



The Christian Artist Workshop (PDF Edition)



Chapter 1. Introduction

About You, the Artist

After you've had time to read through The Workshop, we'd like to learn more about you. Below are some topics we'd like to have you write about. Then copy all of it into an email and send it to us at creativesoulrecords@gmail.com. Also, please send us any questions that come up as you read though everything.

Life Story

OK, maybe not your complete life story, but certainly your musical history, and of course anything that stands out as part of the development of your music and artistry, as well as the life experiences that have made you who you are.

Artist talents

What would you say is your main talent? What other talents would you say you have?

Influences

What artists or bands influence your music making? These should be people who move you to want to sing, write, or play. They do not have to be only Christian in nature.

Calling

When did this go from something you thought you could do (or didn't know you could), to something you definitely felt God directing and calling? What made you take the steps towards doing something about it?

Experience

Talk about your experience in music as far as performing goes. Choir, solo, band, anything that you feel has prepared you to be an artist in front of others. How do you feel on stage? What other music experience do you have: Worship Leader? Band Director? Choir Director? Teacher?

Recordings

Have you recorded before in any way? If so, how do you feel about the studio experience and the final product(s).

Press Materials

Do you have a web site at present? Any kind of press kit? Pictures? Bio? Business cards?

About Creative Soul

Creative Soul is the music consulting, production, and promotion services company dreamed up by producer Eric Copeland. So here is his story in his own words.

I was born into a very musical family in Lexington, KY. A great town to grow up, and one heck of a college basketball team (Go Cats)! My father was a bandleader and IBM manager, and my mother was a piano teacher and church organist for 40+ years. I grew up in church and have a very boring salvation story. I've been saved as long as I can remember. Sorry, no sweaty palms or blinding light here. Just at church with my mom every time the doors opened. It just always made sense to me, and it still does.

I grew up in touring choirs, champion marching bands, and various other musical events. At about age 13, I started writing songs, and realized pretty quickly that I was meant for music making.



Actually it happened much earlier than that. As you see here, when I wasn't playing hide and seek or going to Indian Guides, I was recording even as a kid. Luckily my Dad was an equipment junkie, and had recording equipment. When friends came over to spend the night, we didn't tell ghost stories...we recorded shows!

As I began to write in my teens, I wanted to record and hear the songs back. Before too long, people knew me as the guy who recorded stuff. See? A producer even then...

Through high school I kept recording bands and friends, until I went on tour through the Mid-West with a Holiday Inn Lounge band (imagine me in leather pants singing Huey Lewis and Bruce Springsteen. OK, you better not...) I ended up in Chicago for a few years where I just woodshedded on my songwriting, arranging, and keyboard programming.

When I returned to Lexington, I soon met my wife, and shortly after getting married formally started doing music work for hire from my home – part-time.

See, when I was 16, my Dad brought home the first IBM PC. I'm talking boat anchor here! This thing weighed 50 lbs. and had one big floppy disc. That's it. So for fun, I taught myself DOS and BASIC. That pretty much led to me being "the computer guy" at every job, and eventually got me real jobs at technical companies. Somehow I lucked into early desktop publishing work (before there was a Microsoft Word), CD-ROM design, and of course web design, all for Fortune 500 companies.

So like many creative folks, I did my music on the side. I worked full time in a computer tech job, but I was also producing from my home on nights and weekends and wondering what God was doing? Will I ever get to do music for a living? (Felt that way before?)

Leaving the Laboratory

In 1995 I began venturing out of my basement studio laboratory to produce albums in larger studios, and began making regular trips to Nashville to work, attend GMA (Gospel Music Association) events, and meet with industry folks. Around the year 2000, I quit corporate for good with enough music and other work to support the family on. (Mostly. Ramen anyone?) In 2001, I took over a production company and opened a large studio facility outside Lexington, doing Christian music projects, but also jingles, demos, scores, and just about anything else I could do to make a living working in music all day.

After a few years, the studio just was too much overhead to keep going. Even though I was becoming known through the US as *the* Christian music producer for new artists, it seemed easier to work from home. Plus, another calling was coming. Nashville's siren began sounding, and it seemed it was finally time to take the business there.

But God, as He often does, had other ideas.

A Subtle Shift

People began to ask me why I didn't work in the church. I had no answer other than I had RUN from being a music minister back in the early 80s when I heard a still small voice telling me I could do it. But in those days, it meant wearing a three piece suit, directing the choir in robes, and leading the congregation in a rousing rendition of "Bringing in the Sheaves", with my mom over there swinging on the pipe organ.

Um, not for me.

But this was 2003, and now leading worship meant a band, cooler music, and much more comfortable attire!

I was more than a little tired from being a full-time producer scaring up work, and barely providing for my family. So getting a paying job seemed nice. Plus, I had said those very dangerous words to the Lord: "I'll do anything you want me to."

Well, within a few months, I was leading worship and growing a music team in a small church. And here's how God works. I told Him if he wanted me to give up producing I'd be happy to, if this was truly where He wanted me.

Then the pastor says, "I can't pay you a full time salary, but how about we convert this basement area into a studio so you can be at the church during the week and work with your production clients."

Reeeeeaaaaally. Doesn't God move mysteriously?

Surprisingly, my production business grew even more during my years there, and so did I. The reason you are reading this now is because I found that investing in the artists that were serving in the church was the best way to grow them. I read a book called "The Heart of the Artist", by Rory Nolan, which is basically the playbook for leading Christian artists, and I started to think, "Why not apply this to my production clients?"

Thus, the Consulting side of Creative Soul was born, and now it's become the basis of who we are. Songwriting and Production are why I started all this, but consulting and investing in artists has become the reason I get up every day. I love to see that excitement in the eyes and soul and emails of an artist, writer, or singer, and help them realize why God gave them their talents and what they can do with them. THAT'S fun.

"It'll change your life!"

After two years at the church, the worship team had grown from 5-6 folks to close to 30! About that same time, I really felt I had reached the peak of what I could do in Lexington as a producer. I knew that in order to grow, I would have to go some place where everyone was better than me.

I took a new CD that I felt was about the best I could do to Nashville to get mastered. I complained to my mastering engineer that I needed new blood and needed to talk to someone about the next steps for me as a producer.

He went down his list and mentioned Grammy-winning engineer Ronnie Brookshire. I called Ronnie and we met at Cracker Barrel the next day. He listened to the CD (Kristyn Leigh's first record "Glimpse") and he said a few words that will live in infamy.

"This stuff is fine, the artist, even the songs, but you need to come here and record with the players and engineers here. I tell you, it'll change your life!"

So, I put the word out to my artists that I was looking for a guinea pig to record in Nashville with the very best the Christian music business had to offer.

Of course, long time friend and artist Tom Dolan was the first to volunteer. We came to Nashville with several songs, and recorded at the Sound Kitchen with Ronnie, and some great musicians.

After those first tracking days, I went to Florida with my family. Walking on the beach with my wife, I broke the news. "Honey, it's time."

Creative Soul Comes to Nashville

We moved to Nashville January 3, 2005. Business was brisk from the start, and has barely let up. Creative Soul has become known as the premier Christian emerging artist program. We've recorded over 60 full projects and countless singles, tracks, and demos, had dozens of songs promoted to national radio, had several artists achieve national and international distribution, and continue to get great publicity.

Our artists average about 300+ combined shows a year, and have sold literally tens of thousands of CDs and downloads in the past decade. Real ministry is happening, and lives are being changed.

Probably most importantly, we've helped hundreds of artists find their way in what God has for them to do. It's the reason you're reading this now. It's our first and best mission. And it's what sets Creative Soul apart from every other production company, studio, or label anywhere. We make artist development and counsel our FIRST business. For most that means recording an album, but sometimes that means just finding your best next step.

Which is probably why you're reading this now.

What We Do

Here's a rundown of what we spend our time doing everyday.

Consulting/Coaching

You're soaking in it (it's OK, it's mild!) It's our first step, and we feel it's the most important one. Before we work with any artist, and even THINK about going down expensive production and promotional paths, we have to know WHAT we're doing it for, and our mutual goals.

We have found this part of the process to be as important as the production and promotional things that come afterward. Some clients come to us solely for the purpose of finding the right road for their music and ministry. Nashville and large production budgets are not the only path to using your talents for the Lord and we stay mindful of that.

These consulting services run the gamut from our book products, one of which you are reading now, to [our exciting full day workshop at a major label in Nashville](#), [our creative phone coaching program](#), and [our popular songwriting and artist critiques](#). All of these include interactive time with Creative Soul getting real constructive, helpful feedback from someone who has worked with hundreds of Christian artists.

Repeating Ourselves: We think this may be the most important thing we do.

Songwriting

Of course, this is where it all started with us. It's why any of this is even happening, and songs continue to be the bottom line and the core of what we do.

Without great songs, it's just making noise. Yes, we have seen artists whose real ministry is in what they do outside of their music or in performance, but the song is why we do ministry in music at all. It has to be great. We think of this like our production quality: We need to give our best for *His* best!

We work with artists in several different ways concerning songs. First with songwriters who have their songs mostly ready when they walk in the door, our job is just to help those writers be the best they can be. Tell them where it is great, but also where it could be stronger.

With newer writers, we write with them or help them rewrite until the song is much stronger. Many times they have great ideas, but the melody is weak. Other times, the music is there, but the lyrics are very cliché and worn.

With artists who don't write, we can approach this several ways. The best case is that we get to write for them, with them, and develop completely new songs together. If we don't write the kind of music they need, we help them find songs from amazing songwriters here in Nashville, or publishers.

It's all about the songs, so we help the artists in any way we can before we get to the studio.

Arranging

Sometimes an artist comes in with their songs, but doesn't really have a sense for how the arrangement should be. In this case our job is just to help steer the arrangement to the style and sound they are looking for. Or, maybe it's a cover song or hymn, and our job is to find a new cool way to do it that fits their style. Many times this can be done in the production process with the players.

Which leads us to...

Production

Actually making a very high end, quality recording is not only what we are known for, it's what's kept us busy for the past 15 years!

Even before moving our company to Nashville, we were known for inventive, clean, current-sounding recordings. But once we got the Grammy-winning engineers, players, and studios involved, it really took things to a whole new level.

Many times artists come in to record with the players and can't believe the jump in quality from their hometown players and engineers. There's a reason for that. These players and engineers have been working on records for Steven Curtis Chapman, Amy Grant, Jeremy Camp, CeCe Winans, and the like for 25 years. Think about that. Every day they have been working with these folks and the people who work with them, sharpening their skills against the best in the world of Christian music.

Repeating Ourselves: Our clients have access to the top Christian music players and engineers on the planet. Doves. Grammys. Nuff Said.

Not to slight anyone outside of Nashville who plays or engineers, but there is just a major difference in being involved at that level daily that local players and engineers can't match. I didn't realize it until I moved down here.

Also, Nashville provides some of the best possible environments for making music on the Earth. Take Dark Horse Recording for example.

A beautiful, sprawling estate with three different studios of varying sizes, a large staff, and "bed & breakfast" style living quarters for those who are looking for a retreat when they record.

Our production methods are varied to suit the budgets and needs of our clients. We've had clients come to town and spend several days writing their songs in the inspiring Dark Horse vibe. They then spend 2-3 days recording at Dark Horse with musicians, engineers, and a large crew. Then they come back and record their vocals at Dark Horse when they are ready.

Then, we've also had some artists come record at smaller, more economical studios, and come do their vocals at Dark Horse. And then we've had clients who don't come to town to record at all. We send them tracks that we work on here with musicians, and they send us vocals to edit and mix in.

Production can happen in a variety of ways depending on your desired experience and budget.

We'll detail the process a bit later in Chapter 3.

Web Development

Unbeknownst to Eric, a longtime media developer for Fortune 500 companies, God was setting him up to be able to help future clients with their web needs. We now offer, and insist for our label clients, that Creative Soul oversee the web development process.

These days, your web site and social media can be your most important marketing and sales tool. So it has to be done with the same quality we put into songs and production.

We offer several packages and try to make them very affordable.

Video Production

We have some amazing video people here in Nashville that have worked with some of the best in the Christian music industry. [Our videos](#) speak for themselves, and our artists have done well with these.

Photography

Here's another quality level watermark. Many artists seem to have an Aunt Sue or their best friend who has a high-end digital camera, and they think that's all it takes for good pictures of them standing on a railroad track, or in front of a brick wall. (If you have had your picture taken on railroad tracks or a brick wall, it's OK, we all have.)

The real truth here is that label quality professional photos and editing are NOT easily done. Don't listen to the person who tells you if you take 100 pics you're bound to get one good one. That is not a pro photographer speaking.

Like the players and engineers that take you to a new level because they have worked with the top artists at the top labels, getting a professional photo shoot is every bit as important.

CD Graphics

Similarly, having an experienced, creative designer can mean the difference between your friend with 100 fonts and Photoshop on his laptop, and a major label look. This kind of look will get noticed by fans and industry folks alike, and set you apart from amateurs and semi-pros.

Creative Soul Records

In 1997, when we were beginning to start working with larger budgets, I had put out my first solo CD. On the back of the CD was a logo for a label I had made up out of thin air: Creative Soul Records. The first official label artist other than me was Tender Mercy, mainly because they liked the logo, and felt it helped them seem part of something bigger. It made them look like they were on a label.

Fast forward 17 years, and in 2014, Creative Soul Records has been the home of many independent artists, helping them find marketing, radio, publicity, and distribution options for their music.

But Creative Soul has done it in a very different way. Instead of signing artists and then trying to sell records of those artists, Creative Soul Records has worked as a service company, letting artists use the Creative Soul Records logo, site, and branding as a sign of quality.

Radio, publicity, marketing, and distribution people (not to mention Word Entertainment who now partners with us) now know and respect the label brand, because they know the producers, players, engineers, and others behind the work. They know it will be a quality product.

Creative Soul Records exists exclusively for the artists who work with the Creative Soul production and artist development teams. It's ongoing for as long as CSR and the artist want to walk down roads together.

Creative Soul & Word Entertainment

Every few years, as I would sit in the place where I do my dreaming and journaling each morning, I would wonder why a large label wouldn't want to be involved with Creative Soul. It wasn't something they needed too badly, and it certainly wasn't something our artists had to have to be successful. But I just felt that if a major record label realized the good Creative Soul and its artists were doing, they would want to be associated with us.

In one such time, I reached out to one of my oldest mentors in the Christian music business and took him to lunch. I told him how I felt associating with a major label would not just be a benefit to our company and artists, but to Word and the entire Christian music industry. As the major music industry shrinks, the world of independents only gets larger.

He agreed to show it to a friend, and in a week, the president of Word Records was emailing me about my idea. After negotiations with their head of A&R, we agreed to formally associate. Creative Soul is now associated with Word, and enjoys many benefits of that mutual agreement. We show every project that we market to Word, directly to the head of A&R. We have had multiple face-to-face meetings with artists that they have been interested in. Several artists have even opened for Word artists in their area. We've held multiple workshops in the Word conference rooms, and have access to their writing rooms as well.

It's a great combination, and we are proud to offer it with our services.

What We're Looking For

As a company, Creative Soul looks for artists who want to better themselves creatively. We look for people who want to minister, and seek God's plan for their lives. Whether that means getting some good advice, amazing production of their music, or marketing themselves worldwide (or all three), Creative Soul is open to any artistic person needing those services.

Why We're Different

1. Creative Soul only works with music ministries. We specialize in most current forms of Christian music, including Pop, Rock, World, Jazz, Reggae, Country, and R&B.

We do not and have never operated under the industry model of signing artists and then trying to take all their profits from sales, performances, royalties, etc. Creative Soul has always been a service company and will continue to do so. We like the studio model: you leave at the end of the day (or project) with your music, still owning everything. Creative Soul is completely paid for our services, and then the client owns all masters.

Repeating Ourselves: You pay us only for what we do, you own everything and never owe us another dime when the project is complete.

2. We only work with who God brings us. We do not go out and look for artists to approach about working together. Most clients find us online or are referred to us, then get in contact and schedule some kind of consult, and we get started. We feel this is a very natural, God-inspired way to begin working with ministries.
3. We are devoted to artist development, musical, ministry and personal growth, and long term success. Many of the clients we work with have worked with us on second and third albums. We have been working with some artists longer than we have been in Nashville (10+ years). It's about the long haul. And we feel privileged to be involved with ministries for years and years.

Chapter 2. Effective Music Artist Ministry

What makes a Successful Artist?

When you see this phrase, who or what pops to mind? Amy Grant? Michael W. Smith? Third Day? That artist or band that you saw recently who came by on tour? A songwriter who writes for other artists and just has to walk to the mailbox to collect the checks?

Well, I think we all have had those dreams (delusions?) at one time or another. But let's stay in reality here. What things do you feel makes an artist successful?

Talent? Marketing Power? A Record Label? Charisma? Hard Work?

Probably all these things add to the success of an artist. But for this exercise, I want to focus on what would be success for YOU. Not what would happen if you did this or that, or got signed, or won some contest...but what would be your vision of success for your craft?

What is Your Vision of Success?

Is it to tour and be on stage as a singer? Is it to write music and have others sing your songs? Is it to live and work daily in a music field (or any field OTHER than your day job??)

Most people who come to us are looking for some kind of next level for a music ministry God has impressed on them. They have felt God whisper (or shout as the case may be), and they know it is time to make a next or first step towards pursuing their talent seriously.

If this is you, then what are your success goals?

What would be your goals for one year from now for you to call the year a success?
(Make a recording? Get demos made of your songwriting? Meet publishers? Get in front of as many audiences as possible?)

What would be your goals for five years from now? (Quit your day job? Focus on music full time? Go back to college for classes or certification? Work as a music director at a church?)

The point is, unless you have an idea of what God wants you to be, you can't make steps toward it. But it starts with having that vision of what success would be for you.

Unique Ministry Position

In sales, we have a USP. A Unique Selling Position. We have a product and it is unique because...

Think about the iPod. It was not a new idea. There had been MP3 players come out before it, but the iPod had a Unique Selling Position: iTunes. Apple eventually convinced every label into putting their songs in iTunes, so that you could download them into your iPod. Sure now we can download them on phones, etc, but when the iPod and iTunes came out, this was huge!

I like to ask then, what is *your* Unique Ministry Position? We don't say sales because our goal isn't (solely) to sell anything, but to minister!

So you are a Christian, you make music of some kind, and you want to go out and sing to the world. What is your Unique Ministry Position? What is different about you than everyone else? Why would a Pastor choose you to come when he can pick you or another artist just like you?

You might be tempted to say, "Well, I love Jesus, and I am called to serve Him with my talent." That is not a wrong answer, but we all pretty much feel that way. That doesn't really differentiate you from other Christian artists.

The Reason for Your Life Story

My feeling is that there is a reason for your life story. There is a reason for all the strange, crazy roads you have been down in life. There is a reason for the awful, stupid, horrible, and sad things you've gone through. They weren't necessarily to punish you, or teach you anything. But maybe, just maybe, they were things that you could use as God led you towards ministering to others.

What if that relationship that ended, or almost ended, and all the emotional turmoil and grief and recovery; what if that was something that God can use to speak into the lives of others who are going or have gone through the same thing?

What if the depression you've suffered from qualifies you to share about the debilitating effects it has on a person's life in a way no one else could?

What if your past in addiction, abuse, or loss could be mined for ministry? You could take those hard times, then write and sing from the real pain and road back to life. This is the kind of thing that affects people sitting out in your audience, or listening to your songs on the Internet. It makes them break down in tears, get on their knees, and seek out God.

Isn't the goal to have that kind of emotional and spiritual impact?

What's Your "Something Else"?

I call it your "Something Else."

This has less to do with music and more about your life.

Maybe you dealt with a teen pregnancy and are passionate about pro-life issues, and this drives you to build your ministry around that and speak at conferences and pro-life meetings.

Perhaps you want to speak out against abuse of some kind because you have dealt and survived it in your own life.

Maybe it is centered on something non-personal like your unique musical talents, your heritage, or personality. Whatever your life has led to and through to this point, is where you can find your "Something Else", or your "Unique Ministry Position".

This can be the difference between a true direction in your music and ministry, and just going into the studio to record something and put your face on a CD.

Chapter 3. The Artist Development Process

This part of the workshop deals with our process of developing artists, moving into the studio, and then into promotion and marketing.

Phase 1. Initial Development and Production

Consult

This is where everything starts with us, and is our usual first step whether it's an in-person workshop here in Nashville, this workshop you are reading now, our coaching sessions, or our 3-Song critique service.

Once we go through some kind consulting, and the client wants to move forward into production, we agree on a budget, and move into the next steps.

Determine Audience

Usually during our initial consults, we get a sense for who your audience is. Sometimes this exploratory time stretches into the first part of the pre-production and song discovery time.

Songs

If you are an artist coming in with songs, then usually our job here includes listening and helping you choose the songs that are strongest. If the songs could be improved we work on that together.

If you are not a songwriter, or just beginning, we will do some kind of songwriting together to begin to find a unique style for you. Or, we will talk to publishers and songwriters to find the right songs for your recording.

Sometimes you have hymns you want to redo, or you have worship covers, or any cover. In this case our job becomes arranging again.

There is no right or wrong answer on how to put songs together for an album. But we do have a few things to say while we are here.

Thing 1. Let's get good songs. Truly, we have to have great songs to make a great recording. If you want any chance of competing in the marketplace, whatever the genre, you better have stuff that stands up to what is out there.

Thing 2. Don't feel in any way substandard if you don't write songs. In this day of the modern worship singer-songwriter, I meet so many artists who feel inadequate because they don't have the talent to write. So they spend time copying what is popular, or just writing a generic worship tune to show they can write. There are plenty of good songs and writers out there looking for artists to cover them. If you are an artist who doesn't write, don't waste your time and effort that you could be putting into your artistry.

Production

Now that we know your audience and have songs ready, we can begin the process of music production.

Now there are quite a few ways to accomplish all the processes of production, and many depend on your budget, your time, and the experience you want. Our goals in production are top commercial quality using the best players, engineers, and studios on the planet. We can do that in many ways.

Tracking

This is the process of recording all the instruments. Typically we accomplish this in the following ways depending on project budget.

Large Studio Tracking

In this scenario, a large professional facility such as Dark Horse Recording is rented by the day. Players and engineers are contracted, we hire assistants, and all the instruments for players are rented and brought in for the days we are working there. (Studios in Nashville work on an ala carte system. Most do not have staff players, although some do have staff engineers. We usually prefer to have the engineer who will be mixing the track in a situation like this.)

Now, if all this sounds expensive: IT IS! But it is also the most fun you are likely to have in your life, watching your songs come alive with the best players in Christian music today in an awesome environment.

All the parts are tracked as far as drums, percussion, bass, acoustic and electric guitars, piano, organ, and keyboards. Artists sing into a mic for “scratch” vocals, so the players can hear where the melody is. We will get to the artist vocals later.

Small Studio Tracking

Here we choose a smaller studio, usually built into an engineer’s house. These studios are built for clients, and include the studio and engineer in the cost of the day rate. Then we just pay players on top of this. These places usually have instruments or the players bring their own as needed.

This makes for a cheaper day rate, with no drop in quality. You simple lose some “experience” factor of the big name studio and environment, but again many of these smaller studios are very nice and client friendly.

Player Home Studio Tracking

A newer twist on this is players (usually drummers) who have built studios in their homes to work there. These studios have been designed for the drummer to control the system if need be, but we can also bring an engineer with us to these. The price is similar to the Small Studio option above, if not a little cheaper.

Pass Around Tracking

This final option is very popular with producers, and clients looking to save money. The producer, likely a musician, will send a song that has been started (perhaps a piano part and a loop), to a drummer via email. The drummer will put his part on and send it back to the producer. The producer will then mix those things together and send it on to bass guitar. Then to acoustic and electric guitars, etc.

In this tracking option there is no studio fee whatsoever, and no engineer cost, so it is our cheapest option.

The thing you might lose here is the band playing together factor, but these pros are so good you will never feel like you hear that once it's all done. They do this every day and have for years.

Also, when players have the tracks to work on in their home environment, there is no time limit or pressure. They can really focus on their parts and take the time they like to add interesting sounds and licks.

The beauty about all these methods of tracking is you still get the most important thing in all of them: the amazing players of Nashville, and your producer watching over the process to ensure quality.

Overdubs

Once the initial tracking of the instruments is done, the artist gets a rough mix of the track to practice with. At this time we might have some other things we want to add such as strings (real or programmed), solos, or background vocals. These things are often done without the artist present, again with the Pass Around method or scheduling a session.

Vocals

OK, no pressure. But here's where you as the artist do your thang!

Our preference is to let the artist have the rough mixes of the tracks for at least a month, so that the artist can work with the tracks and get comfortable with them before entering the studio to do vocals.

Usually we pick a good 4-5 days where the artist can come to town. During this week we will work in a small vocal studio, likely with an engineer, and begin recording your vocals.

We prefer to let the artist sing all the way through the song, and once they are warmed up record 5-7 "takes". The producer will likely give you some tips as you go. Unlike your local studio or past experiences they won't just be pushing the button and saying "Good Luck", then pointing at you. Our goal is to hear what you're doing with the vocal, and coax a great performance out of you.

We record full takes all the way through to get a natural, emotional performance. Then we edit the best parts into one great vocal, tune where needed, and then move to the mix process.

Mix

This is the process of mixing all the various tracks of instruments and vocals, and adding effects to create a high quality mix. There isn't a set time this takes as every mix engineer has a different speed and method. When done with each mix, the engineer sends a reference mix to the client and producer. The client and producer suggest changes, if needed, to the engineer, who then makes those and sends the mix back for approval.

Master

Once all the mixes are done we move to the final step in the recording process before the songs go to CD, iTunes, or whatever the marketing will be.

Mastering is usually a one-day process for the entire collection of songs, to properly add EQ, level volumes, and put the songs in the correct order for the duplicator.

It's also a valuable "third set" of ears that can catch mistakes or problems that the client, producer, and even engineer were too close to hear.

When finished the engineer sends back a reference of the final master to the producer and client. When approved the mastering engineer sends the final master to the duplicator.

Graphic Identity

Now let's pause a moment and talk about the graphic arts side of the project. At Creative Soul, we feel that your graphic identity is as important as the musical identity. The way the product looks and feels to your audience may go a long way in them deciding to purchase it.

Photography

Since the beginning, Creative Soul has been helping artists develop not only their music, but also their graphic identity, including amazing photography.

In this digital age, everyone has a multi-pixel camera, and knows someone who fancies himself or herself a "professional" photographer. But it takes more than a fancy camera to be a pro photographer.

We have our artists work with a photographer and designer who not only has the right equipment, but knows design well, especially music album design. And our team knows the music industry and has done hundreds of designs specifically for the purpose of commercial music success.

Our usual photo shoot time is when the artist is in for vocal week. We pick a morning or afternoon and hold the shoot at our photographer's studio in downtown Nashville.

The shoot cost can range from \$500-1000. But here is where our photographer differs from most: you'll get all 400-500 pictures he shoots. ALL OF THEM. High and low rez. To use as you see fit. If you've done any pro photography lately you'll know what an amazing price that is.

You'll immediately get what we call a web gallery to start narrowing your choices down (it's a big list!), but we need 10-25 favorites to begin cover and inside design.

CD Graphics

Once we have decided on 20 pics or so you love, we will have the designer get started with cover ideas. This is an important step, because the fonts, colors, and pics we choose for your artwork will become what we call your "identity" for the next year or two, or maybe more.

We will use this identity for your album, web site, social media, posters, 8x10s, etc. It will be the graphic imagery fans worldwide come to know you by.

Once you choose a cover, we finish the art around those choices and send you proofs to approve. You can see some of our work [here](#).

Duplication

In a perfect world, the graphic design master and audio final master files are ready at the same time, and sent to the duplicator. This is another area we are able to insure quality, and usually use the distributor we have used for over a decade.

Once they receive the artwork, they will make another set of proofs for you to approve. Then once that is done, and you have given them a deposit, the turn around is 12 business days (no weekends or holidays) before they are ready to ship.

And Voila! You have boxes of amazing CDs showing up on your doorstep ready to sell to the world!

This ends the Production phase of what we do for artists. The next step is the fun part! You get to go out to the world and minister! Here's what we do to help:

Phase 2: Creative Soul Records

Now that we have a great product, it's time to figure out how to market it right? No matter what your style of music, or your ministry goals, in most cases you are going to need help finding an audience and promoting your new music to the listening audience.

Since the mid-90's the Creative Soul Records logo has been a fixture on our CDs, and it has come to be a mark of quality on the products we produce. For radio, marketing, publicity, distribution, and more, the CSR brand services we have provided for artists after production have helped our artists get dozens of songs to radio, get seen and heard and found on the Internet, get national and worldwide publicity, and much more.

Web Site and Internet Marketing

First things first. Having a great web site and social presence these days is almost as important as the music itself. A good web site is your home base as far as all marketing, information, and contact are concerned. If a pastor wants to find you to bring you to his church, they will likely seek out your site. If a radio station or other media person wants to hear your sound, they will want to find you online. Our definition here is a good 4 to 7 page site that offers a homepage, bio, music, schedule, online store, photos, and a contact page. See some sites we have developed for artists [here](#).

Social Media

Just as crucial these days though is your social media marketing. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, ReverbNation, and your blog of choice are absolutely necessary to marketing these days. In fact, they are the best way to market your music and ministry and cost much less than marketing ever did before. Using these tools you can literally find thousands and thousands of new followers that will love your music and ministry so much they want to be part of it.

So our first job, after building your personal web site is building your complete social media world, or adapting what you have already started and tying it all together. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and get a feel for what's going on.

Media Kit (Online/Physical)

A media kit has traditionally been a printed piece or creative folder of information, pictures, and a sample of your music. Now, in many cases, the online press kit has taken the place of this. There are no printing costs, and changes can happen very quickly if needed. A great example of an online press kit is [here](#).

Video/DVD

Video is a very popular option these days, especially with the advent of YouTube.com. Did you know YouTube is one of the top three search engines now? Many of our artists have chosen to do music videos and informational EPKs, both high-end, and low-end. [Here's some examples.](#)

Radio

Promoting a single to radio is an effective way to find new listeners and fans of your music. But it's not exactly the cheapest, and in the current Christian music landscape, it's very hard to fight the machine of the larger labels protecting their airspace. But there are many companies we use that are available to independent artists, and play their music worldwide. We also use online radio outfits like Jango and Pandora.

Publicity

This form of promotion is usually done by a publicist and includes getting your music and ministry featured in magazines, newspapers, and on TV and radio shows. This can be a pricey service, and is very hard to quantify its effectiveness.

Marketing

As we talked about above, much of your concentration on marketing will be online social media tools. But some artists just aren't "social" kinds of people when it comes to hawking themselves on the Internet. That's where a good marketing specialist comes in. We find a team that can help the artist "look" as if they are very busy online, even if they aren't. Plus marketing specialists can hook artist gigs and publicity together, for instance making sure a newspaper article that runs locally the day before a concert.

Distribution

In the days of yesteryear, distribution meant getting your CD out to stores so when people perused the mall, or the bookstore, or the big box stores like Best Buy, they would find your CD and buy it. Say goodbye to yesteryear. *Nice knowing you yesteryear.*

We recently submitted a few projects for Grammy consideration, and a check box required you have "International Distribution". At first, we were disappointed, knowing we didn't have CDs across the globe. Then, we read what that entailed. It meant the music had to be available via iTunes, Amazon, or some other credible online store that sold internationally like CDBaby! We have that for every artist, so we are internationally distributed!

So is physical distribution important? Well it would be, if there were anyplace to put CDs. You would be hard pressed in most Walmarts or Targets to find much Christian music, much less product from independent artists. As a matter of fact, all stores are stocking less and less CDs every day in favor of DVD, BluRay, and iPhone covers apparently.

What's the future for the CD? Well, it's not as bleak as it appears for the independent artist. [Read more on that here.](#)

Suffice to say that having CDs to sell live, and perhaps at local stores, plus having your music at iTunes, Amazon, and CDBaby is the definition of distribution these days for most artists.

Chapter 4. Income Streams & Business Stuff

Now to what you've all been waiting for...How do you make any money at this?

Good question, and yes we know it's not all about money when we are balancing music and ministry concerns. But it is important to be fiscally responsible and help the ministry at least pay for itself.

As you will see, the two biggest incomes from artists are Bookings and Product Sales, but there can be other things such as royalties that bring in income as well.

Bookings

Since the very beginning of musical time, live music has been the organic way to hear music. From madrigals performing for audiences in the countryside, to composers in the courts of kings, to the southern gospel groups who have made a living playing for churches for over 100 years, live music performance has survived as the once and future king.

We've been through the entire product cycle of records, tapes, and CDs, and after they have gone away (to be replaced by a substandard disposable MP3), live performance still thrills audiences just as it ever has.

Church

Now, for a Christian artist, much of this performance comes via the church, although the way churches use artists has changed in recent years. In the 1970s and 1980s, contemporary artists brought something different to churches by bringing in a band and a raucous concert. Now, churches have contemporary worship concerts every week (and sometimes twice on Sunday!). So the idea of an artist coming in to do a contemporary concert doesn't exactly have the same thrill it once did.

Despite this, churches still hold the greatest opportunities for Christian artists. They still have budgets for women's events, men's events, youth events, special services, or other events that will sometimes need special music.

Churches also enjoy bringing artists in for mini-concerts during services, or as a special worship leader for the week.

Coffeehouse

The coffeehouse is an old idea, but still popular around the US. Usually coffeehouses are better suited for artists who play guitar or keyboard and sing, as the venues are often very small. But these can be good for bands, as well as artists who sing with tracks.

Note: Accompaniment Tracks are still a viable way for solo artists who don't play (but have spent good money on production) to perform. There are still plenty of venues and small churches that prefer an artist use tracks instead of bringing a band. It's also infinitely cheaper than paying musicians, and easier to schedule without five other people involved.

Conferences

Many artists are finding conferences to be a viable way to get in front of audiences. Especially if you are a speaker, or author, and can provide music with your knowledge, this can be a powerful

way to get more bookings. Women's conferences (like Beth Moore) or Men's Conferences (like PromiseKeepers) are very popular events and offer great exposure, not to mention very good sales.

Weddings/Funerals/Parties/Events

Most reading this have done one of these, if not all. While they are not always paying gigs, they can provide new fans, and opportunities for other engagements from those attending.

Build Your Own Event

This is a secret weapon that is sorely underused. As we talked about earlier, every artist has a "special something" that makes them unique. God designed you specifically for a type of ministry that only you and He know. Use this to create a special event you can take to churches.

As we have discussed, churches don't always need artists for concerts, nor do they have the budget for artists to come in. But if you as an artist offer a special event that you can bring and set up, that brings something special to the church other than just you on stage, pastors can often get behind it.

Example: One of our brands is a group called [Player A](#), a collection of some of the top Christian musicians here in town, many that we use on Creative Soul projects. We have developed a special "Player A Creative Weekend" where we offer a church a weekend of concerts, learning sessions with the players, and worship involving all the creative people in their church. We can even feature an artist in the church as part of the weekend, with the Worship Pastor as the host. It's a win-win for everyone. To get the whole picture, see "[The Player A Creative Weekend](#)."

Having an event you can suggest to a church can be the difference between a yes and a no when working on bookings.

Product Sales

We spoke earlier about the decline of the CD in distribution, but here, we get to talk about how those shiny discs can bring real income. There is no other instance where you can move hundreds of dollars of CD sales as fast as a concert or other live appearance. Why? Because of these two simple things:

1. Audiences felt something in your performance and want to take it home with them. Everyone has a CD player in their car, and knows they can rip it at home for their MP3 player. They prefer to get the CD right there before they forget. (And they will forget if they walk out the doors without a CD.) Plus they can get it signed.
2. Audiences feel a kinship with those on stage, and want to support you. Many times they just want to meet you and shake your hand, maybe get an autograph.

Other things artists sell at concerts are DVDs (music videos, video press kits, etc) and various forms of Merch (T-Shirts, Posters, 8x10s, Stickers, etc)

Royalties

It's not always a flowing stream for indies, but royalties can be an income source from radio or television play, or now, the Internet. The following is a very brief explanation of royalties.

The Three Forms of Royalties

Performance (BMI, ASCAP, SESAC)

Performance royalties are paid by one of the three PRO (Performance Rights Organizations) to songwriters and publishers. This is mostly for radio and television airplay.

Songwriters register with one of the PROs, and if you wrote a song that gets played on the radio, AND it is reported by the radio stations, AND the market is big enough...the PRO should send you a check once you make a certain amount. To be honest it's all very blurry, even to those of us who have received royalties.

Note: If you are not the songwriter or publisher of a song, you will not be paid for radio or television royalties. (If your music was not played anywhere, you also won't be paid. ;)

Mechanical

This is a fee that is paid to the owner of the recording (usually you in the kind of work we do with independents) from whoever is wanting to make copies. An example would be, you make a CD, and a company wants to make copies to resell in another country. They would pay you a mechanical royalty for each unit sold. Or in song terms, if you as an artist want to do a song that is already popular, you would pay a mechanical royalty to the songwriter or publisher of that song before you can legally release it on your CD.

Sync (Film, TV, Internet)

When you hear a popular song in a movie, TV show, or behind a commercial, someone is getting paid a synchronization royalty. This is payment for use, and is usually a one-time buy out.

Distribution

As we mentioned before, independent artists are not getting rich with their CDs in stores. But there are strategies that can bring very consistent income from CD sales in local stores, or in stores where you tour. This usually requires some organizations and stores approving consignment sales, but artists have made this work.

While physical distribution may be wonky at best for indies, the real power is in online distribution. In this arena, independent artists have many of the same opportunities as signed major artists - sometimes more. With one click at CDBaby.com, you can have your music up on iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, and more within weeks. Now, how you get people there to buy them...well that's a whole other E-Book!

Strange but True: Online sales are better the more you tour. Audience members at your gigs will look you up if they didn't buy a CD, or to order more music since they love what they heard and bought at your concert.

Partnerships

Finally, many artists find income streams from companies that are looking for artists to represent them. Companies such as Worldvision and Compassion International have artist programs where they pay a fee every time an artist does a presentation and gets a child sponsored.

Music Ministry Business

So how do you set this up like a real business? No you don't necessarily need to pay an attorney to set this up, but here are a few things you can do.

Form a business (DBA, Sole, LLC, S-Corp)

Usually a DBA (Doing Business As) will do for small starting ministries. Creative Soul operated for years as a Sole Proprietorship. You usually don't need an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation) or S-Corp unless you fear some kind of liability (like someone falling down at your business) or it helps for tax reasons.

Accountant

A good accountant is worth their weight in gold (which they can probably tell you by the way). Just having them to make sure you are filing everything correctly is, literally, a Godsend.

Bank Account

This is an easy thing to start. Just a simple checking account for your music ministry, and nothing else makes keeping track of the ministry money a breeze, without trying to figure out if last week's CD sales went to groceries.

Web Site

We've talked about how important this is, but it is absolutely something that will give your music ministry credibility and legitimacy.

Press Kit

A good press kit (online or physical) can be the difference between someone trusting you in business or not.

Business Cards

A quick and easy way to leave your web address, and maybe a link to free music.

Send Out/Give Away Post Cards

Another inexpensive, yet very professional way to leave behind information about your music and ministry.

Chapter 5. Songs

This is a very important part of the process, if not THE most important part. Having great songs is not only key to being a good artist, but is also our main tool towards reaching people with ministry. The words and the music work together to change hearts and minds, and you must remember that without great songs, you are just a nice person standing around with a microphone in your hand.

So where do you find these songs?

Artist Originals

Many artists come to us with songs already written. Sometimes really great songs, and sometimes we need to work on them to get them into shape. But working with someone better than you is the real key to becoming better anyway as a songwriter (or artist!).

But what if you don't write songs?

Cover Songs and Co-Writes

Many artists worry because they don't write great songs, or any songs at all for that matter! But the world needs singers that don't write too. Singers like the late Whitney Houston made a career singing other people's music, and no one ever wondered why she didn't write. Only in this day of the popularity of the "singer-songwriter", as well as labels wanting the profits from music publishing, has writing been a preferred skill for artists.

There are thousands of songs out there ready to be made new, or demos from songwriters that are ready to be recorded by an artist for the first time. We work with artists to help find those songs that truly match their style and ministry.

Writing Specifically for the Artist

Many times, we will write with the artist to "mine" thoughts and experiences into songs that are original for the artist. This can happen even if the artist has never written a song before. Think of it as "ghostwriting" for singers.

From the Moment Music (BMI)

This is our music publishing side, and we have many hundreds of songs we have written or published through the years. Many times we can find songs from our existing catalog that artists will love to sing for their recording. Find out more about our music publishing company at FromtheMomentMusic.com

While we are on the topic of songs and songwriting, let's cover a few basics about copyright and music publishing in general.

Copyright

There are a lot of myths out there about what copyright means, and how a song is protected. Copyright Law states that when a song is put down in any form, it is copyrighted to the author at that moment. This means if you record your song on your phone, make a YouTube video, write down the words, or anything that is recorded, it is copyrighted. Now, proving when you made that recording or when it was written is another thing.

The *only* legal proof that stands in court showing when you wrote the song and ownership is a copyright from the US Copyright Office. This is obtained at <http://www.Copyright.gov> (see this site for complete updated information.)

You can file a basic claim online for \$35, and that can be one song, or a collection of MP3s in a ZIP file.

Music Publishing

You hear the terms ‘music publisher’ and ‘getting published’ all the time, but what does it really mean? All it really means is you have hired a company (a music publisher) to help you find avenues for your song to be heard. This can mean it was recorded on an album, it was used in a TV show, or some other use. The music publisher usually gets 50% of whatever the songs makes in all these venues, and the songwriter(s) gets the other 50%. Think of it as a company that just helps get the song out more than you could alone.

Importance of Strong Songs

It can't be stressed enough the importance of great songs. This needs to be your number one concern as you build your music ministry. Great songs not only get you in doors, do well at radio, and find you new fans, but they minister well. God deserves our very best, and doing your due diligence to put the best songs out there only glorifies Him more.

Chapter 6. The Plan for Your Ministry

OK, so you've come through all this information, now what will you do with it? The reason you are reading this is to take the next steps in music ministry, so let's see what we know about you.

What is Your Mission Statement?

What is the thing you are passionate about? What is your "Something Else" we talked about in Chapter 2?

A good mission statement is about a sentence long. It lets you succinctly tell anyone what your music and ministry is about. For instance, Creative Soul's mission statement is "**To Lead, Inspire, and Develop Creative Christians in Ministry**".

My personal mission statement is "**To Imagine, Create, and Produce Amazing Things**." See the *creative* thread running through those? You can develop a mission statement like this for yourself based on who YOU are and what you feel God has for you to do.

A great book on developing your own mission statement is [Laurie Beth Jones "The Path"](#).

What is the Reality of Ministry in Your Life?

Another thing we like to look at, is what is the reality of your life right now? Is it a good time to start this? How many hours in your day will you put towards music ministry?

Do you have the support of your family? We work with many artists whose spouse or parents often are an integral part of their music ministry. We also work with artists who have the full support of their family, but are pretty much going it alone. Either way, this doesn't have to be a hindrance to you. If you feel God is calling you to step further out into ministry, then He will open all the doors needed for this to happen.

Are You Ready to Get Started Now?

Is this something you are investigating for "one day"? Or are you ready to get going now with your dream of music ministry? It's easy to read all this and feel the pressure of how much you will need to get going, both financially and spiritually. But there is no time like today to begin to get busy with what God has for us to do.

"Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone." - Pablo Picasso

The Role of Creative Soul Records in this Ministry

Unlike other companies in the traditional music business that are looking for the next big thing, Creative Soul is looking for those who need our help. We are looking for folks that passionately want to pursue ministry. We are waiting to be at your service and help you build a successful, quality music product.

Our goal is to equip and lead hundreds if not thousands of music ministries to success for years to come, not to just be some one-off, vanity project. We are serious, and have serious musicians, engineers, producers, and others that are standing by to provide the same high-end services they have given to the Christian music industry for 25 years.

[We'd love to hear from you. Visit us at CreativeSoulOnline.](#)

Training

There are many things you can be doing until you step into that studio to record, and later, the stage to minister.

Performance

All roads lead to the stage, our friend Tom Jackson likes to say. You can find out more about Tom in our links below. But knowing how to perform on stage is more than just what to wear. A great performance coach can free you to own the stage in more ways that you have ever imagined. And if you are new to the stage, this kind of instruction is very important.

Vocals

Generally, we are not keen on most vocal coaches. Make sure if you are getting vocal coaching, it is for *contemporary* singing, not opera, unless, of course, you are trying to be the next Josh Groban.

Songwriting

Working on your songs, writing and rewriting is always important. Your songs can never be over-written, and can often use revision after revision. Songwriting courses and clinics, as well as reading books and co-writing with others is always a great idea.

Conferences

Attending songwriting or Christian music conferences is always fun, and can be a source of new contacts, friends, and fans.

What to do now

Determine the plan

If the plan is to make a recording and get your music ministry out there, then [contact us](#) and let's talk about the next steps. Sometimes, just taking the first steps with a real company can be enough to get the snowball rolling down the hill.

Plan a Next Step with Creative Soul

Ready to move forward? [Get in touch at Creative Soul Online](#) or call us at 615-400-3910. You can do some low-cost coaching calls, have your songs critiqued, or move forward with a full album or EP project.

Stay encouraged and focused

Above all stay positive. You've made an important step by going forward with this initial workshop. You are arming yourself with information. Now it's time to pray and seek God's counsel for your next steps.

Congratulations on taking this important step towards the next phase of your music and ministry career. By taking this step, you've shown amazing initiative and faith in both God's plan for you, and your abilities and talents. We at Creative Soul hope we can help you further your music and ministry from this point.

Chapter 7. Important Web Sites

Our Sites

Creative Soul Online – Consulting/Production/Development
www.CreativeSoulOnline.com

Creative Soul Records – Artists/Label Services
www.CreativeSoulRecords.com

From the Moment Music – Music Publishing/Songwriter Services
www.FromtheMomentMusic.com

Eric Copeland Music – Personal Producer/Songwriter Site
www.EricCopelandMusic.com

Our Popular Blogs

For the Creative Soul - Inspiration, Encouragement
www.FortheCreativeSoul.com

The Music (Ministry) Business - The Business of Music Ministry
MusicMinistryBiz.BlogSpot.com

Soul of the Songwriter - Ideas and Info for Christian Songwriters
SouloftheWriter.BlogSpot.com

Studios We Use

Dark Horse Recording
www.DarkhorseRecording.com

We have a pretty exclusive relationship with Darkhorse Recording. If you are reading this, you have probably already visited and have the brochure. You know the magic of the place. We just feel it's a wonderful, peaceful place to work. And they love and respect our artists like they are as big a star as some of the folks who work there often. Although we love all the studios listed here, we feel the Creative Soul experience is best brought forth by and at Darkhorse Recording.

Sunset Blvd. Studios
www.SunsetBlvdStudios.com

The Givens House
(Private Studio, Franklin, TN)

Playground Recording
www.PlaygroundRecording.com

Other Sites You Should Know About

Reverbnation

www.ReverbNation.com

CDBaby

www.CDBaby.com

Jango/Radio Airplay

www.Jango.com

IndieHeaven

www.IndieHeaven.com

Tom Jackson Productions (Performance Coaching)

www.TomJacksonProductions.com

Cindy Wilt Colville Songwriting Consultant

www.CindyWiltColville.com

QCA Duplication

www.Go-QCA.com

BMI

www.BMI.com

ASCAP

www.ASCAP.com

Library of Congress (Copyrights)

www.LOC.gov

Chapter 8. An Interview with Christian Artist Ken Verheecke

By Eric Copeland

At the Indieheaven CIA Summit in 2005, I opened the Friday conference by asking everyone who loves music, does music, or wants to do music to stand up.

Then I said anyone who has sold a CD or played a date in the last 12 months, stay standing. A few sat. I slowly increased the numbers. 25 CDs or 25 dates. Some sat. 100 CDs or 50 dates. More sat.

Finally I got to, "Stay standing if you have sold over 1000 CDs or played over 100 dates in the past 12 months.

Three people out of 350 were still standing.

One of those people is Ken Verheecke, an unassuming guitarist and singer/songwriter from Piedmont, South Dakota.

Want proof that labels and music cities don't matter?

Ken runs his own booking, his own web site (with sales!), and takes his ministry on the road up to 150 times a year.

He's sold over 20,000 CDs and it shows no signs of stopping.

I sent him some questions and here are his answers:

1. Tell us about your ministry and how it got started.

I started playing Christian Music in 1978... I know that really "dates" me, but that was a time in my life when I discovered Phil Keaggy, Paul Clark, Randy Stonehill and Keith Green... all of which impacted me deeply. Through such ministries... I was drawn to write and sing my own songs of faith.

2. What's a normal day like for you?

A normal day for me is spent on connecting with as many folks as I can in an effort to secure opportunities to share in concert and ministry. This generally means... 'email city' as well as making some phone calls here and there. Btw... this is a non-stop effort!

3. Tell us how you got started approaching calling and booking? What works and doesn't work?

I usually begin with an introductory email... sending these to pastor's and music leaders/directors. Within this email I'll note some brief information about myself... and I will then direct all contacts to my web-site... which in essence serves as my on-line brochure. This seems to work nicely... though a small percentage respond to my email. But this is generally no different than making a phone call.

4. How do you feel about asking for money? How is that subject broached?

Within my introductory email... I'll note my detail form which communicates my general needs per concert. Lately I have been stressing what my "area of need is." This seems to help with people understanding that this isn't a hobby for me... this is my vocation and calling. I feel uncomfortable discussing money... but I have learned through my 13 years of traveling full time... it is something that I need to communicate... the continued success of this music ministry depends on my willingness to address this!

5. How does travel work?

It's me and my car... logging in approx. 60,000 miles a year. I am a 'road dog'!

6. How many dates do you do a year on average?

Approx 150 dates a year... which is my limit.

7. How does traveling affect your family and how do you make it work?

My wife and I are very dedicated this ministry... going on 14 years of complete devotion to this effort. In other words we are very committed and we know that is a sacrifice... but in the end... lives are touched, encouraged and blessed through our efforts... and that makes it worth it all. It is a ministry that gives... and often far more than what we receive... but we are called to be 'faithful' and God takes care of the rest.

8. What about product. How many CDs have you made?

Goodness... to be honest and this not to sound impressive, in fact it makes me look bad... but I have lost count. Presently we make 4 different recordings available at our concerts.

9. How many CDs do you sell online and what kind of traffic do you get?

I don't do all that well on-line... pretty average sales of 5 to 10 units a month. Although my site is quite active thanks to my active message board community. We average about 50 to 100 posts a day.

10. How do sales go at your events?

I am averaging approx. 2500 units a year... most sold through my concerts, many sold though gift shops which my feature my 'instrumental' recordings... and last but not least, average sales from my site.

11. How do you handle the finances for the ministry?

All checks are written to our ministry... Heartcall Music Ministry. My wife handles the budget and she does an awesome job keeping us on the road.

12. What's your best advice for ministries that are just starting, or struggling and wanting to get where you are?

BE FAITHFUL... in all things, from the small to the big... because you never know how something you may say, do or sing will affect and impact a person life. We have the blessing and privilege of serving in a music ministry! This isn't a hobby... in my case... it is a lifelong commitment. I will serve in this capacity until the day I die.

BE FAITHFUL!!!! God will be faithful to you.

Soothing Instrumental Guitar @ <http://www.kvmusic.net/>

Chapter 9. A Sampling of Our Popular Blogs

The Next Step and How to Take It

From the blog [For the Creative Soul](#), a service of Creative Soul Records

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. - Martin Luther King, Jr.

We all have dreams. Our creative passions we think about when we have a stray minute; when we're driving alone without the music on; when we are falling asleep at night. The dreams we dare to dream that we know no one will hear, or laugh at us.

So why don't we DO something? I talk alot about DO in this blog. Sorry if my DO offends you, or if you feel all this is dodo.

But all of us are hampered by the simple task of taking the next step on some goal, quest, or passion.

A few years ago, for no apparent reason, I went back to college. I think at the time the idea was to finish my degree (I'm on the 32 year plan). But the first class I took was a music history class studying Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, etc., and I was hooked. (I even started [another blog here](#) about it.) Since taking that little step, I am not only finishing this spring, but am growing in ways I had no idea I could by studying music history. It's like I added a whole other dimension to my knowledge, my work with my clients, and my general music life.

But I almost didn't take this step. Why? Well, it costs money to go to college (even in my advanced years ;). It meant time away from my busy client schedule, and trying to make sure the wheels stayed on. Plus, the kids at college are MY children's age. They're gonna think I'm some geezer, or narc or something.

I did in fact take the step, and I am glad I did.

So what thing do you dare to dream about, but in the cold hard light of day completely chicken out to do any blessed thing about? If it's a creative passion that you want to follow then I urge you to take a step this week. Make a move towards it. Even a small step today can bring you closer to that seemingly insurmountable dream.

It's not just a question of conquering a summit previously unknown, but of tracing, step by step, a new pathway to it. - Gustav Mahler

It could be an internet search. It could be a phone call or email to someone. It could just be putting a list of things to do towards the goal.

But God made us to be creative creatures in His image. So don't put off this creative urge you may have. We all never know how much time we have on this Earth.

Take that next step this week!

What saves a man is to take a step. Then another step. - C. S. Lewis

Have a great week!

EC

Eric Copeland is a producer, creative cheerleader, and president of Creative Soul, a company that fosters and encourages Christian artists. Find out more at <http://www.CreativeSoulOnline.com>

Looking for a great first step? We've lowered the price for our monthly consult. Come visit a major label, and get our NEW full day workshop. Get started and take that step! [**For more info including the dates of our next conferences, click here!**](#)

Why You Probably Won't Be Famous

From the blog [The Music \(Ministry\) Business](#), a service of Creative Soul Records

If you don't become the next megastar in music, it's not because you aren't talented. It's not because of your looks, or because you never got your "big break". It's not even because you didn't get on American Idol or the Voice.

So what is it? Why are you much less likely to be famous these days as a music artist?

It's because there is so MUCH.

There's just too much music out there.

It's getting harder and harder for anyone to find good music they like. There's iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, Bandcamp, eMusic, Pandora, Sirius/XM, Jango, CDBaby, your local radio stations (that play the same thing over and over), and even your DMX or whatever they call the music channels on your cable box.

But you still can't find anything new or great that you like.

Oh sure, there is Lady Gag (sic), or some other flavor of the week that somebody found on Youtube and we all huddle around a phone or monitor to laugh at it or be mildly impressed.

But is it music we want to "live" with. In our cars, on our iPods, in our hearts!? Um, no.

So what's the use, you say? Why even try to make music in this crazy age where there's so much music that there is no good music?

I think we have to make music we believe in. It has to come from our hearts, and be purposeful. It has to be music that can make a difference in someone's life.

Why? Because if it's just about being "famous" then I just don't think God will honor that. Most of us are fond of proclaiming we are doing this for ministry, or to profoundly affect people with our creations. So we need to prove it.

We need to die to being famous, and strive to make amazing art that deeply moves people.

So how do we do this? Let's break this down.

We have to make music from the heart.

Sounds a bit cliche', but for you people with music ministries out there this is pretty crucial. Other forms of music fit this category too like Jazz or Classical.

This is music that makes someone feel something deep and meaningful. There may be lyrics that touch or affect, but it could just as well be a beautiful melody.

It doesn't have to be a ballad or slow either. It's about making something that makes someone take pause in their day, take refuge in the song, or just get lost in the music. I call it "the stop in

your tracks in the middle of the Walmart” song. You seek out a speaker to hear your favorite part.

Music that makes a difference to someone if they hear it or not. Music they take with them on trips. Music that has become like a good friend; a part of their life.

Find the audience for your music, and go after them with all you've got.

I mean, you have to live to serve this audience. You've made music that you feel says what you want it to say, now get it out there to the people.

Is it easy? No. In fact it's much harder than Step 1. Way harder. Sure the Rolling Stones and Beatles had radio, TV, and huge concerts to push their music. But they didn't have FB ads that could reach millions, the ability to make music and put it up for the world to buy immediately. They didn't have many of the tools we have at our fingertips just because we have an internet connection.

We have to NOT quit.

Seems simple enough right? Just keep working on our craft, getting better, finding our audience, and keep serving them. Year after year. But the truth is many of us give up, or quit, or lay it aside because it's very hard. It seems like no one is listening. You've put your heart and soul into it, and still you're not getting anywhere.

This is where the hard truth comes in. We're not going to be famous. We're not going to be able to quit our jobs immediately and tour. No one is going to drop money in our lap to do this.

So we have to be willing to find that place where the music fits in our lives, and be happy with that. We have to still be tenacious even though our visions of fame have not become reality. The truth is they probably never will. But that's OK. In fact, maybe your destiny all along was to build a small but loyal following of listeners around the world. Those people who will buy your music, bring you to their area to perform, and touch their hearts and soul with the music they can't live without.

We've all had those moments where we touched someone musically, and saw it on their face. It was more than just a “sell”, but a ministry.

And if you haven't had that experience, make THAT your goal and ambition. To change someone's life with your music.

Now that's what God made you for. He's the real famous one you know.

Have a great week!

EC

Eric Copeland is the president of Creative Soul Records, a kind of, sorta label and music production company in Nashville, TN. His company works with music artists who deal with fame aspirations and ministry concerns every day. <http://www.CreativeSoulRecords.com>

The Reason For Your Life Story

From the blog [Soul of the Songwriter](#), presented by From the Moment Music

So many times, especially as songwriters that write for church or other religious reasons, we tend to write Christiany things. Yes, it's a word. Ok, no it's not, but you know what I mean.

Christianese. Words that sounds good to Christians because they know them and are comfy with them with our church friends or driving in the car praise-driving. But are these the only things to write about? Does writing more Christianish songs really get the true job out of reaching people for Christ?

Is this why God made you? To write more of what is already written? Another nice ditty that sounds like every other hymn, worship tune, or Christian song you've ever heard before?

I think the thing writers miss most at first, is writing from the powerful pages of their personal life story.

I tell all the beginning songwriters I meet (and artists too) that there is a reason for the life they have had. God has a Plan that cannot be seen by our puny minds. We can't know why we endured all the heartache, pain, humiliation, anger, sadness, and yes, also love and happiness in our lives.

But as songwriters, we have a unique chance to mine that sometimes painful, sometimes thorny past, and turn it into some great songs.

Dealt with major awful things like abuse, divorce, or death? Use it. Write about it. Tell your story and let others know you have been there.

Is it hard? Well yes, of course! Deciding to turn your private life into a ministry is not easy for everyone.

Even if you have had it fairly easy compared to most, there are still situations you've been through where you've seen God work. Or more importantly, there are things that you have learned the somewhat hard way (probably because of stupidity) in life. These are the things that you can speak about in your lyrics. The reason God designed you, because He knew that you would have to go through them and come out the other side with unique insight.

We're all unique. He made us that way so we would have unique things to say, and a unique way to say them.

So look into your life. Think about the things you struggle with. Think about the painful or watershed moments of your life. You know, those things you can't believe happened to you, and wonder why God allowed them to happen?

Ahem. Here's why. You have to share that experience and that is what separates you, your music, and your ministry from everyone else.

There's a reason for your life story. Write from it!

About the Author

Eric Copeland is a producer, composer, author, and consultant in Nashville, TN. He works every day with artists, producers, engineers, musicians, and a cast of thousands. His main work is in finding ways to help his clients be better at what they do, and have more success. It's a new music business out there, and there are infinitely new ways to do everything.

For more about producer, author, composer, and consultant Eric Copeland, visit his site at:
EricCopelandMusic.com

For more info on how to get started in Christian music, including how to find someone to help, consulting, studio production and more please go online to CreativeSoulOnline.com

If you are an artist or songwriter and would like to know more about the complete line of services and products available by Creative Soul and Creative Soul Records, check out:
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