

PERFORMING

GIG MANNERS: HOW TO BOOST YOUR APPEARANCES AT VENUES by Annette Warner, CoffeeHouseTour.com

If you are one of those musicians that just doesn't think about 'manners' when it comes to venues, it's about time you started.

Here are 10 easy-to-manage tips on how to mind your manners when gigging in a new venue or returning to an old one.

Always make sure to confirm your gig prior to leaving town (if you're travelling). Mistakes happen and schedule changes occur. Even at the last minute, venues have and will toss a new performer aside when given the opportunity to book a returning favorite that is guaranteeing a crowd. They may have dropped the ball on calling to cancel or even double billed the gig without letting you know.

So protect yourself and make sure you are still scheduled. If a cancellation does happen, ask for a new date right away -maybe two dates while you have the venue in a potentially generous state.

Never appear rude or inconvenienced in an attempt to make the venue feel bad. It will haunt you later and you'll just irritate them and make it hard for them to want to work with you again. Be pleasant and kind even when you may be gritting your teeth because it's screwed up your entire weekend. If nothing else, you've shown you are a professional and a tactful business person.

Most of the venues and musicians I asked admitted to getting caught in the awkward trap because they failed to confirm. Avoid it altogether when you can. Just call. Don't even depend on e-mail. Call.

Ask when the load-in time frame is and follow it. If you find out that you are going to be late for loadin, especially for a show at a restaurant, you'll want to call the venue as soon as you can in order to find out if it's okay to load-in late. I have witnessed musicians being turned away for their gig because they arrived late at a restaurant that specifically required that load-in and setup be completed two hours prior to peak dinner hour. Even though the musician would have been able to start the gig on time, the lateness was inconvenient for the restaurant.

Ask the venue booking manager what the preferred times are - and stick to them.

Ask the venue if there are any particular drink specials or event announcements they would like announced on the PA between sets. It shows you care about their business and want to help increase the register for the evening. You can also ask who the artists are that are playing the next few nights after you and announce the dates they are appearing to your audience.

It will come back around in a good way And the better you do it, the better it will come back around. If you have the time, research the next few performers prior to playing so you'll have something personal to add and write them telling them you intend to promote them and ask if there is something special they'd like for you to announce. That's just good, friendly networking and taking care of each other.

Next thing you know, they'll call you and want some details to announce on stage at a gig with 3000 people :) Just cuz you rocked!

Do not forget to announce reminders for tipping for the wait staff and bartenders. They really do appreciate acts that do that. At the end of the evening, tip the wait staff yourself. Even if they didn't bring you anything to the stage. Nothing says you shouldn't just because you are playing there. Waiters talk amongst themselves. Impressing them is a big part of the game. They will ask venue owners when you are coming back and they will tell their friends when you play.

Clean your stage area of bottles. Put the chairs back that you used. Leave things as you found them, or

better. When you exit the venue, you'll stand out - believe me.

Assuming you liked the venue, add the venue to your holiday card list - and send them a Thank You card after your first gig. Let them know you appreciated being there and look forward to coming back. Do so even if you don't want to gig there again. It's easy enough to 'not be available', but it's not easy to recover from being unappreciative. Again...you'll stand out.

Give the venue a CD for their overhead player. Many venues will play them. Especially for the ones that have made the best impression. On return visits, introduce one new artist you think would fit in the venue, by giving them a CD of the artist. The venue will think you are wonderful and thoughtful. In a profession where most people are only looking out for themselves, it's rewarding personally to be supportive of your colleagues. But make sure your recommendations are good ones. You need to develop the venue's respect.

Offer their customers some raffle prizes through the night. Play some games like "First one to buy the newest drink on the menu, gets a free T-shirt." Always come prepared to give away things at your gigs. It really does make a difference and it's easy to do.

Remember to promote safe driving and designated drivers as often as you feel necessary - at least once per show. It's a community responsibility we all have - reminding intoxicated music lovers they shouldn't drive. Simple.

Make an effort to remember names of the staff so you can name them on stage. "Billy behind the bar makes a fabulous Margarita guys - go grab one!" or "Lisa is a fabulous waitress - everyone, remember to tip her well." It makes the evening more personal for the staff. You can't help but like someone who calls your name from the stage.

Be on time when starting and stopping your gig. If the end of your night has come and the crowd is still going strong, ask the manager if they want you to play longer. Don't stop cold and empty the place without showing you care enough to ask what they would like for you to do. They will appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Don't hesitate to barter. If you've done a fabulous job at maintaining the crowd, offer to stay another hour for a certain sum of money (whatever applies, but be fair). Most would be happy to let you play all night as long as they are making money, but don't assume that they do want you to continue. And whatever you do ...avoid taking breaks when it's starting to pick up. And when you do take breaks - keep them short. You are being paid to play, not drink and sit around.

In addition to Founding CoffeeHouseTour.com Annette is a freelance Sales Copy Writer and Web Resource Developer with her own business; Awesome Webs. She also enjoys duties as a part time event planner and booking and music entertainment manager for several local festivals. She organizes and promotes the Wilmington, NC based and successful AWESome 'Live Performance' Songwriting Competition now in it's 9th year. She is the owner of A. Warner Entertainment, a Live Entertainment Publicity Planning Agency. www.awarnerentertainment.com