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**The Successful Studio Singer**

**By Tom Gauger**

After singing on countless sessions including commercials, backup for many an artist and for an

array of producers, I have come to the conclusion that while singing in the studio might seem glamorous, it is definitely hard work. Even as a former talent booking agent with the William Morris Agency, I continued and still do, singing in the studio. I have to admit, though, that I absolutely love session work and accomplishing the task at hand no matter how difficult or challenging the particular session might be. Anyone who sings professionally and states otherwise, is either lying, or plain doesn't have enough work or has a bad attitude or both. As founder of ReelMusician.com, I have had the opportunity to work with singers and get them geared up and ready to go into commercial singing work and I believe that I have enjoyed that as about as much as session work if not more. Seeing singers who have a dream and want to make it happen, and then help them make it happen is incredibly rewarding. With that, I would like to take a few minutes and discuss the successful studio singer and how you might take your talent and dream and enter the field.

You heard me correct. You take your dream and enter the field as a valid and credible studio singing source for multiple producers and session work. Just how will you go about that? - Great question. Let's spend a few minutes looking at some ideas and concepts to get you on the road to success and get you into the studio as a professional studio singer.

Singing talent is obviously at the top of the list, but let's spend a few minutes talking about vocal qualities. There are a number of different types of singers - the blender who sings on a variety of session work, but doesn't sing on that many lead spots. Those are usually reserved for more gritty and husky singers who can carry the lead. Then you have the husky or gritty singer who is asked on occasion to sing in a group sing to give the group a little more bite. This singer usually sings on quite a few leads that are up in your face commercials and backup vocals that require a big sound. There are also a core of what I call specialty singers who don't fit either just discussed and tend to be very unique and used on very specific spots and background vocals. Neither of the singers I've just described is any better than the other in terms of work, they are just called on for different session work. Where do you fit in? You need to get that figured out along with your degree of giftedness. Just be honest - studio singing isn't for everyone, no matter how much they want it. But I would guess that there is more opportunity out there for a lot of singers if they chose to go after their dream.

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In order to attempt to get into studio singing you are going to have to have a few key items in place - namely a good deal of practice, an incredible demo, and a follow up with great people skills. Most artistic individuals I know usually have fairly good people skills counting out those who either know it all or those with a bad attitude. I'm guessing you have fairly good people skills, will probably need a little help in being consistent with your follow up and will need an incredible demo tape. At ReelMusician.com we specialize in singer's demos and specifically those wishing to enter the jingle singing market. You'd be surprised at the demos we receive on a regular basis that are not up to par. I've stated in other articles, that your demo has to sound like you've already arrived on the singing scene with numerous credits. It is our experience that most don't have a real clue as to how to write and market their voice to compile a singing demo tape that will actually get listened to and if it does, won't garnish the work that they are looking for. There are a number of reasons for this, but in the simplest of terms, there is too much competition out there to be dealing with fairly good or even pretty good demos - they have to say the word "Incredible." For any questions on this at all, please don't

hesitate to contact us at ReelMusician.com for further advice, articles or just to just plain ask us a question. We're more than happy to answer any questions you might have. Our goal is to help singers make their singing dreams and careers come true.

Now starting with the assumption that you have credible singing talent, are practicing everyday, are either working on or are preparing to have an incredible jingle or session singer reel written specifically for your voice, and are ready to take the plunge into the session singing world, I will give you some ideas and tips to get you motivated and hopefully moving towards a rewarding career as a successful studio singer.

Once you have your incredible jingle reel in hand, marketing will be key. You will want to submit your reel to jingle producers in your area, various industrial music houses, and general music production companies. You will want to get to know other jingle and session singers in your area and genuinely get to know them and hand off a reel - keeping in mind that you will want to hand off reels to other singers that you are not in direct competition with. Your follow up with these individuals will be key. Stay in touch with email, letters, birthday notes, etc and keep all of your potential singing clients in the fold. Make sure that you have a follow up reel within a short period of time. You will want to cross the desk of certain producers a couple of times to reacquaint yourself to them. Keep detailed records of who you talk to, when, contact numbers and any misc information. In time, with the right singing reel and follow up, you should start bringing home some singing work. As time grows, so should your reputation and work. In closing, if you will stay focused with a great attitude and voice supported by an incredible jingle reel, you should be well on your way to a successful studio singing career!

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e-books "The Jingle Singer's Guide," and "Secrets To Great Song Demos," may be downloaded at <http://www.ReelMusician.com>

## **What is pitch correction? – Can singers actually sing anymore?**

**By Michael Oliphant**

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Not all that long ago, record producers and engineers used to spend long hours with singers in the studio making sure that they got the best possible take of their performance. It was very important to make sure that the singer sang everything in tune and that there was no 'pitchiness' or parts of the melody that were sung a little flat or sharp. This was critical for it meant that when it came time to mix the track, there was simply no way to correct a performance for pitch.

This all changed with the invention of pitch correction software. Most studio recordings these days are done on what is known as a 'DAW'. This stands for Digital Audio Workstation and has become the standard throughout the music industry replacing tape based multitrack machines. Because the process is entirely digital it means that the recorded audio can be processed in ways that most musicians never even dreamed of in years passed.

Remember when Cher had a huge hit with a song called 'Believe'? That strange warbling effect on the vocal is actually created by the pitch correction software. Someone discovered that by setting it to over-correct it would actually produce a pleasing effect. Like all these things it has been over-used since by many artists.

Pitch correction works by analysing the audio and resampling it back to correct pitch. It operates in real time which means that a studio engineer can apply pitch correction to a vocal where and when it is needed. Many regard pitch correction as a lifesaver in the studio. Singers often feel relieved that a great performance need not be erased and redone simply because one or two notes may have been a little flat or sharp. Studios often see it as a great time saver as it reduces the need to record many takes in the hope of getting a performance that is completely in key.

There is however, a downside to all this. Many studio producers now argue that singers have become overly reliant on this technology and have almost forgotten one of the most basic requirements of great singing– singing in key.

Can you tell when pitch correction has been used on a singer in a recording? The software is now so good that, in experienced hands, it is nearly impossible to tell when it is used subtly. Many vocal

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recordings made these days on current cd's use some form of pitch correction. Does that surprise you? From the singer's perspective it is a very seductive technology. It can certainly make a "pitchy" singer sound very much in key without revealing any lack of ability in that area.

We have become so used to the effect of technology on our music that much of this technological innovation becomes the norm in a very short while. Remember a band called Milli Vanilli? They became the laughing stock of the music business and ended their careers when it was discovered that they had not even sung on their own recordings! Yet we seem completely comfortable now with the idea that singers don't need to be able to sing in tune when they record.

The funny thing is that singing in key is just a learned technique like most other musical skills. It requires practice and solid singing technique but there are few people who cannot do it at all. Singing in a recording studio can be an unnerving experience for the first timer. The studio environment is designed to reveal all the nuance of the human voice and can tax even an accomplished singer at times.

Pitch correction is one of the most practical and useful tools in recording today but remember that it won't make you a great singer. Only you can do that.

Michael Oliphant is a successful musician, producer, songwriter and web developer. He is co-producer of Explore Your Voice, the innovative and successful online singing course that streams to your pc. When not drinking coffee in cafes around St Kilda Australia he can be found as part of the team at <http://www.freeonlinesingingmagazine> <http://www.exploreyourvoice.com> Singing lessons online

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