

Finding singing work.

Once you have purchased the necessary equipment, and have enough quality backing tracks to provide approximately 2 hours entertainment (most spots are usually 2 x 45 minutes in length or 3 x 30 minutes - the extra 30 minutes of tracks are necessary for times when you may be expected to sing a few extra numbers at the end of your performance), the next step will be to find enough work to either earn a sustainable income or use as additional income. There are numerous ways to increase your booking potential - some are surprisingly inexpensive and others require a substantial amount of time and effort, for which there may be no guarantee. We shall cover the possibilities as follows :-

Entertainment agencies.

One of the most common methods for finding work is to use an entertainment agency. These can be considered similar to an employment agency. The agency will try to find work for you, for which there is usually a commission fee payable. There are many agencies to choose from, each having their own criteria. Varying commission rates are charged amongst different agencies, and also some are VAT Registered (meaning that you may be required to pay commission plus VAT). A decision to use an agency should not be based on these factors alone, but should be based on the overall package. One agency may charge a higher rate of commission than another, however if they are able to find you more work at better venues, or with venues that pay a higher fee for the artistes, then this can be beneficial.

An important point to consider is the area in which an agency operates; are the venues likely to be within a reasonable travelling distance from your location? If not it is important to consider the additional fuel expenses which may be incurred when travelling to the venue.

Contact as many agencies as you think appropriate - many do not charge for registration. Some may wish to see you perform at either an audition show or a local venue before they will offer work. This can only be deemed acceptable as the reputation of the agency is at stake - and it will be the agency that is contacted by the venue if the entertainment was unsatisfactory.

Audition shows.

A good way to showcase your talents is to attend audition shows. These are held by various agencies or concert secretaries - details of which can usually be found in local music/entertainment brochures. It is quite common for the artiste/s to perform a few tracks on a no-fee basis. This may seem a little harsh, however this does give everyone a chance to see a sample of your performance prior to a booking. There may be a number of landlords and concert secretaries at your audition show, therefore the few free numbers you have performed may turn out to be extremely worthwhile. If you do not receive a booking do not worry, there can be many reasons. Some people are especially looking for duos as opposed to individual vocalists etc. Try to use the audition as a learning experience - you will have gained some invaluable experience of performing on stage, in front of a live audience.

Talent competitions.

Although you are now looking for professional work, it can be important not to overlook advertised talent competitions. These can be extremely useful as there are usually music-related people attending these events. As an example, I recently attended a talent competition whereby one of the judges owned a vocal recording studio. The prize on offer was a studio session to produce your own CD. Steve's Trax sponsored the event providing free backing tracks, therefore the winners received quite a lucrative prize. The venues which host these events usually are involved in the entertainment industry, so there is also a chance of receiving a booking.

Promote yourself.

One of the most overlooked methods, yet one of the easiest, is self-promotion. The internet has opened up advertising opportunities which were previously only available to large corporate companies. Have you considered setting up a web page advertising your talents? This can now be achieved in minutes with the many basic web editing packages that are on offer. Your website could consist of a photograph, description of your music style and details of equipment used. If you are considering updating the site regularly you could even list your future available dates and venues. Try and think of all the information you would like to see from an advertisement - try and put yourself in the shoes of the landlord or concert secretary. This will

help you to keep the content as specific as possible. Consider advertising in a local pub/club brochures. These can be surprisingly inexpensive.