

"Do I Really Have To Leave St. Louis?"

Hello readers. This month I'd like to concentrate on the songwriting aspect of the music business, as I've come to know it. Over the past 8 years I have had as clients some of the biggest-selling songwriters in the music business. They are in addition to the other 'as of yet unknown' writers who like what I bring to their songs. From working so close with these people I have come to learn a few things that seem to be consistent with all of them:

1. You are only as good as your current hit.
2. Nobody cares what you did yesterday.

I had always assumed that just because you had a few big-time, #1 records to your credit, that automatically entitled you to special consideration by every record company A & R person when it came time to pick songs to be recorded by an artist. No such luck. Just because you had a big hit on Toni Braxton's last album, don't expect her to come running to you for material for her next one. One of my co-writers had a big hit with Huey Lewis And The News. Naturally, when we heard that Huey was recording another album, we sat down and wrote what we thought was another great song for Huey. NOT!!! We could barely get Huey's manager to answer our calls; Huey took forever to even listen to the tape; by the time he finally heard it, the album had taken a completely different turn and our song no longer fit in with the others.

Anyway, the point is this: All of you writers out there, whether you're in St. Louis or Chattanooga or Plain City have roughly the same chance of getting your song cut as do any of the "Big Boys". Then how do you get your songs to the record companies and singers? OK, here's the keys to the castle: there are no set ways to get your songs to these people. Some of the various ways writers have gotten their songs recorded by artists include:

1. Hanging out at the same club & giving them a tape
2. Sitting on their doorstep for days until they listen
3. Paying a lawyer to shop the songs
4. Having a friend at the record company

As you can see, there are about as many ways to get your songs heard as there are songs. Nobody has the same story twice. But don't give up hope just yet. The one thing all writers seem to agree on is that you have to just keep on pushing and shoving at every angle you can think of. Dianne Warren is the most aggressive songwriter ever – she is also the most successful. When Cher wasn't going to do one of her songs, Dianne went over to Cher's house and begged on her knees – she even offered to pay for the session. (*at least that's how the story goes.*) Do all of it. Call the record companies and see which of their artists are currently looking for songs. Go to the record store, look at the backs of CD's, tapes, anything. Write down the names of the producers recording the artists who are appropriate for the type of music you write. Get their phone numbers by any means necessary and call them up. Don't be shy. Don't be timid. Don't be embarrassed. This is an ultra-competitive market. If you can't stand getting rejected, get out now. The bottom line is this: as hard as you worked writing and recording your songs, you now have to work at least as hard to get those songs out there. Being in Los Angeles or New York is convenient, but not necessary. There are plenty of starving songwriters in both those cities that will attest to this.

Next time I'll discuss how to make a demo tape that doesn't get turned off. 'Till then, keep writing and get some sleep. Yeah right, like I ever sleep.....