

Top 10 Gigging Tips
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Guitar Creativity | Bonus Chapter

Top 10 gigging tips

I have put together a top ten list of tips and advice which I think will really help you all be prepared when out there gigging!

Tip 1

Most important thing of all is...'**The show must go on**'... in some form, but the show **MUST** go on!! The world of gigging is a strange, strange world, where everything kind of weird scenario may actually occur, and even if you think you have seen it all, believe me something even stranger occurring is just around the corner.

So, to make sure that the show goes on, you must have a prepared plan or have some idea of a backup show. This could be an acoustic set, piano only and vocals for example, figure out what combinations you have in the band and if you can make something work! You'll be remembered for it!

Tip 2

Always have a **BACKUP** and always have a backup plan. Obviously, it is not possible to take a backup of every piece of gear, but for leads, guitars, microphone stands etc. always have extras!

For bigger items, have a solution, for example, I have a simple and cheap amp-modelling pedal (e.g the Joyo American Sound, which cost £25), which I can stick in in an emergency if my amp blows up. I leave it in the gig bag and it is always there, a simple little solution to get you out of a hole.

Tip 3

BE LOGICAL in problem solving. Always start at the beginning of the chain when sorting out a problem. No matter what the problem, there is always a signal flow! So, for example, if a microphone isn't working, replace the microphone first, then the cable, then work back to the mixer. Likewise for a guitar, check the volume pot, the lead, the pedals then the amp!

Be systematic and it will save you time.

Tip 4

Timings will change, venues will change, stages will change, requests will change, moods will change!! So be prepared to **BE FLEXIBLE!**

Especially when playing weddings, where things never go to time, what with extended speeches and the like, just go with it, be adaptable to the change and be prepared for it and be ready to get on and play at a moments notice. Don't quibble about it, just go with it.

Tip 5

BE PROFESSIONAL at all times, you will always encounter '*idiots*', accept them for what they are and move on. Keep smiling!

Tip 6

TURN DOWN, not up. Yes, this might be a controversial one, but many of the problems with levels, bad monitoring, people unable to hear themselves, can be solved by turning levels down, not up! The same applies to EQ, try cutting frequencies rather than boosting, you'll be surprised!

Tip 7

GAFFA TAPE is your best friend and it can be used for anything - never ever, ever be without it. There isn't much it can't fix and remember the simple mantra, "*if you can't fix with with Gaffa tape, you aren't using enough Gaffa tape!!*"

Tip 8

BATTERIES - yes loads of gear still relies on the good old battery! So, always take spares, take rechargeable batteries and a charger and charge them during the gig and then while you are packing away, stick the ones you have been using back on charge again (don't forget them!).

Tip 9

ALLOCATE TASKS to band members! Work as a team to get things set up quickly and efficiently. Work to the strengths of the band members. Don't tolerate the "*I'm the {insert role} so I can't do XYZ.*" (yes usually the singer), it only leads to tension and resentment.

If someone can't do something physical, for whatever reason, get them Tweeting or Facebooking something, shooting some behind the scenes footage, talking to the venue owners, schmoozing, blogging. There are so many things can be done during set up. You hopefully play together as a team, work together as a team, so help out as a team.

Tip 10

KEEP PLAYING! Yes this is a famous old one, just keep playing, things will be occurring all around you, but just keep going, especially if something going down, assess the situation and take the appropriate measures.

If things are getting rather rowdy during a certain song, drop down into a slower part until things settle down. Stopping will sometimes draw attention to a situation that is being dealt with, so keep going until someone official tells you to stop.

Okay, I know I said ten, but here is a bonus one...

Bonus!

BE PREPARED for sound level meters/limiters! This is the big one currently; it is very possible to turn up at a venue only to find they have a sound limiter fitted.

If possible, contact the venue before hand to check, be prepared for the fact that they may not necessarily know the technical issues and you may get a response like "*we had a band in last week and it didn't trip the sound limiter*", try and find out as much information as possible as to what kind of band it was, because bands can be very different in their dynamics.

Sure if they had a laid back jazz trio in, of course they will be quieter than your metal band! If you are confronted with a limiter, it has the potential to ruin the whole evening. You will need to know if it is a peak meter or a averaging meter. Peak meters are the easiest to deal with, as you can try and reduce anything that peaks, perhaps with a compressor/limiter. If it is an averaging meter, then you will need to figure out how you can play quieter, can you direct the sound away from the meter.

Be warned that some meters will go off even with a couple of hits on an unmic'd drum kit!

Good luck out there!!

Remember

Gear doesn't make you awesome, you make you awesome!

About the Author



Neil is a guitarist, sound designer, composer and educator. Neil's main goals are to focus on creativity, the guitar, music technology with the aim being to inspire creativity in readers in whatever form of art, work or even life that they are involved in.

Neil has been playing guitar since the age of 8, and has performed around the world, he also creates 'instrumental guitar music' and 'ambient cinematic electronica' (under the name of Light B4 Sound). From the 1st July 2010 to the 31st December 2011 Neil successfully completed a creative challenge to create a piece of music every single day.

He has worked with artists, including Al Green, Robert Plant and Jimmy Page and his music/sound design has been used in films, computer games and mobile apps.

Neil completed a PhD on "The effects of expectation on the perception of soundscapes", a MSc in Signal Processing as well as numerous music qualifications including media composition, orchestration and studying on the Specialist Blues, Rock and Jazz Guitar Certificate Program at Berklee, loves travelling, meeting new people and photography and the simple pleasure of hanging out in a coffee shop (and probably talking about guitars!!).



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