

# 40 Ways To Make Money As A Musician

[www.jamesdivine.net](http://www.jamesdivine.net)



# **40 Ways To Make Money As A Musician**

## **By James Divine**

## Introduction

It's more difficult than ever to make money in the music field, but difficult doesn't mean impossible! There are also many more opportunities than ever before. Who knew 20 years ago that for a few dollars, you could make your music available all over the world?

I've been in this business for three decades as a performer, teacher, entrepreneur, author, educator, speaker and lecturer. It's the only career I've had and I love it!

There once was a time where you could make a living as a full time performer. A few made it through the ranks and were sponsored by a record label. Many made it on their own through intensive networking or by getting a gig as part of a "house band."

You still can make it as a full time performer today. However, realistically, **you are more likely to make it as a musician if you have several streams of income.**

Some of the items in this book will be obvious. They are all meant to be adapted to fit YOU. Some can be done full time; most are suited to just part time.

Each idea concludes with three sections:



1) Real Life: A realistic expectation of what this idea can generate in cash. It may also list the realities of what I have made doing this or what I have seen others make.

2) Take it to the next level: Some outside the box thinking in relation to this idea.

3) Skills you'll need: What you should have at least an average knowledge about to implement this idea. I've also included some things that would be more temperament or personality related here.

This book is not meant to be an all-inclusive list. There should be many ideas that fit your personality. Try them. See what works.

Very few people get to do what they love to do. You are one of them.

Happy Music Making,

James Divine

[www.jamesdivine.net](http://www.jamesdivine.net)

Also by James Divine

*The Saxophone Diaries – Stories and tips from my 30 years in music*

*Forgive: One man's story of being molested...and God's redemption.*

*Go Ahead, Make My Day: 39 Ways to Make Someone's Day*

*A Stroke of Bad Luck*

Available on amazon.com or at [www.jamesdivine.net](http://www.jamesdivine.net)

## 1. Perform

Well James, thanks for starting with the obvious. But is it really obvious?

We think of a concert tour set up by a record label. All the details are handled by someone else. We sit around waiting for someone to hire us.

How about organizing your own tour? If you are great at marketing – maybe your day job involves marketing for a business – you might rent the performance facility yourself, sell tickets, collect money and keep all the profits.

Start small at a local venue with just one performance and build from there. There will be some risk of capital, but the gain could be huge. When you have some success, you might work towards longer tours.

Real Life: You'll need to put up about \$200-\$500 of your own money to secure rental of the facility. However, try to work out a deal with the venue owner to work on a percentage basis.

Facility rental	-\$500
Sell 100 tickets @ \$10 each	+\$1,000
Advertising	-\$200
CD/Product sales	+\$300

Profit

\$600

10 concerts a year = \$6,000 in profit

Take it to the next level:

- Offer a free CD to the first 50 ticket buyers
- Bring other musicians into the line-up
- Pitch your music and products during the performance
- Ask for song requests preceding the concert
- Use your church as the venue (maybe for free).

Skills you'll need: marketing, sales, some accounting, outgoing personality (or someone in your group who is outgoing and can promote the ticket sales)

## 2. Give Lessons

“Thanks for another obvious one, James! Everybody knows that you can give lessons.” But not everyone thinks outside the box about giving lessons! I know people who are great at giving lessons, but have no students. On the other hand, I have several high school students who are making their pocket money giving lessons after following my suggestions and utilizing their network.

Don't just send flyers. To be honest, when I receive unsolicited fliers from someone I don't know, they usually go right into the trash (ok, the recyclable bin). Try making a connection with music stores in your area. They often have a referral list. Don't just mail a flyer, deliver one in person. Get to know the teacher.

Treat lessons as a **business**. Ask for payment for the full month at the first lesson of the month. Get a Square or PayPal account to accept payments. Develop a lesson cancellation policy.

Real Life: Easily earn \$25-\$40 per hour or more. Ten lessons a week can net \$300/week, \$15,000/year.

Take it to the next level:

- Offer to travel TO the student. Do this at a discounted price if you are young and inexperienced. Charge a



premium if you are more experienced.

- Try group lessons (works really well for guitar). This can significantly increase the amount you can make per lesson.

Skills you'll need: work well with all ability levels; patience; organized (keep track of calendar)

### **3. Be a part-time music minister**

Many churches have someone on staff full time who is responsible for leading the choir, leading worship services, creating arrangements for the orchestra, coaching performers and many other tasks. However, many churches cannot afford someone full time and are looking for a part time person. The time commitment is usually about 8-10 hours a week.

Real Life: Earn anywhere from \$50 to \$500 per week doing this part time.

Take it to the next level: You might be able to do this for several churches. Many churches now have services at non-traditional days/times. For example, I once applied to be the Generation X worship leader for a Saturday evening service. I had to turn it down as I was gone too many Saturdays. A position like that could be combined with another church that meets on Sundays.

Skills you'll need: patience to work with volunteer musicians, some teaching ability, you will need to be in agreement with the beliefs and lifestyle of that particular church/denomination.

#### **4. Be a street songwriter**

I was on the 16<sup>th</sup> Street pedestrian mall in Denver, Colorado with my wife when we passed a lady sitting in a chair with an old-fashioned typewriter in her lap. She was writing poetry on demand for \$5 on any subject.

Some of you are good enough songwriters that you could do this with a guitar, a digital recorder and a laptop. Offer to compose a song for anyone on any topic. Offer several styles that you are comfortable composing in (it would be the rare bird that could do it in “any” style). Create the song, record it on the digital recorder, and dump it onto a CD that they can take immediately with them.

Real Life: You could charge \$10-\$25 for this. In most areas, it would be seasonal. You may need to get some type of business permit in some areas. On a nice day in an area with lots of foot traffic, you could reasonably sell 10 of these in an eight hour period, \$100-\$250 for the days work.

Take it to the next level:

- Capture your customer's email address
- Offer this same service on your website
- Upsell: The plain CD might be \$15, a nice looking color package \$30, a web page devoted to the person the CD is about might be \$100, with downloads of the song available (if you already have a website, it would

be pretty easy to do...for example  
www.jamesdivine.net/janedoe might be the page).

Skills you'll need: composing, a good voice, and some  
technical know-how

## **5. Serenade**

You've seen the romantic scenes where the in love young man serenades his sweetheart from the ground floor while she is ensconced in the balcony.

How about a serenade of whatever your "instrument" is. The most "sexy" of instruments for this idea would be guitar, vocals and/or saxophone, but probably almost any instrument would work (although I do find it hard to picture the drum set being a good choice, but hey, give it a try).

This serenade could be advertised for holidays like Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, but could be available all the time for anniversaries and such.

**Real Life:** Earn \$50 to \$100 per serenade

Take it to the next level: Offer a custom made CD of the songs you used for the serenade at a premium. Make sure to follow copyright laws for cover songs.

**Skills you'll need:** Great stage presence, ability to set-up quickly, ability to learn special request songs.

## **6. Perform at nursing homes/retirement centers**

Don't knock this one before trying it. Some retirement centers DO have a budget for entertainers and are willing to bring in quality performers – usually solo – to come in regularly. Ask to speak to the activities director. Be persistent, but also realize some places have no budget.

You won't get rich doing this, but you will touch many people's lives. I had one regular monthly gig I did for four years for \$100 each time. I raised my rates and they weren't willing to pay my new rate.

Sorry, probably not the venue for Screamo bands, but wait 50 years and try again.

Real Life: Perform at 1-3 of these a month for yearly earnings of \$1200-\$3600 per year. Do you live in a very large metro area? You might be able to work this into a full-time gig. You would need 20-25 places that were willing to bring you in monthly.

Take it to the next level:

- Take song requests from the residents.
- Write out a program.
- Have your CD available for sale.
- Give your CD away.
- Talk to the residents before and after you perform.



Many of them have some interesting stories. Don't know what to say. Start with, "Have you ever played an instrument?"

Skills you'll need: Be entertaining and sociable.

## 7. Record in a very niched market

I read about one guy who records old church songs (hymns) on guitar. I believe he also sings. There are literally thousands of these songs. He records a song a week, offers it on iTunes and **sells enough to make a living doing that.** He probably has developed quite an email list.

Real Life: It would probably be hard to earn a living doing this, but suppose you had a mailing list of 10,000 raving fans and one in a hundred bought your iTunes release each week? You would earn 70 cents/download x 100 downloads = \$70/week \$3500/year. If one in ten bought your new release you would earn \$35,000/year.

Take it to the next level: Take requests from your fans or have them vote on the next song you are going to record.

Skills you'll need: Computer knowledge, a large fan base, and a niche market you are a part of.

## **8. Start a music program at a school that has none**

I perform frequently in small towns. When people find out my full time job is as a public school music teacher, they often ask something like...

“ Do you know of any music teachers looking for a job? We got rid of our music program because we could not find a qualified music teacher.”

Then a month later I'll be talking to some young prospective music teachers, and they say,

“Do you know of any music teaching jobs? We can't seem to find any.”

After many similar conversations, a light bulb went on in my head.

What if these young music educators submitted a proposal to the school board? Could it be feasible that a teacher could contract into one school district at 60% pay for a 50% job and do that at a second school, thus earning 120% of what most music teachers in their area make? Yes, it's very feasible! And many smaller school districts would be willing to be flexible with the schedule.

Maybe you teach Monday and Tuesday at the first school,

Wednesday and Thursday at the second, and have Fridays off to gig. Maybe you are a stay at home mom or dad and working 8am-11am would be perfect for you.

You may not even need a teaching license. I started my teaching career at a private school that did not require me to have a teaching license.

Think outside the box!

Real Life: There are often several layers of bureaucracy in public schools. You may have to peel away these layers and be persistent.

Take it to the next level: Think outside the box. Are you a guitar teacher? Maybe you bring in guitars twice a week to several schools.

Skills you'll need: Ability to teach music (not everyone who can play can teach), persistence, and consistent schedule.

## 9. Play in upper scale restaurants

If you have an eight-piece rock band, this might be difficult to do, but how about an acoustic scaled down version of your band?

When I was a teenager, I worked in a 5-star restaurant in the kitchen (then later in my career, I had to walk **through** a lot of kitchens...what is it about banquet settings that they don't want to see the musicians until they perform).

Every Friday and Saturday night, we had a guitar player who would go around to the tables and play for tips. He averaged over \$100 in tips each evening **in the early 1980s!** He had a full time job teaching guitar at the local community college.

Real Life: \$50-\$200 per evening, 1-2 evenings a month, \$2,000/year

Take it to the next level:

- Sell CDs using the CD Seller (see resources in the appendix.
- Have a flyer/business cards available. You may see some follow up wedding and party opportunities.

Skills you'll need: Large repertoire of music, preferably memorized; ability to fade into the background.

## **10. Run a recording studio**

You can do as much in a small home studio for a few thousand dollars as what you could do in a professional studio 30 years ago. You've invested tons of money in recording gear. Why not record for other musicians?

Real Life: \$50/hour, 20 hours per month; \$9,000-\$12,000 per year

Take it to the next level:

- Rather than rent by the hour, offer a package deal
  - Record for one hour
  - Mix down and create master
  - Help get onto iTunes
  - \$100
- Offer a “vanity” CD package: Record, mix and create 50 CDs for \$500. Great for those who “always wanted to be in the music field” or who want to create a CD for friends and family.

Skills you'll need: Recording knowledge, familiarity with CD Baby/iTunes.



## 11. Join the military band

I did this full time from 1986-1996. I got paid to practice, perform and tour the world! It's a great career field. Did you know you can also do this part-time? Just about every state has a National Guard band that meets one weekend a month and does a two-week summer tour. I did that from 1996-2006 and retired from it. When I'm 60, I will collect a small pension **from a part time job!**

Real Life:

- You have to audition
- Basic training is involved (think of it as getting paid to get in shape)
- Although 80% of your job will involve music, you're still in the military. You train for and sometimes get called up for other duties.
- Part-time as a National Guard member you can earn \$3,000-\$8,000/year. Full time \$30,000-\$80,000/year.

Take it to the next level: The "special" bands, like "Pershing's Own", a marine corps band in Washington D.C., focus exclusively on music. They usually require a performance degree to make it into the few openings per year.

Skills you'll need: Professional level of playing, be between the ages of 18 and 32 when joining, decent fitness

level, not be overweight.

## **12. Compose music for podcasters**

Do you know what a podcast is? It's basically a radio show that can be downloaded on the Internet or through iTunes rather than played on a radio station.

The best podcasts are formatted just like a radio show with theme music, transition music, and even music for special effects/events. There is an increasing demand for this type of music.

Real Life: Probably not a ton of money to be made here, but it could be great "exposure" (I hate that word). You might charge \$100 to create original music that the podcaster then owns.

Take it to the next level:

- Keep your price low, but work out a deal where every so often, the podcaster gives you a commercial to promote your products or services.
- Maybe you could offer to produce the podcast itself. If you have some decent recording equipment, you might have them send you their digital podcast voice recording, then you edit, add transitions, boost the level, etc. for a fee.

Skills you'll need: be able to play a variety of styles, familiarity with technology like wav and mp3 files.

### **13. Become an impersonator**

Do you look and sound like Elvis Presley? Can you bend notes like Billie Holiday? Maybe you can become an impersonator.

I know it sounds cheesy, but if you enjoy the music of the person you're impersonating AND it provides some money to pursue other musical avenues, perhaps it could be the thing for you.

Real Life: Probably works better in larger cities. You may have many empty dates on your calendar. Realistic pay might be \$300-\$500 per gig.

Take it to the next level:

- Go all out with costumes, mannerisms, personality etc.
- Do radio interviews as the "person", even responding to questions as if you ARE the person.
- Create a whole product line available on your website: t-shirts, CDs, mugs etc.

Skills you'll need: Ability to look and sound like the one you're impersonating; a 1-4 hour repertoire of songs; outgoing, fun personality.

## **14. Work as a DJ**

Hey you've got the sound equipment already, you are performing at a wedding ceremony and you've got an iPod or laptop computer. Why not rake in some extra bucks as the DJ too? I recently raised my price for live music at a wedding, but I provide music for the ceremony, for the dinner AND as a DJ at the reception with a combination of live sax music and pre-recorded songs. I simply ask the prospective bride and groom for a list of songs that they would like to have and order those on iTunes. I make sure to provide a mic for announcements.

Real Life: \$700 for an entire wedding package; 10/year equals \$7,000.

Take it to the next level:

- Offer your CD as a premium to the package as party favors (\$5-\$8 per CD).
- Make a personalized CD for the bride and groom of the songs they requested for the first dance, groom's mother's dance, etc.

Skills you'll need: organized; outgoing personality; take-charge mentality if things aren't progressing at the reception; flexibility (I once provided 45 minutes of "pre-music" before the ceremony when we had agreed on 15-20).

## **15. Compose music for video games**

I'll admit that this is an area I am not very familiar with, but some of the teens I have taught tell me that there are composing possibilities for video game music.

Real Life: Probably hard to get into this. Connections in the gaming industry would help. Try to keep the rights to your music if possible.

Take it to the next level: Work out a deal that – rather than a flat rate to compose the music, you receive a pre-arranged amount per game sold. Game goes big, you earn a lot and maybe you can release a CD with the game music, the full, uncut version.

Skills you'll need: Probably need to be well versed in electronic music for this one. Also an ability to shape the music to the action.

## **16. Write a book**

Technically this isn't music related, but if you have in depth knowledge of the music field, technical expertise in a certain area, or just a fascinating story of how you were born at the South Pole, your parents put a tuba to your lips when you were two, and it froze there for the next twenty years, and that's how you became a world class tuba player!

@TheRobertD (it's a twitter thing) says that most people overestimate what they can do in 5 years and underestimate what they can do in 15 minutes. All of my books were written in 15 minutes a day over several months.

With createspace.com and Kindle Publishing direct, the cost to publish a book is very low.

Real Life: An eBook can be free to publish on amazon while a "real" book will cost you about \$3-\$5. You can sell a real book for \$10-\$20. However to sell a book, you need a platform. If you write it, they won't come! What do I mean by a platform? If you are gigging regularly, that's a platform. If you speak about your life, that's a platform.

Take it to the next level: Combine your book skills with your performing skills. This is what I do now; I share my story in a concert setting and sell my books and CDs as a



package deal.

Skills you'll need: Some editing skills; knowledge of online technologies and systems. A tough outer shell when you ask your 300 Italian relatives to buy your book, and only your mom and grandma buy it.

## **17. Substitute teaching**

As a full time teacher, I want to scream whenever I hear someone debating the problems in our education system and they say something like, “We all wish we had jobs that were from 9-3.” The truth of the matter is that all music teachers only work half-time, and the other 12 hours we can do whatever we want.

Seriously, music teachers and teachers in general are a hard-working bunch. A short week for me is 47-50 hours. Many marching band weeks are 60-70 hours, but I LOVE what I do.

Substitute teachers are also hard working. However, they typically get to leave when school is over. If you find you enjoy it and you are qualified in music, you’ll be able to work as little or as much as you want.

That’s the other advantage...it’s highly flexible. Only want to work Wednesdays and Thursdays? No problem.

Substitute teaching can often lead to a full time job if that’s what you want.

Real Life: Earn about \$80-\$120/day for 7 hours. In some schools, you will need to get a special substitute certification.

Take it to the next level: If you like subbing but only want to sub in music classes, send a note to the music teachers expressing your availability and your qualifications in music. Develop a relationship with them.

Skills you'll need:

- Ability to teach
- Willing to step outside your comfort zone (one day you may have an almost professional level orchestra, the next day you may be singing *Ring Around The Rosy* with 1<sup>st</sup> graders)
- Flexibility, teachers usually have a planning period. However, during the plan, you may be called on to substitute in another class, monitor the lunchroom, or something else unrelated to music.

## **18. Start a camp or summer program**

I ran a jazz camp for about seven years. I charged \$100 for the week and usually had 10-15 kids sign up. I was able to “rent” my band room for free, created a fun and varied curriculum around playing jazz, improvisation and jazz history, interspersed some fun activities like kickball and incorporated a snack time. Camp was from 9-noon. On Friday evening, we put on a performance for the parents. The kids loved it! I loved it! The parents loved it!

Real Life: \$1,000/week, 2-3 weeks per year

Take it to the next level: Hold a camp whenever school is out. The theme can be almost anything: composition, guitar, or even a full band. A director I know used to have a summer band of 100+ kids he called “The World’s Most Dangerous Summer Band.”

Skills you’ll need: Organized, fun personality; ability to keep things fast paced, especially if teaching kids.

## **19. Be a street performer**

You won't get rich doing this, but it can be a lot of fun and a chance to practice your new show or new music.

I've heard of certain street performers in NYC earning upwards of \$35,000/year. However, that's NYC and it's only in certain prime spots. Try to even find a rental in NYC at that wage and you will see it's not that great. (As a comparison, I saw an ad for a middle school teacher in NYC that advertised a salary of \$120,000).

Make sure you follow all local laws and permit requirements.

Real Life: Whenever I have done this, I have averaged \$10-\$12 an hour in tips. It didn't seem to matter how many people were in the performing group. With a sax quartet, we averaged \$40/hour, but once we divided it up, it came to \$10/hour/person.

Take it to the next level: Have your CDs available for purchase with the CD Seller (see appendix).

Skills you'll need: lack of embarrassment, large repertoire, and ability to have fun with the audience.

## **20. Sell used instruments part time**

Once you have been in the music business awhile, you start being able to recognize great deals on used instruments. If you have a little repair knowledge, you may even be able to purchase instruments on the cheap. You can then resell them on eBay, craigslist, or at your local flea market. Maybe you can be a regular at the flea market. Some markets have permanent buildings you can rent out on a monthly basis.

Real Life: Try to get instruments very cheaply. You have to look around carefully in the paper, on craigslist and at flea markets. Be patient. Have cash. Cash is a great negotiating tool when someone is motivated to get rid of something.

Take it to the next level: Offer two free lessons when someone buys an instrument.

Skills you'll need: ability to see a bargain, some instrument repair skills, and patience



## **21. Become a booking agent for a club that has a lot of musical guests.**

Who better to know the local music scene than a local musician? A club that brings in a lot of guests will have a need for someone to help schedule those artists. Make sure to schedule yourself too, maybe you are the house band one night a week.

Real Life: 20% of the payment

Take it to the next level: Make sure to book quality groups. Your reputation is on the line. Think of ways to promote events on nights that are usually not busy. Maybe you host a battle of the bands. The winner gets booked for a paid gig.

Skills you'll need: Knowledge of the local music scene and prevailing rates; good organization skills; good business and contract sense.

## **22. Play on a cruise ship**

You may have seen these ads looking for entertainment on a cruise ship. Most of them are legit. Cruise ships have a need for a wide variety of entertainers, from members of a big swing band to solo instrumentalists/singers who can sing in a coffee house setting. A friend of mine did this for about a year.

Real Life: Earn \$2,000-\$3,000/month or more, with room and board included. Probably not recommended for those with families since you can expect to be gone for months at a time.

Take it to the next level: Do you have your own successful act? Pitch it to a cruise line and see if they will pick you up.

Skills you'll need: It helps to be versatile. A bassoonist would probably have a hard time getting a gig like this, but a bassoonist who doubles on sax and clarinet, can sing back-up vocals, and has performed in a number of secondary roles in Broadway shows probably has a better chance.

## **23. Music Therapy**

There's the real music therapy, which requires a specific degree program and certification, and then there's therapeutic music. A friend of mine specializes in drum circles and how they calm aggressive and hyperactive boys that are incarcerated.

Real Life: Highly specialized field. Many people may want to see your certification.

Take it to the next level: How about music for pets, or music lessons specializing in children with Down's syndrome, or music lessons for moms and their babies, or...

Skills you'll need: Ability to think outside the box, creativity, good marketing skills (define the benefits).

## **24. Create an instructional DVD**

This is a growing area in the field of music. Start by creating free instructional videos and posting them on YouTube or a similar platform. Offer your DVD or – better yet – video course. You can offer it on the Udemy platform or something similar.

If most of your marketing will be via YouTube, focus on the online video course platforms. This will keep your initial costs low.

Make sure you shoot good quality video. The hardest thing these days is to capture great audio. You can either use an external mic or record the audio digitally and then bring the video and audio together in an editing program.

Real Life: Charge \$20 or more for an instructional DVD; cost is approximately \$3.

Take it to the next level: Offer various “levels” of product: Free YouTube videos, \$20 DVD, \$200 in depth course.

Skills you’ll need: Some video editing skills, good marketing skills.

## **25. Perform house concerts**

A house concert is basically a concert in which the venue is someone's home. The homeowner books you, sells the tickets (or pays the cost himself), sets up, invites people and does the cleanup.

I have done several of these. They can be a blast. They are way more intimate than a regular concert and offer an opportunity to really interact with the audience.

Real Life: You won't make huge money at these, maybe \$300-\$500. Many performers do them on their way to other gigs or the night before and after a major gig they have traveled to.

Take it to the next level: Upsell by offering a discounted price for the purchase of bulk CD orders in advance. Sign the CDs. Make sure that you invite those attending to host their own house concert sometime during your program.

Skills you'll need: Great audience interaction. A show that can fit into someone's living room.

## **26. Be a tour organizer**

When a group becomes famous or semi-famous and are traveling a lot, they are going to need someone to handle the details of the tour: book hotel rooms, flights; make sure there is plenty of product to sell; arrive to the venue early and check on details of the sound system, product table, etc.

These are all things you probably already do for your own tours; it would just be on a bigger scale.

Real Life: May interfere with your own gigs.

Take it to the next level: Be the advance person AND the opening act for a bigger name group.

Skills you'll need: Great organization skills.

## **27. Sell merchandise**

I haven't listed an obvious idea for a while, but you would be surprised how many musicians I know who don't have any CD or other merchandise to sell. In this day and age, there's no reason for you to not have a CD. You can make your first 50 copies – including recording – for under \$500. Don't have that money? Deliver pizzas for a week or use some sort of crowd funding to get the project off the ground.

Real Life: A CD and DVD each cost me about \$3. I sell my CDs for \$15 and DVDs for \$20. I've experimented with the price of the CDs between \$5 and \$15 and there is almost no difference, although sales start to drop above \$15.

Take it to the next level: Offer package deals. For example, I offer a book/CD combo for \$20. Separately the CD is \$15 and the book \$15. Almost everybody takes the combo. Other products you might sell, depending on your group and audience: t-shirts, sheet music, books, pictures (signed and framed).

Skills you'll need: Think creatively. Be willing to try something new at a minimal investment.

## **28. Live online shows**

For these shows, you advertise and promote a live concert from your living room, studio or even in the woods. People pay in advance whatever you decide to charge.

I haven't tried this so I can't say how well it would do.

Real Life: I personally would have a hard time being willing to pay for a streaming concert. The ones I have seen for free have been poor audio and video quality.

Take it to the next level: Offer the live version for free and sell copies of a DVD you make during the live show. This could work if you have an exceptionally big mailing list.

Skills you'll need: Tech savvy.



## **29. Be a sound engineer/expert**

Are you one of those band members who knows a lot about sound? Maybe you have your own equipment? How about renting your expertise out to other bands/groups?

This might be a one time thing where you teach someone how to run the band's soundboard, you could be their "full time" sound guy, or you might even rent your expertise out to a church, school or business that is setting up a new sound system.

Real Life: Charge \$50/hour to consult. Charge a \$100 flat fee for a concert or live music setting.

Take it to the next level: Rent out your own gear and expertise. Contract this out by the gig, maybe \$300 for up to three hours. Create sound training videos on Udemy or another platform.

Skills you'll need: Expertise in sound. The latest equipment.

### **30. Perform with a small, regional orchestra**

Many performers have their sights on being in the Chicago symphony or another group of that caliber. Keep your sights there, but also look around. There are many smaller regional orchestras that contract out musicians for their performances.

Real Life: It depends on the size and budget of the group, as well as how many performances they schedule. You can make anywhere from \$500 to \$18,000 a year.

Take it to the next level: Some of these smaller orchestras also have a part time admin or businessperson. If you have skills in those areas, you might string together a playing and admin position. Sometimes the admin positions pay more than the music positions.

Skills you'll need: Great chops and sight-reading skills.

### **31. Work at a music store**

Depending on the size of the music store, there are a variety of jobs available – full and part-time. Many of these allow you to specialize. For example, if you are a guitar player, you may be able to be the guitar expert for sales. These sales may also lead to lesson opportunities.

Many stores also have an outside sales rep, someone who visits school music teachers, delivers music, picks up instruments that need repair, etc.

Real Life: These jobs often don't pay huge amounts. Many might be on a commission basis. If you are a good salesperson, you will actually prefer to be paid on a commission.

Take it to the next level: Are you out of work and need a job? If there is a music store that doesn't already have an outside sales person, maybe you can propose an arrangement where you work as their rep at no cost to them, but they pay you a percentage of business you bring in.

Skills you'll need: Good customer relation skills.

## **32. Become a public speaker**

This is actually what I do now. I have several different presentations in which I incorporate music.

If you are an expert in a certain niche, this may not be as difficult as it seems. Do you have recording knowledge? Have you sold thousands of CDs on iTunes? Did you start a music program from scratch? Then you are an expert.

Real Life: You can realistically earn \$500+ for a good presentation. Once you have created a GREAT presentation and become better known, earnings are possible in the \$2,000-\$5,000+ range.

Take it to the next level: Put on your own seminar. Partner with a music store that has a stage and either charge admission or have something that can be sold. For example, you might put on a free guitar workshop, but then offer your DVDs for sale.

Skills you'll need: Great presentation skills (different than performing skills).

### **33. Make accompanying others your niche**

Mind you, this probably works best for piano and possibly guitar players. There is a huge need for accompanists for solo and ensemble festivals, recitals, even for college auditions. What if you contacted music teachers in your area and let them know of your availability?

Real Life: Usually seasonal, expect to earn \$25-\$50/hour.

Take it to the next level: When accompanying solo and ensemble students, set a flat rate that includes two half hour rehearsals. Have a different rate for harder music at the college and high school level.

Skills you'll need: Ability to adapt to all levels of performers.

### **34. Become a music judge**

I know many retired and former music teachers who are quite busy judging other events now. They have the flexibility to commit to the time required and the experience to do a great job providing feedback.

Real Life: \$200-\$500 a day. This work is often seasonal. One person I know is extremely busy in March and April and then has nothing going on the rest of the year, but he likes it like that.

Take it to the next level: Offer workshops where you pre-judge using the same criteria as the event to help students prepare for the event. Offer yourself as a clinician to work with schools for a fee.

Skills you'll need: Ability to provide positive feedback to help young musicians take it to the next level for them. Extensive experience in the music field.

### **35. Record regularly and post to a YouTube channel**

The number of ways to make money at this is astounding and limited only by your own creativity. There is a band that does nothing but record YouTube videos that have become extremely popular. They are able to make a full time living through ancillary sales of products.

Your video must have a specific purpose and must lead to a possible product sale AND it must be good enough so that the 99 out of 100 that don't buy anything will still like and promote your video.

Real Life: This takes a lot of work! You can't just post a video and HOPE for results.

Take it to the next level: Have multiple products at many price points, from 99 cents to \$100 or more.

Skills you'll need: Marketing, persistence

### **36. Help musicians set-up their own websites**

You have to have a web presence these days! It needs to look professional. It is really inexpensive to start and keep it regularly updated.

When I got my first website back in about 1997 or so, I spent \$200 to get it set-up and it cost me \$75/month. Now a website – including hosting – can be had for about \$20/month.

If you have some web savvy, you can help others set theirs up.

Real Life: These days it would be hard to earn residual income with this as many websites have user-friendly templates and forms that almost anyone can learn. Income would probably be one time and in the range of \$100-\$200.

Take it to the next level: Offer website set-up and maintenance as part of an overall package where you provide business and marketing advice that has worked for you.

Skills you'll need: Tech savvy



### **37. Non-profit sponsorships, i.e. feeding hungry children**

There are non-profits – usually those whose mission is to sponsor children in third world countries – who partner with touring musicians. The non-profit asks the musician to spend a few minutes talking about the kids at the end of their concert to encourage people to sponsor a child. Some non-profits that do this are: Compassion International, Mission of Mercy.

Real Life: Typical amount received for sponsored kids is \$40-\$80. Some musicians have 5, 10 or more kids sponsored at every event.

Take it to the next level: If this ends up working well for you, you might arrange a visit to the project in the home country.

Skills you'll need: Passion for the particular project.

## **38. Karaoke**

James, are you kidding me? No, I'm not. In some locales, karaoke is really big. If you have a sound system and a computer, you can easily host karaoke at parties, proms and other events. You can purchase karaoke background songs on iTunes for about \$1. Just search for the title of the song followed by karaoke.

Real Life: Charge \$200-\$500 for a 3-4 hour party

Take it to the next level: Specialize in a niche, like kids, gospel music, oldies.

Skills you'll need: Ability to draw people out and encourage them to make fools of themselves.

### **39. Make your original song available for streaming**

When I record a new CD, my go to platform for selling it is CD Baby. They handle distribution of the actual CD and make it available on iTunes.

Another option they have – at no extra charge – is to make the song available for streaming on various channels. You earn a steady income with no extra work involved.

Real Life: The earnings are less than 1 cent per download/stream. To make this work, you need to promote it. I currently earn \$5-\$10 a month doing this, but that involves NO work on my part beyond the initial recording. Suppose you earned \$2/month but eventually had 100 songs earning that. If you record one song a week, in two years you would have 100 songs.

Take it to the next level: Make your original song available for use in movies, TV, video games and YouTube videos.

Skills you'll need: Recording

#### **40. Conduct a youth or community orchestra**

Some of these pay little or nothing, but others pay quite well. I currently conduct a youth orchestra that meets one night a week. Some meet on Saturdays. Some meet during the school year only, some all year.

Real Life: Earn anywhere from \$200 to \$1,000/month.

Take it to the next level: Offer camps, workshops and seminars that require an extra fee.

Skills you'll need: Conducting ability and be a good recruiter as you will often be the one to encourage kids to join.

## **41. Perform at Disney or other theme parks**

There aren't very many theme parks that have full time musicians, but there are a few. Disney is one of them. There are many around the country that hire musicians seasonally. Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia is one of them.

Real Life: An audition is required. You often have to re-audition each year to keep your job. The pay at Disney is decent if you are a young musician, but there is no upward mobility; it's set by contract. Working conditions can be hard. You might perform 6-8 times a day in the heat and on your feet.

Take it to the next level: Put together an upbeat, fun entertaining group and see if you can gain a contract at one of these places. This might be easier to do if you already live within commuting distance.

Skills you'll need: Stamina, showmanship

## **42. Transcribe music**

Other musicians often have the need to transpose a part. Some bands don't know how to write music, but they compose their own songs.

That's where you step in. You write out their song using a program like Sibelius and give them the pdf.

Real Life: Make \$5-\$10/page of transposed music. Charge \$100 to write out a band's song.

Take it to the next level: Combine this with other services, like recording, or partner with someone else; charge them a referral fee.

Skills you'll need: Adept at music notation software.

### **43. Record backing tracks**

As much as you may hate the thought of it, a lot of live music these days is done to prerecorded background tracks. Most of my gigs are done with tracks. It allows me to make a decent amount per gig. If I had to share that with three other musicians, none of us would do well.

I personally create my tracks in a program called Band In A Box. If you are good at creating these tracks, you might want to create them for other musicians.

Real Life: Before starting to create my own, I paid a guy at a recording studio about \$200 for each one he helped me to create. It would usually take about four hours.

Take it to the next level: If you retain rights to the track, you might be able to market these to other people, especially if it is a track that will work for a very popular cover tune.

Skills you'll need: Great ears and knowledge of editing and saving electronic files in a synthesizer program.

If you want to make it full time as a musician, the best thing to do is string together several of these ideas that work for you. Here are some examples:

\$1200/month as a church minister of music: \$14,400

12 private students \$50/week: \$28,800

Background music 1x/month @ \$250: \$3,000

Regular gig with rock band 2x/month @\$50: \$1200

TOTAL: \$47,400

\$2,000/month teaching 1/2 time at a school: \$20,000

Perform at 20 fairs in the summer @\$300: \$6,000

Rent out recording studio 10 hours a month @\$50: \$6,000

TOTAL: \$32,000

Serenade 30 people during Valentine's season @\$100 each:  
\$3,000

Give lessons to 15 people weekly @\$50: \$36,000

Be the Friday night house musician at a local place @\$100:  
\$5,000

Take it to the streets for three days a week in the summer,  
four hours each time, playing and selling CDs: \$2,000

Play 2x/month at a retirement center @\$125: \$3,000

TOTAL: \$49,000

Let these ideas be a spark to create your own ideas.