

By Rick Rose

# How To Sell Your Songs in Nashville

Well aspiring songwriters, here we go, put your seatbelts on. When I met my manager for the first time about eight years ago in New York City he made me understand this business. Dee Anthony, who represented such acts as: Peter Dinklage, Tony Bennett, Joe Cocker, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Jethro Tull, Gary Wright and many other very successful bands educated me quickly.

**PERSISTENCE, TENACITY AND RESILIENCE**, is what he said. You have to be committed and stick to it, it's not a hobby, pastime or fantasy, it's reality and it's your life. You have to ask yourself is this what I want to do for the rest of my life? If you think you can run a Dry Cleaning Place and write a song every once in a while, it's the wrong business for you. There's also going to be a great deal of knowledge to grasp and hold on to — remember, it's a people's business, and you will have to understand that your talent and life will be under scrutiny and always under a huge microscope. Always look at it like you are training for the Olympics and your gonna have to know how to bounce back in the roughest of times. There will be times when family and friends might think you're crazy chasing a dream but stay focused.

**NASHVILLE IS KNOWN AS THE LAND OF A MILLION SONGS.** The songwriters circle is great, they're like neighbours, very honest and extremely humble and there's never a lull in conversation — remember, it's story town. At first it was one of the scariest things in my life that I did. I went to unknown turf to see what I'm made of. After a few weeks I made the rounds to the songwriters clubs and eventually got signed to Sony Tree Publishing after I did a six-song audition for Country Hall of Fame songwriter Bobby Braddock at the Sony Studios.

The **CREATIVE PROCESS** requires you to be organized and very self motivated. You have to be prepared when you walk into a writing session, if you're having trouble paying the hydro bill that month, figure a way not to bring it into the session. I recommend to write every idea down, read books, watch movies, travel, listen closely when people speak and just be very alert. Write all titles, story lines and phrases down and keep music ideas on an organized tape that's labelled so you know where everything is.

**NETWORKING** is extremely important, when you meet writers and producers in Nashville remember that this is their life, not



a hobby, so in conversations make sure you stay focused on what you came there for. I've been fortunate to converse and work with some of the greats such as Desmond Child, Barbara Mandrell and Bobby Braddock and they all say the same thing, you've got to stay focused and keep learning. Never think you have enough ideas, just keep writing and re-writing.

Inside the **PUBLISHING WORLD** it's a different animal altogether, my job as a staff writer is to write songs that will make it onto big stars' CDs and hopefully sell millions of copies and chart high. It's business they're into to make money for the company. I'm assigned a personal song plugger and he or she will work closely on building my catalogue and steer me in the direction that I should be writing. When I turn a work tape in I will be informed who it's pitchable to and then do a strong demo to convince the artist that this is "their" song. There might be two or three re-writes and even other songwriters brought in to help finish the song. It's an open concept and you have to be willing and able to deal with guidance all the way through.

Nashville is a town of **LOYALTY AND INTEGRITY**, so if you think you have to change your style to fit into the club, don't — it's a quick way to be asked out of town. Don't dare be phoney, it won't last long. What you are is what your are. I come from the Mellencamp/Springsteen school of writing and it's accepted by Music Row's way of thinking 'cause it's rural enough. I write

with a lot of the great writers over at Sony Tree and the beauty of collaborating is when I amalgamate my style with some of the hard core country writers or the gospel/pop and Music Shoals guys. We come up with very interesting commercial songs. Develop friendships — remember it's a lifestyle down there, you live it. I'm still on the road a fair amount and I just finished some dates with Sawyer Brown and Barbara Mandrell. But when I'm off the road, I'm there in Music Row taking meetings, writing sessions, recording and performing in the songwriter clubs. My last major cut was for the Orion film *Rude Awakening*. I wrote the theme songs for the movie with Paul A. Rothchild and Jim Steinman and sung by Bill Medley. That opened a lot of doors and made me realize I love the songwriting world.

**SOCIETY AND TECHNOLOGY** are rapidly growing. But there's one thing the computer will never figure out how to do. So we as songwriters still have one of the only human element professions left and that is why we try to reach people with words and music.

*CANADIAN SONGWRITER/ARTIST Rick Rose is a staff writer for Sony Tree, Nashville and has worked with Sawyer Brown and Barbara Mandrell and scored the movie theme song for the Orion release "Rude Awakening".*

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