

Interviewing a Pro (1 of 3)



When interviewing a professional musician, the goal is to experience a music-culture or some part of it from an insider's point of view. Samples of professional interviews can be found at www.NonLinearMusic.net. Here are some shortcuts to putting together a great musician interview:

Select a musician you would be excited to learn about, hear from, or meet. This should be fun for both of you!

Ask them in a way that sounds like it will benefit them. Really sell it! There are three ways a performer will do an interview:

1. Ego: *They like to feel important*
2. Business: *They want to promote a CD, concert, book, etc.*
3. Charity: *They are a teacher at heart and want to help others*

Based on what you think will be most compelling of those three, create a script and call them. Only email if they don't return your call. Here is a sample script:

Dear, Bono. It looks like things are going well for you. Congratulations on all your successes!

You and others like you have inspired me to work on finally getting serious about pursuing music! I was hoping I could convince you to let me interview you for just 5 minutes to promote your new recording, (and whatever else you'd like) and encourage other beginning musicians. With your approval, parts of the interview would be published in music blogs with other interviews of professional musicians. I just finished an interview with guitarist George Taylor [*it doesn't really matter who you put here*], and after hearing him talk, I thought it would be great to hear your perspective. Most of my audience is pianists, drummers, and guitarists [*list instruments this person does not play*], so they need to hear what a good vocalist really wants from them!

Thank you for your consideration and what you're doing both for vocalists and for music education!

Talk to you soon.

-Jamin Coller

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Prepare:

The key to a good interview is good preparation. They will be flattered and more helpful if they feel like you are their biggest fan!

**Google them/read their bios - prepare to ask questions relating to major performances.*

**Watch or listen to clips of them playing*

**Ask them what they want to promote/advertise*

**Prepare impressive intro*

**When you've read the next section and you have your list of questions, email them a list of questions so they can prepare answers for any questions they think are really interesting.*

Interview:

*Listen! They are the experts—you are there to get their perspective. No one cares about yours.

*Offer water, tea, coffee, or other refreshments

*Ask follow-up questions! Only use your list of questions to startup the conversation after it has died, but try to not let the conversation die.

*Take good notes! Remember, you told them that you were going to be advertising for them. If you can, video record the interview, but at least audio record it. Remind them that you won't publish anything without their approval first.

*Be done before they are! Never interview for more than 20 minutes. You want them to feel like the time went by too quickly and they still have more to say. That way it's fun for them and you can come back again in the future. If they get bored, they'll feel like they did you a favor and they'll never have to do it again.

*Thank them professionally and give them an idea of when the video/blog post will be ready for their approval. If you can, get the

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address of the interviewee so you can send them a follow-up thank you card.

When you prepare your list of questions, just be sure to focus on them and their opinions. Don't spend any part of the interview explaining what *you* think.

Here are some sample questions to help you get started:

WHO THEY ARE:

- *What accomplishment are you most proud of?*
- *What motivated you to practice when you started out?*
- *Who influenced you?*
- *What is your #1 musical goal?*
- *What are you currently working on improving?*
- *Could you play a favorite piece from...(recent album, repertoire, upcoming concert, etc.)?*

PERFORMING:

- *What could people who play other instruments do to be better band members?*
- *Do you have any band-related pet peeves?*
- *What is the role of your instrument in a band?*

TEACHING:

- *What is the most important quality in a music teacher?*
- *What musical advice impacted you most?*

MUSIC INDUSTRY:

- *Overall, do you feel the internet and videos has made musicians better or worse?*
- *What's the difference between a musical hobbyist and a real musician?*
- *What is your perspective on copyright laws & piracy issues?*