CONSIDERING & CREATING A CAREER IN MUSIC

STUDY GUIDE

MAKING THE CONNECTION:

• How does a modern musician build a career?
  o Most modern musicians build a career using multiple streams of revenue.
    ▪ Teaching
    ▪ Gigs
    ▪ Composition/arranging/songwriting
    ▪ Production
    ▪ Engineering

• What music professions would be considered high risk jobs and which would be considered low risk and why is this important?
  o High risk jobs are jobs in which the musician is NOT guaranteed a paycheck for services.
    ▪ Some high-risk jobs would be songwriting or producing.
      ▪ Songwriting – most songwriters only get paid when the songs they have written are played via radio, streaming, or licensed. This means that unless the songwriters music is being played by a decent sized artist, the odds of them making money is slim.
      ▪ Producing – While not as high risk as songwriting, many music producers work in the hopes of a “high played artist” coming along and wanting to work with them. However, unlike the songwriter, the music producer can still make money just producing for artists and songwriters. The more the demand for the producer the better their rates.
  o Some low-risk jobs would be teaching and engineering.
    ▪ Teaching is probably the least risky job in music. When a musician teaches private lessons, they are paid immediately after the lesson has been completed. There are also many teaching positions from elementary, middle, high school music teachers to college professors. Many of these positions offer from $30k - $120k. Not only do those musicians receive a paycheck but many receive health benefits, retirement packages, and potential bonuses.
    ▪ Music Engineering is another fairly low risk job. This is similar to a gig for a musician, once someone hires you to engineer a session you will be paid immediately following the recording session. There is still some risk in this job as you still need to find recording sessions to engineer for. Many aspiring engineers begin by interning at a major studio thereby meeting plenty of potential clients.
  o Gigs & composition/arranging are of average risk.
    ▪ These are high risk in the sense that you need to search and find gigs and opportunities. If you find a great gig, like a touring gig with a major artist, this can be lucrative and stable for a period of time. It also is high risk as when there are no gigs or a tour has ended, the money stops.
    ▪ The only factor that puts gigs into a somewhat lower risk job is the fact that once you play the gig, write the composition, etc…you are paid immediately afterwards.
  o It is extremely important to understand the risks and how to balance these when creating a career in the music industry. If you are weighted too heavily in the high risk area, you may find yourself in a tough financial situation. If you find yourself only in the low risk group, you may find that you are financially
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stable but creatively unfulfilled…and after all, most people who go into music as a profession do so for creative reasons.

SAMPLE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS:

• Try and create a balanced music career.
  o Example:
    - Teaching as an adjunct (part-time) at a city college
    - Performing gigs in the evenings when possible
    - Composing music for middle school & high school big bands to sell
    - Doing 1-2 songwriting sessions a week

• What does an average gig pay in your area?
  o You will have to do some research online as well as asking professional gigging musicians.
    - In Los Angeles, the average 2 hour gig will pay between $50 - $300.