

EVENTS

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EVENTS

OVERVIEW

For purposes of this handbook, the term *festival* will refer to events which are centered around performances and/or demonstrations (for example, folk festivals or folklife festivals), while the term *fair* will be used for events which focus on the sale of objects (such as crafts fairs). *Concerts* refers here to individual performance events for the public (including music concerts, storytelling performances, and the like); they may occur as single events or as part of a series.

Becoming knowledgeable about different types of fairs, festivals, and concerts, and deciding which kind(s) best suits both your personality and the nature of your product will help make marketing your work at events both pleasant and profitable.

To gather information about a festival or fair, one of the best sources is someone who has participated in the event in past years. If you don't know anyone who has been active in the fair or festival in which you are interested, ask the director or promoter for the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of two or three other traditional artists who have participated recently.

The checklists on the following pages outline important things to keep in mind in selecting and preparing for fairs, festivals, and concerts.

THE PERFORMANCE SITUATION — NEW AUDIENCES

Most traditional performers feel at home when performing for members of, or events in, their own communities. For example, playing music at family or church gatherings, swapping stories on the front porch on summer evenings, or playing for the regular Saturday night community dances are familiar pastimes for many traditional musicians and they know their audience(s) intimately.

More and more, traditional musicians are moving outside their communities to perform. At **folk festivals and concerts** you will be performing in front of new audiences of people who may not be familiar with your kind of music or performance traditions. Most reputable

festivals will have a **presenter** who will see to your needs as a performer and who will help to acquaint the audience with you, your traditions, and your style of performance.

The presenter's job is to introduce you and your music to a new, and usually diverse, audience. A good presenter will talk with you before presenting you and will discuss what you would like people to know about you and your music. If you have questions about whether or not to perform particular songs or numbers, you may wish to ask your presenter if they will be appropriate for the particular audience.

Either the presenter or the stage manager will make sure that you know when, where, and how long you will be performing. If you are not accustomed to performing with a microphone, it is the responsibility of the presenter or stage manager to adjust it for you and to help you use it comfortably.

Good festivals and concert venues will provide you **in advance** with adequate information on:

- the performance place, time, and duration;
- how to get there;
- who to report to; if there is to be a "sound check" (to set up microphones and amplifiers), when and with whom.

Be sure that you know when and where to report, and who to look for. For bookings other than festivals (clubs, dances, schools, community arts councils, concerts, and the like), make sure that you have a **contract** which clearly states the following:

- **where** you will be performing;
- **when** you will perform;
- **how long** your performances is to last;
- **what fee** you will be paid;
- what arrangements will be **made for travel and lodging**, if you must go some distance to the performance site;
- who will provide the **sound system**, if one is needed;
- the **nature of the performance space** – is it suitable for what you do? If you are a musician or storyteller, are the acoustics appropriate? Is the stage a reasonable size for your group? If you dance, does the space have an adequate surface? If you are performing outdoors, what provisions have been made for sun and/or rain protection?

BOOKING AND PROMOTION FOR PERFORMERS

Self-Booking

- Booking agents and promoters get thousands of unsolicited promotional recordings and calls. Some producers judge talent by the “20-second factor,” in which “you’re good or you’re gone.” That’s a 20-second judgment call on listening to your music, talking with you on the phone, or viewing your videotape.
- Do your homework before you call. Is the venue appropriate for what you do? Do they operate a weekly or monthly concert series? Are they a club open 7 nights a week? Do they feature your kind of music or performance?
- On the phone, be concise, professional, and courteous. Difficult artists don’t get asked back!
- Promptly send what you’re asked to send.
- Show up on time for the sound check and the performance.
- Bring your product(s).

Fees

Performance fees vary with the venue. Local coffeehouses are good places for musicians and storytellers to start. Usually they “split the door” (charge an admission fee and divide the money taken in with the performer) rather than paying a guaranteed performance fee.

“Open mikes” [where anyone can get up and perform] usually don’t pay at all, but they are good for exposure, polishing your act, getting known in a new town/city, etc.

Many clubs structure their fees on whether or not a performer has a tape/CD, is a known quantity, has a large following that will fill the house, etc. Seasoned performers usually get a guaranteed fee (and hotels, backstage food, etc.). while beginning or lesser-known performers get a percentage of the door.

Performing groups may want to look at union scale (local musicians’ or stage performers’)-hourly or per performance-and set their fees accordingly.

Self-Promotion

It is in your best interest to do self-promotion for your performances (see section “Creating Promotional Materials”). Send postcards to fans in the area (sorted by zip code), etc. Do not expect the venue to promote you unless you’re a draw, although they will put you in their own newsletter/flyer and do free listings in local papers and on radio.

It is your responsibility to do additional print and radio publicity before you land in a town, and to supply photos to print press. Call at least one month in advance to set up telephone interviews for print press, and to book live radio shows when you get to town. (Directories such as Kerrville will have all this information-see below.)

Talk to other performers to find out good (and bad) places to play, who to talk to (and not talk to), going rates on fees, how venues handle selling your product (Do you staff the table or will they, for a percentage?), etc.

Press Kit

A press kit is essential for telling a booker/promoter about you and your music (art form), and it is what press/newsletter writers will use for background information for potential features and/or reviews. If you were booked solely on the strength of your reputation or a booker having seen or heard you perform elsewhere, you should send the venue a press kit when the contract is confirmed, which is usually enough lead time to have the information included in the venue’s or festival’s own promotional materials.

A press kit need not be fancy, but it should be complete. A nice colored folder is good for holding everything together. You can be as high-cost and glossy as you want, but it is not necessary. Good, basic information is what you want to communicate.

A press kit should include

- 5x7 or 8x10 black-and-white clear glossy photo of you (and your group, with you with your instrument); horizontal shot (suitable for cropping) is best. Photo need not be professional, per se, but snapshots rarely work.
- A one-page biography: who you are, where you are from, something about your music or performance type, and a list of recordings (if you have them). Avoid “cuteness.” Be sure you include contact information: address/phone/fax/e-mail. If you have an agent/booker/publicist, list them and their contact information also.
- News clips (if you have any): be sure they are *recent* and include the name and date of publication. Ten-year-old clips, even if they are rave reviews, turn people off! You only need to include 2 or 3. Make sure they are good photocopies. You may put multiple clips on one sheet of paper, but make sure they are aligned and all go in the same direction.

- You may wish to put together a one-page information sheet with quotes from reviews of performances or tapes/CDs, a scanned photo, a list of previous venues/festivals/concerts, and an upcoming tour or performance schedule (for up to 6 months in the future).
- You can include a tape/CD or video, but it is not necessary unless you're submitting the entire package to be considered for a booking.

The easier you make it for a booker/promoter to find you, and the more lead time you give them to publicize you and your performance (both in their own publications and by providing information to the press), the better exposure you'll get. Press kits are usually filed for future use, so remember to *keep them current* at places you perform frequently, or *make it a habit to distribute new press kits every year*.

Get a Good Directory

This will save you time and money. Some directories list performers as well as venues.

Kerrville

Kerrville is one of the best for beginners. It is published by the folks who produce the multiweek Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas, a venue for singer/songwriters to see and be seen. Many bookers/agents/festival producers go there searching for talent. The directory is about 400 pages, is updated annually, and lists

- US, Canadian, and European performance venues with address, phone, contact person [90 pages worth]
- US and foreign radio stations-radio shows and producers
- Commercial press, entertainment editors
- Folk press, newsletters, organizations, and publications
- Foreign folk publications
- Songwriter organizations and services
- Retail sales, instrument books, music lessons
- Performers, writers, agents, managers, and publicists.

It costs \$25 to be listed (they provide the forms) and you receive one copy of the directory.

Kerrville Music Foundation, PO Box 1466, Kerrville, TX 78029

E-mail: kfest@hilconet.com

Web: <http://www.kerrville-music.com/>

Pollstar

Pollstar is the major directory is for professionals; it costs about \$400/year for directory listings.

Pollstar, 4697 W. Jacquelyn Ave., Fresno, CA 93722

Phone: 1-800344-7383

Fax: 209-271-7979

North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance

Go to the Folk Alliance annual (and regional) meetings. They are held all over the US and Canada. It is *the* place to network, make connections, and get to know agents, managers, and professional promoters. You can also do formal showcase performances (they'll tell you how to apply), or set up your own. The meetings also have daily workshops. Go to these information sessions to learn about traveling on the road (including a special workshop for women only), finding a song publisher, self-management, creating/maintaining mailing lists, finding a manger/agent, how festivals are put together, contracts/copyrights/legal information, etc. Folk Alliance conferences are also good opportunities to interview potential agents, managers, and bookers, as they attend looking for talent. Folk Alliance publishes newsletters throughout the year and offers support services such as access to group health insurance, mailing lists, etc. Memberships start at about \$40/year.

Folk Alliance, 1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20036-5504

Phone: 202-835-FOLK [835-3655]

Fax: 202-835-3656

E-mail: fa@folk.org

Dirty Linen

Read and/or get listed in *Dirty Linen*, a bimonthly magazine for folk, electric folk, traditional, and world music.

Dirty Linen, PO Box 66600, Baltimore, MD 21239-6600

USA phone: 410-583-7973

Fax: 410-337-6735

E-mail: office@dirtylinen.com

Web: <http://www.dirtynelson.com/linen/>

Subscriptions: \$20/year

Folk Festivals

Most (major) festivals book the artists themselves at places like the Folk Alliance gatherings, the Kerrville Festival or by going to clubs and coffeehouses looking for new talent and names. This is true for Newport, Lowell, the National, etc. I would not suggest spending too much time bombarding professional festival producers with tapes/CDs and calls. When you're ready for a big festival, the word will be out and they'll probably come to you! Festival listings are in the Kerrville directory and in the AES Festival directories [see Bibliography].

FESTIVALS

What you should know beforehand:

- **Who** is putting on the festival? (i.e. civic group, private promoter, non-profit organization, etc.)
- **What** is the intended purpose of the festival? (to raise funds for worthy causes, to make money, to provide education and/or entertainment, etc.)
- **References:** names of individuals who have worked with this festival before, and how to contact them.
- **Fees or honoraria:** Will you be paid for your participation? How much, how (cash/check) and when?
- **Staging:** What is the size and nature of the performance area? Is it adequate for what you do? If the performance is at night, will adequate lighting and lighting technicians be provided? If you have a dance group, is the surface of the staging area appropriate for dancing?
- **Sound system:** Will the festival organizers provide and handle any necessary microphones and amplifiers?
- **Transportation:** Are you required to make your own arrangements to get to the festival site? Is transportation cost borne by the festival organization? Do they pay it "up front," or will you have to pay and be reimbursed?
- **Housing:** If the festival lasts more than one day, or if it is some distance from you home, you will need housing accommodations. Who will make these arrangements, and who will pay for the housing?
- **Family members or travel companions:** If you need, or intend to have someone accompany you to the festival, how will their transportation and housing be handled?
- **Meals:** Find out what meals will be provided, and let staff know if you have any special dietary needs for reasons of health or religious proscription.
- **Reimbursement policies for travel:** Will you be compensated for meals during purchased during travel and for mileage if you drive your own vehicle to the festival?

When you have been selected to participate in a festival, you should receive a formal letter of invitation, which includes the following:

- Festival location, dates, fees.
- Confirmation of any verbal arrangements and commitments.
- A listing of other participants in the festival.
- Information about the nature and intent of the festival.

Once you have responded to the invitation, indicating your willingness to participate in the festival, you should receive:

- A **contract**, signed by the festival director or other festival organization officer, which spells out all of the terms to which you and the festival organizers have mutually agreed. These should be the same conditions and/or arrangements outlined in your letter of invitation unless you have requested some change. **All contracts are negotiable prior to being signed by both parties. If something in the contract is not acceptable to you, do not sign it!** Let the festival staff know immediately what you need/want, and *ask that a revised contract be sent to you.*

If the contract is in order, and you agree to its terms, sign it, retain one copy for your personal records, and return the signed copy to the festival organizers.

When your signed contract has been received, the festival organizer should send you a packet containing:

- **Information** on check-in, housing, food, security, and any audio/video recording planned.
- A **release form** allowing festival staff to photograph and/or record you, if this has not been stipulated in your contract.
- Performance/participation **schedule**.
- A **map** of festival and housing sites.
- Information on **parking**, if you are driving your own vehicle.

PRODUCT SALES

Performers' Recordings

If you wish to sell records, tapes, CDs and/or videos of your own performances, *make arrangements in advance with the festival organizer*. Some festivals may require you to ship such materials in advance, and will sell them for you out of the sponsor's booth or at a special "Recordings" booth. Some take a commission (a percentage of the sales price) for this service.

Be sure that you establish the selling price and agree in writing, preferably as part of your contract, by whom and where recordings are to be sold before the festival. (*Reminder: all items sold may be subject to sales tax. See special section on taxes.*)

Sales for Artists and Craftspeople

If you are invited as a participant to demonstrate your art or craft, you may not be allowed to sell your wares in the demonstration area (or at all). If you wish to sell items in addition to demonstrating how they are made, find out what provisions have been made for this.

Some festivals will have a special booth or tent for selling crafts, which they will staff. As in the case of performers' recordings, the festival organization may charge a commission on items sold. Other festivals may allow you to set up your own booth, which you must staff, somewhere away from the demonstration site.

If you have been invited to demonstrate and do wish to also sell the items you make, establish in writing who will sell them, where, and whether a commission (what % of sales price) will be charged to you for this service. You need not draw up the agreement. You can do your negotiating face-to-face, on the telephone, or through a spokesperson-- have the festival organization draw up an agreement for both parties to sign. Ideally, this can be made a part of your contract.

CRAFTS FAIRS

Deciding where to sell — things to consider:

- **Who** is sponsoring the fair, and **for what purpose?** (i.e. civic group as educational purposes and to foster community feeling, etc.)
- What is the **application procedure?** Is it a "juried" show? This means that invitations to participate are issued only after a panel of "experts" approves your work for quality of workmanship, design, appropriateness of the materials to the form and/or function of the piece, and general aesthetics of the work.
- If it is a juried show, will you be accepted (or rejected) on the basis of color slides of your work? Good slides for juried shows are full close-ups with plain backgrounds, focused on an individual piece of work in each slide (not on people or action), well-lighted by an indirect, bright light source, and are clean and clear.
- What **fees** are involved? Is there a non-refundable application fee in addition to a booth fee? (Is this going to cost you money whether or not you are accepted to show at this fair?) Booth fees: how much, to be paid how and when? Will a commission be taken from your sales? If so, how and when will it be collected?
- Who else is participating in the fair? Where are the other exhibitors from? Is the fair local, statewide, national or international in scope? Other good participants may mean competition for buyers, but in general, higher-quality participants will attract a better-buying crowd for all.
- **Booth space:** How much space will you have? What size of booth is given to each exhibitor (length x width), and how many exhibitors will there be?
- What is the estimated **attendance?** (per day, if the fair lasts for several days)
- What **promotion and publicity** will there be before and during the fair? Will local newspapers and TV crews cover the event?

Preparation -- Before the Fair

Plan your booth display and set it up at least once before you take it to the fair. Bear in mind that you may have to protect your work from sun, wind, rain, clumsy shoppers and small children; that your display and stock must fit into the vehicle you plan to use; and, while strong and sturdy, your display must be easy for you to assemble and disassemble yourself.

Keep your display neat, clean, and uncrowded. Plan to have a place under or behind your display area in which to keep the bulk of your stock.

Consider having **business cards, brochures, or postcards** printed for distribution during the event, as many sales actually happen after the fair.

Many exhibitors like to include **portfolio materials**, such as statements of personal philosophy and large good-quality photographs of themselves at work in their booth display. This lends both a personal and a professional air to your booth.

Check on any state **sales tax and/or licensing requirements** for the state(s) in which you will be selling.

Be sure to have plenty of **carbon receipts** (one copy for customer, one copy for your records) to record your sales, (record each sale, no matter how small.)

Cash box: be sure to have a closed container in which you can keep change, sales receipts, and payments.

Charge cards: you may consider subscribing to a national charge plan like Visa or MasterCard. Your local bank can help you with the application. There is no enrollment fee; there is a rental charge for the card imprinter, plus a service charge (3-5%) based on sales.

On Site -- At the Fair

Be friendly and attentive to shoppers.

Be ready to talk about, and possibly demonstrate, your work.

Have enough stock on hand and try to make the stock representative of your entire line. If you sell out of some kinds of work, **be prepared to take orders**, with proper forms and a realistic estimate of when you can deliver ordered pieces.

Set your prices and stand behind them. Don't haggle, argue with customers, or discount your work. Sell only high quality items and be ready to explain the time and attention your work takes. Don't hesitate to remind the customer, pleasantly, that you have materials costs and business overhead!

Start a mailing list of potential clients. Use the list after the fair to let people know when and where you will be selling next.

Take time to **look around** the fair at other booths and talk to other exhibitors. You will gain a wealth of ideas for your next show!

After the Fair

Do your bookkeeping!! All fair/show expenses are tax deductible. Keep accurate records of telephone calls, travel and living expenses during the fair. Total your receipts (including orders generated by exhibiting at the fair) to find out if this fair was "cost effective" (worth your time and money) for you.

Fill any outstanding **orders**.

Follow up on any **contacts** made through your mailing list and/or other exhibitors.