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# Foreword

I've known about Hal since his days in 1972 and 1973 with Cannonball Adderley, and from *Wild Bird*, a record he did on Mainstream in 1971 as a leader. I first heard him live, with Phil Woods, in the early 1980s at the Village Vanguard. His playing that night was both fluid and invigorating, and his solos were rife with harmonic adventurousness and sophistication. Little did I know at that time that in addition to being a musician and teacher, Hal is also an outspoken, highly opinionated fellow.

When the World Wide Web arrived full-force in the 1990s, Hal set up his own Web site. There's an area on his site (<http://www.upbeat.com/galper>) called "Rants and Raves" where he takes on everyone—from major record labels to jazz critics. Around the time that I discovered Hal's site, he discovered mine, Bird Lives (<http://www.birdlives.com>). My site also focuses on issues that are important to the jazz community. Hal started E-mailing responses to some of my diatribes. Soon thereafter we met in person, and he revealed that he was working on this book. He asked me to help out, explaining that he needed someone to clean up his prose. I accepted the challenge and for the past six months, we've been sending files back and forth over the Net.

Hal *lived* this book. A jazz professional for more than forty years, Hal has played and traveled with some of the best musicians of his time, including Chet Baker, Cannonball Adderley, Stan Getz, and Phil Woods, as well as led his own groups. How did Hal go from sideman to leader? By booking his own band. This has been a challenging responsibility that he continues to execute with remarkable finesse.

The sum total of Hal's experience as a road warrior, self-agent, manager, publicist, and booker appears on the pages of this book. Many musicians have lived the jazz life, but few are able to write about it as expertly and candidly as Hal. A perceptive and witty fellow who's been on the road for most of his life, Hal has learned his lessons the hard way—through experience. Now, as a jazz tribal elder, Hal offers fellow musicians a tool of empowerment. If you choose to embark upon a similar journey, this book will serve as a detailed and systematic road map. Accordingly, it's invaluable and—not surprisingly—highly entertaining.

Hal has written a survival manual for jazz musicians who seek to control their own destiny. In the jazz world, controlling your destiny means leading your own group. Because of the highly competitive nature of the jazz business, musicians can no longer rely only on record labels, agents, managers, or promoters to guide their careers. A successful musician must learn his or her craft *and* understand the business of jazz in order to function effectively. In this book, Hal shows how you can take hold of the reigns of your career.

It's been a fascinating journey, helping Hal to mine his knowledge and present it in a straightforward, unvarnished way. In addition to featuring chunks of invaluable information, this book includes a number of stories that Hal gathered during his remarkably colorful career. Believe me, parts of this book will have you laughing out loud! Playing jazz and booking a band is serious business, but thankfully Hal has retained his sense of humor.

Hopefully, *The Touring Musician* will not only inform you, but will inspire you to, like Hal, take an activist role in your career.

—Bret Primack  
writer and jazz editor for GMN.com

# Introduction

If you've picked up this book, you're one of the many musicians who are looking for an answer to the question "How do I survive in the music business?"

There is no *one* answer. There are as many answers as there are people asking the question. Ultimately, you have to assess the career choices that lie before you and find your own way. Booking a band and taking it on the road has been my answer, and could be yours as well.

I've written *The Touring Musician* to encourage you to dream, to give you the information you need to take control of your career, and to convince you that it is possible for you to make your dreams come true—because, ultimately, your career will be rewarding only if you pursue your dreams. If you have something valuable to offer the world and if you believe in it strongly, hard work and thoughtful dedication *will* make your dreams a reality.

Your ability to survive in the music business depends on a number of factors, including your talents and abilities, your music and life goals, and your willingness to apply yourself to whatever path you choose. The success of your career will be based both on how accurately it reflects the realities of the world in which you live and on the rewards that you expect to receive. Being well informed is an essential factor in determining whether or not you can achieve your goals and enjoy their rewards.

This book offers invaluable information for musicians at every level—young musicians still developing the necessary basics for a career in music as well as working professionals—and from every musical genre.

Understanding the complex processes involved in booking and leading a band will strengthen your professionalism and—even if you decide ultimately that leading a band isn't right for you—will help you to recognize and take advantage of the many career opportunities that working and touring with other bands can provide.

*The Touring Musician* is divided into two sections:

**Preparing Yourself to Run a Small Business** begins with an assessment of the mental and emotional essentials you should develop before you begin to book and tour your band. And then it presents the step-by-step basics of how to organize your business, including how to determine which kind of business venture is right for you; how to set up your office, including how to finance your start-up costs; how to select and package your band, including how to develop an educational component of the group's repertoire; and how to manage your time and information. This section also includes numerous sample worksheets and checklists to keep you organized, as well as sample legal documents that cover a wide range of situations.

**Booking Your Tour** introduces successful techniques that I've used to book my bands. You'll learn how to research your venue contacts, including how to scout and evaluate the many different kinds of venues that are available to you; how to successfully contact venues and negotiate gigs, including a list of the eight rules for booking a band; how to manage tour routing and budgets; how to manage your tour finances, including how to prepare your personal and band taxes; and how to manage your promotional activities. You'll learn how to identify and avoid the pitfalls of arranging

transportation and accommodations for U.S. and foreign travel. This section also includes sample scripts to help you navigate a range of negotiation scenarios, solid advice about exchanging foreign currencies to your advantage, *plus* five sample tour calendars *and* five sample tour budgets. These last two items will help you see for yourself how to balance travel, performance, and free time while on the road *as well as* how the numbers work.

I'm certain that each reader will customize my advice to fit his or her own personal style. And soon you will discover that booking a band can be a challenging, creative, and educational experience. As you begin to assimilate and use the information in this book, you will realize that the process of booking and touring a band constantly changes. You will discover new ideas daily, as well as redefine old ones.

Throughout the book, I've included personal anecdotes from my forty plus years working as a jazz pianist. Some are hilarious, and others tragic. All serve to both entertain and educate.

During those forty plus years—and especially since 1990, when I began my career as a full-time bandleader—I perfected the techniques that I discuss in this book. There's an old saying that goes something like "It's a wise man who learns from his own mistakes; it's a genius who learns from others." My experiences in the music business give me a unique vantage point from which I can offer career advice to musicians who want to travel similar paths.

It's been my good fortune to have toured and performed with a Who's Who of the world's jazz greats. It's your good fortune that I've also made or observed nearly every possible mistake that can be made in this business.

In his books about the Mescal Indians of Mexico, author Carlos Castenada sums up my attitude about how musicians should approach the music business by comparing human beings to warriors in the Battle of Life. That attitude was reinforced by my early mentor, the great jazz pianist Jaki Byard. When I asked him for advice about whether or not I should leave Boston and move to New York City, he said, "Sure, man! Get your shield and spear and go to New York."

# ***Getting Your Attitude Together***

*“Attitude is everything!” (Jazz proverb)*

The above proverb has been a recurring theme throughout my career. When I first heard it I said, “That’s really hip!” although I had no idea what it meant. It wasn’t until many years later that the real meaning of this proverb dawned on me—knowledge is useless unless you know how to apply it. This is true in life as well as in music.

Collecting information isn’t hard. As musicians, we all know people who are connected to the industry—other musicians, teachers, music fans, perhaps even some club owners, critics, or promoters. We talk with these people, find out who’s playing with whom and where, who’s recording on what label, which bands are forming, which have broken up. That kind of thing. Many of us also read magazines like *Down Beat* or *JazzTimes*, or check out music-related Web sites. We all do these things—usually without even thinking about it as “work” or approaching it in any sort of systematic way. At some level, this comes naturally to all of us, just because we’re involved with and interested in music. We collect all kinds of information every day—often without really thinking too consciously about it. However, as I mentioned above, *collecting* information is only part of the equation. After you have the information, you need to know what to do with it—how to make it work for you. Learning how to *apply* your knowledge is the artistic part of the process, and it is often more challenging than collecting the information. This is where attitude and the “art” of booking a band come into play.

The fact that you’re reading this proves that you’re willing to invest some time to learn about the creative process of booking and touring a band. This book will give you the information you need to take control of your musical career. As I mentioned in the introduction, if you have something valuable to offer the world and if you believe in it strongly, hard work and thoughtful dedication *will* help you to realize your professional dreams. Forming your own band and taking it on the road is one way to survive—and flourish—in the music industry. However, before you commit to this goal, it is important to make sure that you really *want* to become a bandleader. The next section will help you evaluate your professional and personal attributes—and help you to ensure that this venture is right for you.

## **ANSWERING FIVE TOUGH QUESTIONS**

Every profession has its upsides and its downsides. Being a bandleader is no exception. This section will help to give you a general idea of the kinds of things that you will have to contend with as a bandleader. I’ve tried to dispel some of the common myths about the music industry—like that there aren’t enough gigs out there to keep you working or that touring automatically creates a freewheeling lifestyle. It is a unique person who can thrive on the freedom of a life on the road and yet remain focused on the goal of the tour—to play and promote your music.



# ***Managing Tour Routing and Budgets***

This chapter deals with some of the obstacles you'll encounter when you're routing a tour. It may seem a bit complicated at first, but with study and experience you'll develop the skills you need to master this aspect of being a bandleader. To give you a head start, the last part of this chapter has a five-part step-by-step demonstration of how I put together an imaginary tour. This process illustrates all of the complications that can arise from routing and budgeting a tour—and gives you some of the most common solutions as well.

Tour routing and budgeting directly affect one another in a number of ways. You need to book a lot of gigs to make it worthwhile for you to go on the road. However, traveling from one gig to another costs a lot of money. So, once you decide to book a tour, you need to make sure that you book enough gigs to cover your travel expenses. You'll want to avoid excessively difficult travel itineraries (because they can exhaust you and your band members and can affect your presentation), but at the same time you need to minimize your days off (because they can weigh down the profitability of your tour). Balancing the routing and budgeting aspects of a tour often seems like a juggling act. Once you have begun the booking process, you'll find that your tour's itinerary will take on a life of its own. Establishing total control over the routing process is impossible because too many touring elements are beyond your control.

## **TROUBLESHOOTING TOURING CONFLICTS**

Complications generally arise when you start arranging your transportation for your tour-in-progress. This happens because this is the first point where you see how your transportation costs affect your tour's budget. When you have a reasonable idea of where you're going to be and when you're going to be there, you should begin to check into your transportation routing and expenses. I usually find that I am ready to do this approximately two-thirds of the way through the booking process. Sometimes you find that you just "can't get there from here"—or at least can't get there in time. Sold-out flights, unworkable travel connections, high transportation costs, among other unpredictable factors, will add to your routing problems.

Routing problems occur on every tour. These problems may be caused by:

- disparities among commitment dates of various venues in your tour;
- a need to schedule unexpected last-minute gigs;
- conflicts between travel times and performance times, which are often not known until the tour schedule is relatively complete;
- excessive distances between gigs, which can raise transportation costs;