if you're playing the same venue later—and if you are, you'll win points with the owners if you stick around to clean up the flyers fans inevitably toss on the ground. Also, it helps to get permission from the club booker in advance.

When should you hand out the flyers? Definitely as fans are leaving the concert. If you hand out leaflets on their way in, fans will invariably drop them in the first garbage can they see and focus on more important tasks such as buying beer or staking out a seat. On the way out,

however, fans are idle, walking leisurely to their cars, and talking about the show they just saw. They'll be more receptive at that time, for sure.

When deciding where to hand out leaflets, find a like-minded band's gig and park yourself there after the show. If you play funk and rock, for example, hit The Red Hot Chili Peppers show at the local arena. The risk is that fans will perceive you as a cheaper version of the band they just saw; the potential reward is that they love this type of music so much they'll want to hear more.

Don't be insulted if your flyers wind up on the ground. If you hand out 200, and 190 people drop them and 10 decide to attend your show, that's a half-hour (or so) well spent. But again, clean up after yourself so the club will let you hang around with the handbills on a future date. You can also stick handbills under windshield wipers, although many fans find this a nuisance. Annoying advertising can be effective—take television commercials and pop-up ads on websites, for example—just be aware you risk alienating potential fans.

Internet

In addition to revolutionizing everything else in the world, the Internet has vastly improved the way bands network with their fans. The Internet—specifically, bands' websites—has replaced the old-fashioned fan club.

Some bands, such as Pearl Jam, still run fan clubs the old-fashioned way—but they do everything through their websites. Metallica, to name one prominent example, runs a bulletin board so fans around the world can talk to each other. Weezer, Zwan, Wilco, and others post live or rare music files directly onto their sites. At a minimum, a band can provide basic information and spread the word about upcoming gigs or CD releases. Learning to do this is a huge marketing and promotional leap forward.

Your Website

Like a CD cover or a promotional photo, a homepage should be an extension of the band's personality. Beyond that, it should provide solid, straightforward information. And maybe it should try to sell stuff—without coming across like an annoying salesperson.

But let's back up. First you have to find a domain name, or World Wide Web address. A URL, or Uniform Resource Locator, is the high-tech way of saying *metallica.com*, *phish.com*, or any other name you type into a browser to call up a page. URLs usually end in an extension such as ".co.uk," but many use ".com," ".org" and ".net" for various reasons not worth going into here.

The first thing to do is determine whether anybody else has your name. (The easiest way is to use your browser to see if any-thing's posted to that site.) If somebody else owns "your" URL, it's time for a few decisions. Maybe your band is called Slate—in that case, you're out of luck, because *Slate.com* has existed for years as a Microsoft online magazine. If that happens, and if your band isn't attached to its name, consider changing the name to something else.

If the site in question is more obscure, e-mail the owner to see if he or she will relinquish the domain. In rare cases, people will agree to do this for free. More likely, they'll ask for money or another favor. (Free band CDs?) Still others will be completely unreceptive.

Once you settle on a name, go to an Internet registrar, and follow the site's instructions. Prices vary, but it usually will cost about £50 a year to register and maintain your domain. Depending on how you ultimately use your website, this is pretty much a bargain.

You can set up a "store" on your web page. Usually your Internet service provider will be happy to take care of the details—sending you the HTML code and the graphical "buy me" buttons. They'll also help you accept credit cards, as long as you have a business account at a bank. The money from buyers' credit cards will get deposited directly to your account.

Also consider posting a discography, including any CD or tape releases you've offered to the public, even if they're demos, singles, or EPs. Lyrics to songs are always handy. And stamp your band's logo on every page. A web page is a lot like an ad.

In some popular bands, certain members periodically post their own diary entries. This is an excellent way to create your own "news," and sometimes, as when Limp Bizkit singer Fred Durst described his alleged relationship with singer Britney Spears, may generate publicity through print or television media outlets.

"Hits," or the number of people who surf to your page on the web, are always desirable. You want lots of fans to buy your CDs, T-shirts, and concert tickets, and the more people who reach your homepage, the better. To get a lot of hits, you need to make a lot of links.

Links are a great way to connect your web page to other popular websites. It's fun to link to pages you like, and exchanging links with other sites is a great free tool for marketing and networking. Do this often: Link to musical equipment manufacturers, other bands, clubs you've played, and especially places where people can buy your CD.