

# So you wanna be a star!

Here's a few suggestions from people in the "biz" that might help you get started.

Create a good promo package

1. CD. Your promo package should contain songs representative of YOUR STYLE. Don't include songs that would NOT be of interest to the record label you've selected. Choose GOOD songs, not something that is obscure or is just an "album cut." I suggest 3-- and no more than 5 songs! Keep the demos tight! No long instrumental introductions or codas. NO long guitar solos, etc. Keep it simple-- but full enough to sell the song-- a good rhythm section is fine-- or even a solo instrument like piano or guitar, if the song sounds complete with it. Avoid overproduced demos -- lots of instruments, strings etc, just get in the way. LESS IS MORE. They want to hear you sing, so unless you're trying to sell the song, let the voice be the focus of attention. And there's no need to spend lots of money to do this! You may want to consider a CD-ROM of your material and a website that contains this information.

2. Photo. Get a nice headshot, one that complements you in a natural, pleasant setting. You should look like who you are (a beautiful person!). This is not a time to "cop" a style or establish a new look. It pays to have a professional photographer do this!

3. Bio. Write a short (one page) bio that includes the highlights of work you've done (singing successes) and include your aims and aspirations (I want a recording contract!)

4. Reviews. If you have them, include copies of newspaper clippings, reviews of your professional singing activities, etc. They are gonna want to know if you have had local or regional success, its in your favor.

5. Business Card. If you have a professional business card, include it in the package.

6. Cover letter. Write a short letter introducing yourself and listing the materials included in the promo package. Use personal letterhead if you have any. Make sure your name, address and phone number are there and clearly visible! If you have a contact person or reference, mention them early in the letter. The cover letter should be short (a paragraph or two) and to the point!

BUT... before you mail out your promo package...

1. Look at CDs of artists you admire or emulate and who best illustrate the style of music you are presenting. Get the names of their labels. Go to their websites. Get the names of the Artist and Repertoire (A&R) personnel. Not just one or two -- but as many as possible.

2. Write (or email) the contact person and ASK PERMISSION to send them materials! If you know them, or know anyone in common, or if someone gave you their name, mention this immediately in your request. Few packages ever get past the outer office trash can. Most companies do not accept unsolicited material. If you send a letter, include a stamped, self-addressed postcard with checkboxes -- "Yes, I will receive your materials," and "No, not at this time." Make it easy for them to respond.

3. If they give permission, then send the promo package right away. In your cover letter, your first sentence should reflect this. "As per your letter (email) of April 26...." or "Thanks for your permission to send... "

4. After you mailed the package, if you don't get an answer in a reasonable amount of time, then follow up with a phone call. "Did you receive the package...?" Persistence pays off, but don't hassle them.

While you're waitin'....

1. Visit Nashville (or the city where you want to be established) even before you have an interview or establish contacts. (No need to move there until something is happening in your career there.) Go for a short stay, say for a weekend trip. Find out where artists and songwriters are trying out their stuff. Go and listen. See what and how they do it. Meet people! (glad handing). Build an address book of contacts. Who knows, the A&R person you've written may be there at the showcase. Complement the artists you like and establish friendships. Have something ready to sing just in case someone says "How about a song!" -- and know the KEY of your selection. While you there, check out the locations of the record companies you've mailed. Is it a dump?-- or a gleaming tower!

2. When you are comfortable, and ready, schedule a showcase in a prominent club in Nashville. Send out flyers to all the A&R people on your list. Get as many people at the showcase as possible. Bring family, invite people you've met. Program your best stuff, staying in the style that you are trying to establish.

3. When you're on the top of the charts. remember us! We'd love to name a building after you!

There are a few books that might give you some more insight...

"The Music Business Handbook & Career Guide," by David Baskerville. (7th Ed, 2001)

Sage Publications. ISBN: 0-7619-1667-9

"This Business of Music" by Krasilovsky and Shemel. (7th ed, 1995)

Billboard Books. ISBN 0-8230-7755-1

I hope this helps.