

A 21st Century Musicians Guide to Street Busking

**Implementation, Concept and
Theory Vol. 1**

Onyx Ashanti



This book outlines everything the modern electronic musician needs to start busking on the street, and (vol 2 and 3) also delves into the concept and philosophy of what busking is and can be in a modern connected world.

Donation

If this ebook provides information that you find useful in the pursuit of musical autonomy, feel free to donate any amount of bitcoin that corresponds to the perceived level of value that you feel you have gained.



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Disclaimer

Different laws govern different places in regards to playing music, amplified or otherwise, in public spaces and of the the sales of merchandise.

Implementation of any of the ideas and/or guidelines in this book is completely at the discretion of the reader and i can't be held responsible if it all goes horribly wrong.

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"But best of all was an African American musician, Onyx Ashanti, or so said the sign by his CD's for sale titled *The Future Was Yesterday*, playing sounds crystal beautiful and deep blue true on his digital wind sax. Real new media art in the streets of the new century: a laptop for programming, a drum machine for percussion, high-quality microphones wired to a portable, silent generator. *The Future Was Yesterday* could have been playing anywhere, from the streets of Oakland to the finest clubs of American Jazz. There was something so perfect in that scene: a fusion of space and sound so evocative that when you turned your eyes from the performance, looking out over the waters of the Bay, past Alcatraz and Sausalito to *The Future Was Yesterday* of all the San Francisco's of the world, well, in that moment, you suddenly found yourself no longer part of the crowd at Pier 39 down on the Embarcadero, but swept up into an open place of art 'in whose openness everything is other than usual.' Just for that speck of passing time, just for that speck of passing art, I suddenly knew what Heidegger meant by the other side of the 'standing now': time folding back on itself, time set aside, and future time - an art of sound and gestures and fatigued performance bodies and springtime sunshine and drifting wind and the end of the continent but the beginning of the Pacific that opens myself up to myself."

From; *The Will to technology and the culture of Nihilism* By Arthur Kroker

What is Busking?

busk (bŭsk)

intr.v. busked, busk·ing, busks

To play music or perform entertainment in a public place, usually while soliciting money.

You want fame?! Well, fame costs, and right here is where you start paying... with sweat! Debbie Allen-“Fame”

I remember when I discovered the art of street music, A.K.A. busking. I had just moved to Atlanta, GA. There was an area of downtown known as Underground Atlanta. The history of the place was that the existing downtown had simply been built above the old 19th century era ground level downtown shopping district . That “underground” district had been abandoned for years until some bright spark decided to renovate those still existing storefronts and streets and the result was Underground Atlanta. The area was unique for being the central place where one could experience buskers. Everything from facepainters and clowns to old-school one-man-bands-the kind with a drum strapped to their back, playing a guitar and a harmonica simultaneously as well as their new-school cousins, the solo musicians with backing tracks on CD or mini-disc.

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I was a non-sax owning sax player at the time and upon arriving in Atlanta, my first mission was to find a job. I wasn't a particularly good sax player and had no concept of how to seek out gigs or what I would do if I found one. Before this, I was a college music student and my repertoire consisted of marching band pieces and a few jazz tunes. So I found a job in a candy store in Underground Atlanta.

I worked my 8 hours a day at minimum wage and I believed that this was just what one did to pay bills and advance in one's life; get a job. But one day, during my lunch break, I watched an amazing saxophonist, Yusef Sharif, sitting on one of the many concrete display blocks that populated the place, proceed to summon spirits and ancestors with a skill of playing I have rarely had the honor of witnessing in my life. While he was playing, I noticed that people were dropping money into his open saxophone case, which he had a few feet in front of where he was seated. In the 20-30 minutes that I watched him play, I estimated that he earned, at least, 60 bucks!

Upon return to work, I ran the math in my head;

I was working 8 hours a day, at minimum wage, which in 1992 was about \$4.25 an hour. That came up to \$34 a day BEFORE TAXES.

He had just made approximately TWICE that, DURING MY LUNCH BREAK!! (3 times that, after taxes!)

Not Quantum mechanics. I was determined that I could busk, pay my bills, and take my playing up a few notches in quality, all at the same time so with my next paycheck, I bought the first crappy sax I could find and the rest is history. I played daily. Updated my repertoire of songs. Eventually bought a new horn. And became skilled enough from playing everyday, to start playing in bands around Atlanta as well as playing my own solo gigs.

Currently, I still busk. I have toured around the world. I have played on a Grammy winning Album, toured with Soul II Soul, and played not only some of

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the biggest and best nightclubs in the world, but also the streets in front of them;-)

Busking has been my life and my voice for a large part of my adult life. It represents a freedom that is hard to get any other way. Freedom to grow as an artist. Freedom to play where one wants, when one wants. You instantly become part of a community and of a history that spans hundreds of years.

According to Wikipedia, the actual word “busker” comes from the spanish word “buscar” which literally means “to seek”. The artform is known by many names around the world and through the ages. Romani Gypsies brought the word busker to England by way of their travels throughout Europe. In France, they were known as Troubadors, as Mariachi’s in Mexico, Chindonya in Japan, and in old German, Minnesingers and Spielleute.

In ancient times, busking was one of the primary means that entertainers used to make a living, travel and, literally, “to seek” fame and fortune. For much of recent human history, buskers were to one of the few means that average people had to hear music beyond religious ceremony. and entrepreneurs have always sought to affiliate with these entertainers to increase sales of whatever they happened to be selling. From medicine to theatre to propaganda...busking has been there, done that, for centuries.

In modern times, busking has lived up to the meaning of its name as a means of seeking fame and fortune. Many former buskers took the lessons learned on the street and turned them into the basis of successful careers. Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the USA was a busker. Bruce Springsteen, Eric Clapton, B.B. King, Dolly Parton, Elvis Costello, Hank Williams, Janis Joplin, Kanye West, R. Kelly, Muddy Waters, Nora Jones, Blue Man Group...the list is endless. Many artists either began their career as buskers or continue to see the value of the artform after they have achieved some level of success. Busking has a rich history, a valuable present and an unlimited future.

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This book will take you through the various stages of developing ...

So, you want to be a busker?

Why do you want to busk? Or rather, why do you think you want to busk? Is it practice? Is it money? Fame? There is no wrong answer to this question and many answers you may not have thought of. Take a moment and write them down. It doesn't have to be neat or ambitious, simply honest.

If your goal is Practice, Busking will allow you to practice til your fingers bleed. Maybe not in one location for hours on end (more on this topic later in the book) but you can find a little place off to your self where you can practice to your hearts content, and STILL make money.

If your goal is money, you can do it, but its not easy or assured. Just ask Sting, Badly Drawn Boy or Joshua Bell. All of these artists are world famous and for various reasons, each of them decided to attempt to busk, AFTER they were already world famous. The result? None of them earned more than \$50. So, if getting rich is your goal, busking can be seen as a step along that path and maybe even allow you to achieve it directly, but I wouldn't get too discouraged if you don't make a million bucks your first year.

Fame? It is more than possible if you grasp what busking is and where it fits into the overall game plan you have for your career. That's right...you still need a plan. Write this down as well. It doesn't have to be the most detailed OCD plan, but you need to have a trajectory towards which you are working. It takes time and effort to develop a good busking show and that work can

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directly enrich your other artistic endeavors so if fame is your goal, it is viable, if you are willing to work for it.

One reason why busking lays such a strong foundation for a career in music is referenced in Malcolm Gladwell's book, "The Outliers". In it he goes into great detail about a rule he calls the 10,000 hour rule which states that it takes approximately 10,000 hours to become an expert in just about anything. He goes on to give a great number of examples ranging from Bill Gates to The Beatles. Upon reading this, I began to see this rule played out amongst the best buskers I know and see. Some of them have been doing their shows for 10, 20, 30 years or more! Their every twitch is refined to perfection whether it be juggling chainsaws, singing while throwing darts or beatbox looping an entire orchestra into existence. There is a level of refinement that is possible through no other means. If you have a particularly complex form that requires your full attention, be it classical, jazz, or whatever, busking allows you to hone it to perfection.

Which leads to another benefit; A means of testing new material on audiences. In recent years many many big name artists have hidden on a street corner in some random part of the world, and tested material on unsuspecting audiences. Artists like Paul McCartney, Kevin Costner, Bon Jovi, and others have, on more than one occasion, taken to the street to feel the addictive energy of pulling an audience out of thin air or the stinging yet informative effect of having a song fall flat. Once you can rock a street corner for 40 minutes, you can rock just about anywhere!

I used to have quite intense stage fright. Just having more than 3 people looking in my direction simultaneously, would make me nauseous. Now? I feel more comfortable on stage than I do at the grocery store and that is a direct result of standing in an open space and playing my music to passers by. It can be learned.

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Then there is the enemy of many musicians. Efficiency. On stage, we can bring all of our horns, keyboards, amps, slippers, coffee maker, marshall stacks, pedal boards full of fx pedals and on and on, but on the street, not only will you have limited power to run such a circus, you will find that the majority of it is redundant anyway. It looks great onstage and helps fill space, but on the street its just more stuff to have to setup, trip over and run your battery or generator dead. You wont even make a conscious effort to reduce the amount of crap you carry out. Circumstances will conspire to do it for you. And your music will thank you, for it is not the amount of blinking crap you use, but how you play it.

Ooooh, and lest we not forget the fringe benefits of being a busker. Unbound by the necessity to remain in one place, or even one city, you are free to roam the world. Although laws differ in different cities and countries, it is rare that a musician can go somewhere and not be able to share their art. If you are bold (yet law-abiding), friendly, and have a unique style, the world is literally, your oyster. This doesn't preclude that you should not be cautious in unfamiliar settings though. There are many places in the world, probably including your own home town, where you can be robbed of all of your expensive musical toys, so don't be so intoxicated by the siren song of the open road that you get your ass beat for being stupid. I will cover ways to guard against this possibility, later in the book.

The life of a busker is as adventurous as you allow it to be. From mountain tops to truck stops to European plazas, American shopping centers, to Icelandic cafes and Jamaican beach bars...you can go where you want when you want and if you do it properly, you can prosper along the way.

The 21st Century Musician

The focus of this book is the 21st century musician. What does that mean, “the 21st century musician”? well, we live in an age that is simultaneously different from any ever known to mankind while returning to the need for a type of community that pre-dates society! By 21st century musician, I mean musicians that take advantage of the benefits of modern day technology, of which there are many. From instruments, gear and transportation tech to networking, distribution, and other communication tech.

The world has changed so much in the past 10 years, let alone the last 20, that it is good to get a bit of perspective from time to time.

Music busking was, for most of the 20th century, an acoustic artform. Soloists or groups or musicians would play together to create music. The 20th century saw the rise of the “one-man band” . a person, who would have many of the instruments associated with musical performance-drums, horns, guitar or banjo, high hat, etc- attached to some part of his body and he would move in such a way that he could play each instrument and create the sound of more than one person playing. They were very popular during the first part of the 20th century and persist to varying degrees to this day. But the electrification of the guitar, signaled the dawn of a new age. An electric, amplified age. (I know that there are mixed feelings about this, which I will cover later, but it is never the fault of the tools, what the person wielding them, does with them.) All of a sudden, musicians were taking to the streets with small amplifiers

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whose frequency range was perfect for the electric guitar. It took a while longer for the bass. Why? Because it takes power to push bass frequencies and the technology for such endeavors didn't arrive until the late 70's when affordable, yet noisy, power generators allowed larger shows to take place in the middle of nowhere.

By the late 80's and early 90's a new generation of power technology-small quiet power generators that made use of scooter engines, sealed "gell" cell batteries with smaller size and greater capacity, commercially available, affordable power inverters (devices that convert direct current(DC) from batteries,into Alternating Current(AC) for home appliances)-converged with a new generation of music technology-small powerful efficient solid state amplifiers for studio and or for car audio systems replaced bulky power hungry tube amps, speakers became cheaper yet more roust.yet the most profound change has come from a repurposed business tool; the laptop.

The laptop has taken the entire studio, instruments, amps, effects, mixers... everything, and shoved it into a device the size of a family photo album. It has revolutionized the world and busking is no exception. It is not only easier to sound like you could "be on a big stage"...you can literally go straight to a big stage, medium stage...the quality of todays tools allow todays busker to be as professional sounding on a street corner as they will at a paying gig in any size venue. This is a big deal.

This represents the hallmark of the modern busker. There are no creative limitations to being a busker in the 21st century. Everything from laser projectors to distribution digitally from your entire discography located in "the cloud", a mere click away and instantly paid for. These are the tools of the 21st century musician. But one has to traverse the varied terrain of options and choices one is bombarded with. From the right social networks to the proper speakers all the way down to your choice of handtruck to get you r equipment around and the tip container that holds your money. My hope is that this book

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will help you to make informed decisions that will allow you to concentrate more fully on being an artist first.

This book's focus will be the usage of technology, for busking. The use and misuse of Laptops, synthesizers, looping systems, smartphones, speakers, batteries, and more.

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Getting Started

Soooo....Let us begin! Here is a project for you. Go outside-it doesn't matter where. Go outside to a place you feel comfortable, and simply stand there. That's it...just stand there. Don't worry. Unless you are in the middle of the street, people will go around you. Stand there and soak up the energy of the place. Feel the people. Watch the people. Watch where they go and why. How they gravitate to one area or another. What draws their attention, why and for how long. When you become a busker this is something you will do daily. The area that you end up going to is called your "Pitch". This is your "stage, so to speak. Finding a pitch is an art in and of itself. I, personally, look for locations that have magic combination of decent foot traffic (which isn't everything), a palpable lack of moodiness of any kind and a dearth of residential units (more on these later).

There are different types of pitches and shows. It depends on what you as well as why and how you do it. If you play your music to people walking by, you have a "walk-by" act. If you need to gather a substantial crowd first, you are a "circle act". Both acts have their strengths and drawbacks which we will cover in depth later in this book. Right now we will go back a bit and focus on the collection of gear and tools that you will use to make your performance system. This is called your "rig".

Your Rig is your custom, personal performance system. It is all the things that allow you to do what you do. It will include your instrument(s), sound, power, merchandise, and display . it is your personality on display for everyone to see, hear and experience. A rig needs to be portable as is humanly possible, yet as small and high quality as you can possibly make it. This aspect will not be hard. Todays musician is spoiled for choices when it comes to small,

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inexpensive high quality music gear. But it is up to you to find the gear that will become your voice.

Your Rig

Ok! So now it is time to start mapping out your rig. What musical concept are you trying to present to the world? What is your instrumentation? Will what you want to do, fit on your transportation option? Take a moment and write these things down. Get detailed. Let your mind go crazy.

Once you have finished, use your budget and space considerations to scale it up to something more grand or back to something realistic. If you only have a bike, pulling a fullsize piano around is possible, but will take much work logistically. It may be just a good to create a collapsible cardboard or plywood piano shell and place a midi keyboard inside it. But if you are thinking of you, your laptop and your little 5 watt computer speakers from home, maybe you should aim and shoot a little higher. Compact doesn't necessarily mean underwhelming. Get or create the best with what you have and not just whats adequate.

"Best" is a relative term, relating to you and what artistic message you want to convey so if "best" is spoons and a comic book, then do you. But if best includes sound quality thru speakers of some sort then adequate will work but best will be better. And best is not necessarily more expensive. Best takes into account variables including purchase price, size, weight, sound quality, power output, bass response, and that's just for speakers. Other variables are durability, playability, resistance to temperature and moisture and vibration and on and on and on...what is best for me may not be best for you which is why you need to take the time to consider what you are attempting to do. So lets get started.

Transportation and carriage

As the mobility part of your rig, you need to consider the implementation of a transport system. I have yet to see many high quality “21st century” musical busking systems, ie. the types of gear that facilitate performance with digital or electronic sound, that weigh less than 5 kg. yes...you can always get a battery powered pig nose amp and call it a day, but this book is for 21st century musicians. Most likely you have, and want to perform with, a laptop, drum machine, keyboard, guitar and fx, other or all of the above. And for that it is going to take a not insignificant amount of tiny gear and at its lightest, I would estimate that you will be moving around anywhere from 12-100kg of gear, probably falling somewhere in the neighborhood of about 25-50kg. now, you may be seriously strong and love the workout of carrying this stuff around by hand, but I would suggest looking into some form of carriage in the form of a hand truck, a large suitcase, or if you are a cyclist, a bike trailer is a no-brainer, as well as my personal choice.

Your system size will be determined by your transportation options. I use a folding bike and a folding trailer so I can go many places very fast. I avoid parking charges as well as bus and train fees, except on long journey, at which point, I can fold up my bike and gear and put it into the luggage hold. To me, this is perfect. But if you ride the bus or drive, these can help determine the size of your rig. If you are a walker-someone who is going to walk to the pitch and back-get a hand truck with large high quality wheels that folds down flat. (LINK) Small wheels with anything more than 5kg is a headache after a week or two. You may think that a \$10 airport luggage cart will do but trust me...it wont. They barely work on the super smooth floors of the airport...they will murder your hands and gear on the average street.

If you are driving to the pitch, there are benefits and drawbacks to this method as well. The draw backs are things like parking. Well, actually...not LIKE parking. The main headache IS parking; where to park, getting to and from the pitch from the vehicle, and the cost, which may, on some days, be more than you make. The benefits are;

that once there,

you can bring a much wider array of gear;
more merchandise,
better sound,
bigger instruments,
lights,
generator,
and on and on.

Hell, in some places you can simply use your car's sound and power system as your rig and kill multiple birds with one stone, although this particular scenario is rare. Consider carefully whether driving should be your primary transportation solution.

I mention the transportation first because this will help you focus on acquiring or making use of gear that will fit or attach to your choice of transportation. There is no need in bringing out the full size piano if you either 1. Don't live near the pitch and can thus, put wheels on it and just push it there, or 2. Own a van. Your carriage options will determine much about your rig.

As you will see from this chapter, there are many bits and pieces to a modern musical busking rig; instruments, speakers, tip containers, lights, merchandise, spare clothing, and on and on...it is advisable that you should consolidate these things into as few containers as possible, even if you have a car that can carry it all in. A large suitcase, or a trunk with wheels, are time tested ways of keeping all of your stuff together. And much more if you take public transportation. Wheeling around a hand truck full of random bits and bobs is a sure way of losing pieces of your rig on a regular basis. A larger container also provides you with a safe, "not easily stolen" place to store your merchandise and tips, while on the pitch.

Once your rig is assembled, the container becomes an ideal locker to store your stuff in and away from envious eyes. And best of all, if you go the trunk

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route, glue a bit of astro-turf or some of those non-slip shower flowers to the top, and if you didn't buy the cheapest trunk you could find, you will have a decent stage. The heavy-duty plastic footlockers you can buy at walmart or aldi will support up to 120kg and cost about \$50! Just be careful...the part of the show where you break your neck falling off a footlocker, is not as entertaining as you might think.

If you cant and do not want to pack everything into one container, then at very least, make sure that you have an abundant supply of bungee cords and nets to strap everything down so nothing falls off in transit. And try to bring a large duffle bag with a lock like you use at the gym, to store your tips between sets.

The key is to try to consolidate everything into as compact of a footprint as possible for easy transportation and enhanced security.

Instrumentation

What do you play? Guitar? Bass? Flute? Laptop? Drum machine? Self-created Arduino based digital instrument;-)? Pvc pipe organ? Deciding what you are doing to is going to decide what comes next. Does your instrument require amplification? Seriously? be honest. If you are playing Tuba, you probably don't need a sound system unless you want to run it thru effects. Figure out what you are going to use. You can always adapt or update your rig but be honest with yourself. If you want to use your laptop (and this book will show you how to do just that) but are afraid of taking your baby out on the street so you create a system around a guitar, then later, after gaining your confidence, decide to bring out your laptop, for which you now have an underwhelming or no system at all, you are cheating yourself. Figure out, from the notes you took in the last chapter, what you want to do as a busker.

Attire

Your attire is part of your sound. The signals you give off with what you wear, will mix what you present yourself as, visually. Think about your presentation.

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Does what you are wearing synergize with the message of your sound? If not, why? What are you not doing? Experiment. Be ironic if it works for you. The only rules are that you find a way to, at best, say what you want to convey, and at worst, NOT give the wrong message by virtue of the combination of your attire and your sound.

Sound system

Now once you have decided what you want to present to the world from your soapbox stage, you need a way for them to hear it. Modern digital instruments pose a unique dilemma. The pro is that their volume is infinitely controllable in ways that acoustic instruments aren't because many of them do not make any sound without amplification. The con is that you "need" an amplifier of some sort to hear these instruments at all. This can seriously impede ones ability to "feel" their "axe" in a manner similar to an acoustic instrument which can lead to "volume creep" as your ear become accustomed to the sound levels over time.

What is most desirable is something that can properly entertain your desired Pitch area with a fullrange sound. Full range means that your audience should be able to hear the really high stuff just as easily as hearing the really low stuff. For instance, the legendary pignose amp that guitar playing buskers from the 60's-80's used is insufficient for laptop buskers as it only really represents the frequency range of the guitar (approximately 600hz to around 2.5khz). full range is a must.

You must also be realistic as to how loud you can actually be. Purchasing or building an 800-1000watt sound system for busking your local park or city center is probably not only going to get you a ticket, but probably some new enemies in the form of local residents and fellow buskers in the area. Unless you are in an area pre-marked for louder performances, you would probably be safer keeping your wattage closer to 100-200watts. At 100 watts of

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fullrange power with the volume on 6(scale of 1-10) you should be able to entertain a crowd of about 40-50 without overpowering anyone or anything more than 30m away. Within 10m, your audience should experience good bass response and crisp highs without causing their ears to bleed.

how can you tell? The easiest way,initially, is to make a raw recording of some of your music and go to your local music store and test a few combo speaker/amps OUTSIDE at full volume. The reason for this is that speakers sound wildly different inside than outside. Take your average computer speakers. You know...the ones with the 2 little satellite speakers and the shoebox size subwoofer that sits under your desk. It sound amazing in your bedroom but as soon as you take it outside it suddenly sounds crap and that is because it was created to provide very decent sound within 1-2m. outside of this range, the sound quality falls off sharply. so nicely ask if you and a sales rep can take a few speakers outside. Once you explain what its for, they should be willing to oblige.

Once outside, with the music playing thru your speaker of choice, slowly turn the volume up as high as is possible and listen to the results. Does the sound stay smooth and fluid or does it start to distort and “break up” as it gets louder? Although your mix may not be perfect, its probably not going to be perfect when you play live either...actually more than likely, less so. So try to find a speaker amp combo that isn’t going to work against you.

One thing to look at is how the speaker amp is constructed. Many modern speaker/amp combos have not just one built in amp for one speaker, but 2 or 3; one for the tweeter, which represents the high frequencies and one for the mids, for mid range sounds. A few higher priced ones will have a third one just for bass. And these are all routed through what is known as a **crossover** which is a sort of frequency router. It makes sure that high sounds only go to the tweeter, mids go to the midrange speakers and lows go to the subwoofer. These usually sound great, even in the lower price range so when doing your

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shopping be sure to look for “2-way and or 3-way” speaker amp combos.(add a list of recommended amps)

If you happen to have electronics expertise, Another way to be completely sure that you get the sound you want is to use car audio components. These usually draw less power than AC powered speakers (owing to their usage of a DC based amplifier) and sound as good as prebuilt systems, IF you know what you are doing and source decent components. Otherwise it will probably sound like you got Aphex twin struggling to escape from a tiny box by beating on the inside of it, in rhythm. This option does allow you to customize your rig to the n-th degree and the results, when properly executed, are Bangin!! Definitely something to keep in mind.

Lights

Ok...when I say “lights”, I don’t necessarily mean the types of things you see in clubs, bars and concerts. What lighting does for a busker is focus attention visually. If you are busking at night, having a small battery powered camping light can draw attention to your merchandise and promotional material, if you have any. If you don’t, it can become a fixed point for passers by that can draw their attention from a fair distance, at least until they get close enough to hear your brilliant music.

The type of lighting you use is a matter of personal choice, but going out at night, sans lighting, in dark areas...with expensive music equipment...you get the point...either setup under some existing light, or bring your own. Besides being much safer, you bring focus to your act. Playing in the dark works against you by making possible tippers/customers/fans apprehensive about stopping to check you out, let alone take money out...and for what?! They cant see your merchandise anyway.

Many buskers with a reasonable power system opt for simple clamp on construction-site lamps that can be purchased from any hardware or home improvement shop for around \$10. Coupled with a low power consumption(10-

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15watt) compact fluorescent bulb, you have plenty of light that won't kill your battery or generator. That's basic and it's useful. As I mentioned before, a smaller camping light in or near your tip bucket/instrument case/merchandise display, helps focus attention to this area and should result in better sales/tips (as long as you don't suck).

If you want to get fancy, just remember that lights help draw attention from a distance, focus attention where you want it, and lastly, make an artistic statement. So go wild! You can try Christmas lights, or child's room lamps or if you are technical, LED lighting arrays controlled by an Arduino being fed data from your laptop or drum machine or mic. The possibilities are endless. But remember to

Power

This is the part of the rig that is usually done wrong. And that is because there are so many myriad ways to screw it up. Getting the power system right is the difference between going out and making money slinging CD's and t-shirts, or starring, teary-eyed, at your rig while wondering why it won't turn on, why there is a loud buzzing sound or how you just fried your laptop. Take this part very VERY seriously!

(disclaimer; proceed with these suggestions at your own risk. If you fry yourself or your gear, it is your responsibility, not mine so don't send me hate mail if this happens)

Ok, first. You need to understand what is actually happening here. You now have your instrument, which, for the sake of this book is a laptop and a controller and maybe a mic, sound card, and a footpedal controller as well as your speaker system. You must provide clean power for these items. Sometimes you will be able to source this power from the street in the form of rare power outlets for vendors or from nice store owners who love your music, but I would not expect these things to happen or to last very long if they do.

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City ordinance people will probably not be happy to know that you are powering your rig from city power unless that power has been set aside specifically for buskers or musical performances, which would mean that there is probably a time and/or event schedule attached to it. As for bumming it from store owners, if you can imagine how many times you could listen to your absolute favorite playlist of music ...a lot! But eventually, even your FAVORITE music would get on your nerves. NOW, realize that although they may dig you, you are probably not their favorite playlist which means that even with all the best intentions you will probably wear out your welcome in front of that store, in anything from 2 weeks to 6 months, depending on your performance frequency, repertoire and volume. So ...

For the sake of completeness, lets start from the basics. There are two types of electrical power. Direct Current (DC) and Alternating Current (AC). With electricity you have a positive charge and a negative charge. DC means that the device needing power will have a positive and a separate negative power terminal which will send their respective current type to the device. AC on the other hand, "alternates", which means that there will be 2 terminals and the positive and negative charges will jump from one terminal to the other, many times per second. Most things that run in your car, on battery power, run on DC current while most things that operate in your house work on AC current. This is VERY important to remember as you can not simply connect your Studio equipment up to a car battery. To do that, you will need an Inverter. A power inverter connects to a DC power source, such as a car battery, and converts the DC power to AC power. These are commonly called dc to ac converters. And for the sake of trivia, there are also AC to DC converters that do the same thing in reverse.

There are different types and strengths of inverter. From tiny 50 watt ones to massive 1-2000 watt monsters and bigger. Which is for you? Well you will have to do a bit of math at this point. Get out your pen and paper...time to Take all the gear that you have collected for your rig and calculate the power usage requirements.

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Understanding the basics of electricity is essential for not blowing yourself or your gear, up. I love the simple explanation that I found at HOWTHINGSWORK.COM;

*“the three most basic units in electricity are voltage (**V**), current (*I*, uppercase “i”) and resistance (*r*). Voltage is measured in **volts**, current is measured in **amps** and resistance is measured in **ohms**.*

A neat analogy to help understand these terms is a system of plumbing pipes. The voltage is equivalent to the water pressure, the current is equivalent to the flow rate, and the resistance is like the pipe size.

There is a basic equation in electrical engineering that states how the three terms relate. It says that the current is equal to the voltage divided by the resistance.

$$I = V/r$$

Wattage, using the same analogy is explained as;

“Electrical power is measured in **watts**. In an electrical system power (**P**) is equal to the voltage multiplied by the current.

$$P = VI$$

The water analogy still applies. Take a hose and point it at a waterwheel like the ones that were used to turn grinding stones in watermills. You can increase the power generated by the waterwheel in two ways. If you increase the pressure of the water coming out of the hose (voltage), it hits the waterwheel with a lot more force and the wheel turns faster, generating more power. If you increase the flow rate, the waterwheel turns faster because of the weight of the extra water hitting it.”

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You will need to calculate the sum of these variables to have an idea of the size of inverter, battery or generator you will need to power your system.

Look either on the back of the device near where the power cable or adapter connects. You should see something like “90w/ 20v at 4.5A” or “23w / 12v at 1000mA” or whatever. What this means is, in the first example, your device, which is a laptop in this case, draws 20 volts at 90 watts and 4.5amps. Or, in the second example, 12volts at 23 watts and 4.5A.

the other REALLY important thing to take into consideration when using AC devices is the whether it is rated at 120-140v, which is what most American AC devices are rated on, or 220-250v, which is what most of the rest of the world use. They are largely incompatible meaning that if you plug a 120v device into a power socket rated at 240v, your device will fry. And vice versa. Although, to be honest, this is less of a consideration these days as most devices and power adapters are dual voltage, which means that they automatically sense the voltage and step up or down to match it.

What you must do now, is add all of your wattages and then, separately, add up all your amperages. So, in this example, you have a total draw of 113watts and 5.5A. so a hypothetical 150watt inverter, rated at 7-10amps, should allow you to draw enough electricity to power your devices. I would suggest doubling your required wattage when feasible. So, if you need 150watts, I'd suggest getting a 300watt inverter, or better. You wont necessarily need to double the amperage requirements. 2-4amps above whats necessary should suffice. The cost is negligible and allow room to add devices over time, but if you get “just enough” and just happen to get the inevitable “bass spike” (bass draws A LOT of power), you may trip your inverters circuit protection system and either blow a fuse or cause it to shut down to keep from doing so.

Battery

Now we will look at a battery to go with your inverter. There are many different types and sizes of battery that you can choose from, depending on your requirements.

- How important is the size of your rig?
- How long do you want to play each day?
- Do you want to travel with your battery?

Most people will mistakenly think that a battery is just a battery. That you can simply buy a cheap car battery and call it a day. This is not true. Car batteries, unsurprisingly, are for starting cars. What this means is that their main duty is to provide enough power to get your car start when you turn the key. From that moment, your car has a thing called an “alternator” that provides power for your systems and lights as well as keeping the battery charged. That is why car battery life is rated in years; because it has this one duty to perform and the car tries not to tax it too much. If there are many other systems that need more power, like competition audio systems, the builders of those systems usually install separate battery systems and even separate alternators.

A car battery is not meant to be used continuously. Depleting one by using all of its charge, shortens the life considerably. A car battery in this type of “draw to depletion/recharge/depletion/recharge...” cycle, will last about 2-6 months and then become a useless addition to a landfill.

A better option is a sealed battery of which there are many types. On the smaller end, you have project batteries that are typically used for electronic projects. On the mid sized and larger end of the spectrum, you have “gel cell” batteries typically used for competition car audio systems and marine batteries used for boats with electric motors. These are usually waaaaay more than you will need for busking, but its an option, nonetheless.

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A benefit of these types of batteries is that there is less of a chance of acid spillage. Some Marine batteries still use acid which is accessible, but they are meant to be drawn down to depletion and recharged, which is why they are still a much better option than car batteries despite their enormous size (40-60kg on average). Most project batteries are completely sealed and can be stored and/or mounted in any direction without fear of leakage. And their size makes them ideal for travel, but check with the airline, train or bus service first, before packing one of these babies in your luggage.

the best way to determine which size of battery is best for you is to go back to your device calculations from earlier. Battery life is measured in “amp hours” which is the amount of time, approximately, that said battery will power something running at a one amp draw. So, let say we find a gel cell battery rated at 65Ahr. That means that this battery should power something that is draw 1amp, for 65 hours, APPROXIMATELY. You will recall that our total amperage for our two devices was 5.5 amps. $(\text{battery})\text{Ahr}/(\text{total device amp draw})=\text{approximate \# of hours you can expect from this battery}$, so $65/5.5=11.82$ hours of performance time APPROXIMATELY. I say approximately because there are other variables to take into consideration such as the age of the battery, ambient temperature (hot batteries hold less of a charge), and the true relative math concerning amp hours and amp draw which are too tedious to go into here. Suffice it to say that this should give you a decent approximation of how much time you can expect to be able to play, give or take an hour or two.

Once you know these calculations, you can inform your battery purchase based on your own particular realities. Do you expect to play for hours a day or just during lunch once or twice a week? If it is the latter, you can easily get by with a much smaller (read; lightweight and less expensive) battery. If you plan to jump around and do 3 or 4 2hour sets around the city everyday (yes, some people do this), then a higher capacity battery will work better for you. Or maybe 2 smaller batteries. Are you trying to construct a rig that fits in rolling carry-on luggage, or are you dragging around something the size of a

casket? Either way, once you know your power requirements, you can select a battery option that works for what is important to you.

The last part of the equation is your charger. It follows some of the same logic as the battery. You “can” use any size charger to recharge your batteries, but a small charger takes longer. Currently, I have a lovely combination of a 6amp charger coupled with a 65Ahr gel cell battery which means that to completely recharge it take somewhere in the neighborhood of 2 days!! Definitely NOT the droid I am looking for. So I have recently upgraded to a 40amp charger, which gets the job done in about 4 hours. The main drawback is that you must make sure that you have a heavy duty fuse in your home circuit board. Otherwise it can trip all your lights off at home, especially if the battery is drained dead. So take a moment to see what the load rating is on the fuse that supplies power to the room where you will be charging your battery. The kitchen or garage, near a window is ideal. The kitchen circuit usually has a higher rated circuit breaker because of all the high amperage appliances there, and it will provide ventilation for any subsequent fumes. Keep it away from the stove though, lest ye may ignite a spark. Possible but not probable.

Power generators

The benefit of batteries is that you can use them inside places where you may not have access to a power outlet. The main drawback though is that when it is dead, it's dead for at least a few hours so unless you went with the 2 batteries option, your session for the day, is over. This is one of the big advantages of power generators is that they run on gasoline, and provide much more power than battery systems. When the generator runs out of gas, it is a simple matter of refilling it with gas, or keeping the fuel supply topped up so this is never a concern. The generators of choice are the Honda ES series generators which start at 1000watts so you have more than enough power for a small to medium...hell, even a large busking rig. These brand of generator are known for not only being so quiet that you can stand right next to them while they are running, and still not hear them, but for also providing a very

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clean source of power for computers and sound gear, so there is no electrical hum from badly designed power sources.

There are generators from other manufacturers that vary in power, noise, pollution and fuel consumption. You'll have to check out what is available. One thing that they all fall down on, in comparison to batteries, is FUMES. You absolutely CAN NOT use them in an enclosed area...you will get SICK OR DIE OR BOTH. Don't be tempted to ever do so! Simply bring a battery or a long extension cord so the generator can be placed outside (preferably chained to something, depending on where you are performing). (side note. Many municipalities frown upon generator usage and as such, may require a license. So covering the generator (BUT NOT THE EXHAUST VENT!!) with something like a piece of cloth may keep nosy inspectors at bay. But if it is a law rather than a simple city guideline, you may need to come clean about your generator usage. But, Some municipalities have exemptions specifically for the Honda models I mentioned earlier specifically because the noise and emissions ratings are way better than standard requirements, so check this out at your city ordinance website before you buy one.

Donated power

Some places and some cities provide buskers with power for their gear. Although this is cool in some instance, proceed with caution. Some places use this as a form of control. He who controls the power, controls the music, so said entities, whether from the city or from local businesses in the form of a community stage or a place in front of their business, may use this power to control your repertoire ("do you have to play THAT song again?! Its driving me crazy!) or when you can play ("it's too early. Can you come back in a couple of hours?). in the words of Billie Holiday, "God Bless the Child that's got his own..."

Tip receptacle

So now you have your instrument sorted. You can hear yourself and you have enough power to be able to play as long as you want. Now that you are about

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to unleash your genius on the world you need a way to collect your bounty. This is where your tip receptacle comes into play.

Classically, buskers use their instrument case to collect tips. This works very well. It is a universal tip collector. When people see the case, they know what to do. But you don't have to limit yourself to an instrument case, especially if your instrument is a drum machine or laptop. There are other classic containers as well. The wine chiller. The fish bowl. The bucket. A box. Whatever. But there are a few considerations to take into account.

- It needs to be visible.

- It needs to be recognizable as a place for people to put money

- It needs to be accessible

- It should be easily transportable

- Something about it should discourage anyone considering snatching it and running off with your money

- It should reinforce your artistic identity. If you are playing custom instruments made of industrial machine parts, make a tip container out of the same machine parts.

As an adjunct to your receptacle, you should also have a system for emptying it. You do not want to have too much money, too visible for too long. Firstly, it's dangerous. It can become an overwhelming temptation for the wrong people. But also, it works against you. People love to give to artists, but if it looks like you've got \$100,000 in a laundry basket that's been sitting there all day, people have a tendency to think "oh well...he/she has enough money..."

Having a cloth in the container allows you to quickly cover some of the money in between breaks. As does having a small bag. We will cover how and when to empty your tip bucket, but for now, we'll just look at the tools while we assemble our rig

Bitcoin

Bitcoin is poised to completely change the idea of what busking is and can be. I will be writing about bitcoin in terms of busking, in volume 2 of this book, but for now, you should know that it is a complete win-win. Set up a bitcoin wallet on either an online service like blockchain.info, or set one up on your computer or smartphone, or better yet, all of the above. Create a qr-code version of your bitcoin public wallet address and display it prominently. You could put it on your body, on a sign next to your tip receptacle, on your merchandise...wherever...but it is probably the most exciting technology to happen to busking since portable amplification. And it makes it much easier to take payment for your...

Merchandise.

For most buskers, merchandise is their single biggest money maker, by far! In many cases, 5-10x as much as tips. This should be considered carefully. You must realize what you are actually doing when you play, ANYWHERE. If you are conveying your artistic statement properly, you are invoking an emotional state; you are hypnotizing those that are into what you do. In this state, it becomes very easy to convince someone to purchase something you have for sale. This is the reason that tv commercials have music, and football games, telethons, hacker cons...music acts on people subconscious. And it is there that the decision to trade their money for your artifact, originates. A term that is used by marketing people is "impulse buy". You are creating the impulse for them to buy what you are selling. This is a powerful concept to internalize.

Your merchandise does not have to be simply CD, although that does still account for the lions share of musical busking merchandise sales. Using the above logic, you can have vinyl records, t-shirts, buttons, stickers...all manner of items, but you must take a few things into consideration;

Weight. You are already schlepping around tens of kg's of gear and what not. Do you want to double that with excessive amounts of

merchandise? A few bits and pieces are cool, but try not to bring too much stuff.

Vendor licensing. Because if you do start bringing out a concert festival table everytime you busk, you may start drawing the attention of ordinance officers who want to know where your vending license is. Most places that allow busking, allow buskers to sell CD's and other small hand made, music-related items. In fact, a US federal court verdict from 2007 allows artists to sell their art and CD's fall into that category in most places, but be sure to check first. Most times, selling recordings is fine.

Size. Kinda the same category as weight but slightly different because to display loads of stuff, your are going to need table(s), props, extra lights, and on and on. Which leads inexorable to the next point.

Tackiness. Bringing loads of merchandise to the pitch can be tacky. It doesn't have to be, a there are times, like street festivals, when it works to your favor, but try to avoid coming across as flea market vendor while out busking, unless, coming across as a flea market vendor is the goal.

I would suggest not overwhelming potential customers with too many options. Having some stickers, which act as very effective business cards, CD's and maybe a t-shirt or two, on display, is usually sufficient. But, referring to the points above, you can be creative with you merchandise as well. Sell your music on small, inexpensive mp3 players so your fans can listen to it instantly. Give away your cd's. sell cassettes as a novelty. Auction off one of your vinyl records for the best dancer. You can sell just about anything that relates to what you do as an artist. Just try to minimize the amount of space it consumes, and make sure that it is visible and easy to get to. A small colorful blanket next to or underneath your tip container will help consolidate everything into one tiny little dream store that sells nothing but YOU.

Done properly, your merchandise becomes the third artistic element behind you, visually, and your music. All together, it paints a cohesive picture of what

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you are “about” as an artist, so think carefully about the colors and designs you use, not only in the merchandise itself, but the display as well. Make it big enough to draw the attention of passers by, while not being so big that city officials start looking at you like you are an unlicensed street vendor. My suggestion is 1mx1m MAX. maybe even smaller.

In the next chapter, we will look into things like placement and proper setup, but for now, just think about what few items you can sell that will best represent you as an artist while giving potential new fans an impulse buy that will provide them with a worthwhile introduction to you.

Signage

Although not strictly necessary, a sign allows you to convey redundant information easily and efficiently. Need to let people know that you teach? Or that you have a show at a local bar tonight? What about your website URL or facebook profile? Yes, you can, and in many cases, should give out business cards, but sometimes you are in the middle of a piece when someone wants the information that is easily provided by a small sign.

It doesn't have to be huge. It could be a laminated sheet of paper. Or it could be the size of poster, mounted onto an easel (which should be anchored to something because it WILL blow over). The important part is that it reinforces your artistic aesthetic while providing useful information such as;

- Bitcoin QR-code

- Merchandise prices

- Web information

- Tour dates

- Contact info

- Brief info about the recording that you may be selling

- Interesting, yet brief trivia about you (I am currently touring with KISS!)

Try to keep it brief and simple. Black on white is always good as the contrast means then words can be seen from a greater distance. Green letters on a red

background with yellow squiggles is just going to give people headaches. Don't...no really...don't!

A small sign not only more easily transportable, it makes people have to come a bit closer, to read it, which coincidentally brings them closer to your merchandise.

Using QR-codes in addition to text, allows those with smartphones, to get your information easily and save it directly onto their device. You can use online service to generate qr-codes of the previously mentioned information.

Miscellaneous items

You are almost finished now. But there are a few more things that you will need, to be safe, dry and efficient.

A **rain tarp**. This is an essential piece of kit because it is so multi-purpose. Obviously, to protect from rain. And I know what you're going to say, "I wouldn't play in the rain...that's stupid.." uh huh...until the inevitable day that you go out to play, get everything setup, not noticing that clouds are rolling in fast, then BAM! Its pissing buckets of rain down and now you not only have to collect all your stuff, turn it off, put it away somehow, and THEN, find emergency shelter, which is now completely taken up by all the other people who just got surprised by the rain. Unless you live somewhere that it barely rains at all, you are definitely going to have to factor it in as something to be aware of. A nice 3mx3m rain tarp is light and allows you to cover your gear while you put it away properly, or simply wait it out underneath it, with your rig only partly disassembled. In this way, you wont lose your valuable pitch just because of a few sprinkles.

That same tarp makes a wonderfully efficient sun shade too for keeping your valuable gear from melting in the sun, as well as something to cover your rig with if you must step away for a moment (not suggested, but it does happen). You can purchase them from any army surplus store for about \$20.

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A **small sun umbrella** is useful for some of the same reason, but more so to keep YOU from having a heat stroke in the summer. They're not as effective against rain, unless said rain is coming straight down and all your gear fits underneath its tiny circumference. But angles toward the sun on hot days, it keeps electronics and organic brains from getting too hot.

A lunchbox and thermos. Besides parking, for you car drivers, the one thing that will "eat" most of your busking income, is food and drink. Many times you will be going where the people are and many times that is in areas that are probably not the cheapest areas in town. You just played 3 smoking 20 minute sets and you are a little drained so you go and get a soda and a hot dog. \$5. An hour or so later, you get a coffee and doughnut. \$4. The end of the day, you think, hey, I did pretty good today, I'm gonna go have some dinner. \$15 (if you are LUCKY). You're already pushing up on \$25 of just snacking in one day! Multiply that by 4 days a week and you see that you are throwing away close to \$400 a month on crap! Its better to bring a thermos of your favorite drink and a healthy lunch and/or dinner from home. You instantly save \$2-300 a month! It doesn't mean you wont snack, but you will snack much much less.

Tool kit. Something is going to always break. It is inevitable. Having a small toolkit with you, allows you to fix minor things, right on the pitch and keep the show going. The alternative is the soul destroying necessity of giving up your pitch, packing everything up and going home, just because your power cable has a short in it that you could fix in 5 minutes with some wire strippers.

A decent toolkit would be

- A Phillips and a flat head screw driver
- A small wrench set
- A box cutter
- Pliers with wirecutters built in
- Electrical tape
- Assorted screws, nuts, bolts

Fuses
Rope and/or string
wire

Velcro. This, to me, is the most amazing thing ever invented! The uses of Velcro are limitless. Anything that needs to be attached to something else, temporarily or semi-permanently, can be put together with Velcro. Want your stompboxes to stay in place? Velcro them to a piece of wood or your instrument case. Need to mount your sign? Velcro it to an easel or the side of your footlocker. Put Velcro on the top and bottom of your gear, such as your laptop, and sound modules, and they will stay together securely, until you no longer want them to, at which point you can easily pull them apart and store them. Mount your lights to your instrument, your phone to ...whatever. You get the point. Velcro is a busker's best friend.

Your Basic rig is now complete!

There are items here you may not need. If you just want to practice and make a bit of pocket money, then you may not need signs or merchandise. Or you may be very abstract and experimental and need things that I didn't mention in this chapter. But what you do have now is the basics of a modern musical busking rig. With these items, you can go out into the world, safe in the knowledge that you have the basic tools to play music on the street.

There is one more tool that I feel is increasingly crucial to modern buskers. The smartphone. In the next chapter I will attempt to make the case that no modern busker should be without a contemporary connected device.

Smartphones for the modern busker

At the time of the first edition of this book, it is the beginning of 2011. The world has experienced exponential social change at the hands of technology. We are more connected in more ways than we dreamed possible only 10 short years ago. From laptop super computers that enable us to have not just “an” entire studio in the space something the size of a textbook (and smaller), but multiple “studio’s” more powerful than their physical world counterparts. From global music distribution instantly to social relationship constructs that allow us to connect with as many like-minded people as we want. Today's world is surreal in that everything an artist could want is now available and in many cases, for free!

One of the emerging big movements in the world of technology lately, is the smartphone. Let me preface by stating that the term “smartphone” has been around for years to describe phones with functionality that allows them to do much more than merely make voice based phone calls. I am not really talking about that device. I am referring almost exclusively to the world wrought by the introduction of the apple iphone. In 2007, apple released a device that repurposed the term smartphone to being a small continuously internet connected device, running an OS capable of running “apps” which enhanced the abilities of the device after the point of purchase. Before this, almost all smart phones came preloaded with carrier specific applications that allowed severely limited functionality. The iphone blew that out of the water. Now you

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had a device that could run apps, downloaded over the air, to allow you to do things far beyond anything possible before on a device of this size and type. With its integration of high speed wireless internet, sensors, a camera, gps, wifi, Bluetooth, multitouch, and even PHONE CALLS, the iphone lived up to the hype, as a device that changed the world.

For myself and my busking exploits, the iphone is now indispensable. I use mine as a wireless midi controller using an app called TouchOSC. When I arrive in a new city, looking for locations to busk, I make use of a gps enabled map app called MotionX GPS which allows me to download maps of an area before departing home, then drop map points of interest either from research at home, or from recommendations of people I meet in said city. It allows me to arrive in a new place and bike around, finding interesting locations as I go. When I find one that is viable based on the criteria to be covered in the next chapter, I drop a map point and location notes onto the map. This allows me to do recon on many areas of a new place, quickly and efficiently then when I am ready to play, I can focus on playing rather than pitch recon. If one potential pitch is occupied or in some way, undesirable, I can look at my map and go to the next closest potential pitch, without having to go into “recon” mode, which saves a lot of valuable time. And as I mentioned before, I also use my smartphone/tablet to do bitcoin transactions. I can accept payment for merchandise as well as provide a frictionless means of not only receiving tips while I am performing, but I can also be tipped after I have left the pitch, if they took a photo of my qr-codes. This is enough of a reason to include a smartphone as an indispensable tool in a buskers arsenal.

This is **digital nomadism**. Which is defined as The ability to use technology and the internet to work remotely from anywhere, is profoundly freeing. Maybe not so much if you work for someone else and are inundated with a constant

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barrage of emails from your employer, but as a freelance artist, YOU are the boss and your now enhanced ability control your own destiny, easily, from anywhere, will prove to be life altering, to say the least.

The ability, in between sets, to return email, or inform fans on your social networks of your performance whereabouts, or find a local jam session or open mic quickly, then navigate right up to the door of the venue using gps and online maps, means you can spend much more time performing and less time scanning local magazines and paying for overpriced internet cafés to find out what going locally. At very least, you can use the GPS to find places where buskers and other musicians hangout and ask real people face to face.

How about creating spontaneous street concerts in the form of flashmobs? You can simply inform fans and friends on your social networks that you will be at a particular place, marked by a gps map point they can see in google maps or equivalent mapping service, at a particular time, and watch as dozens or hundreds (ok, your girlfriend and one guy from a music forum you frequent, but still...) of people come to check you out. This type of spontaneous gathering is all the more powerful now, with these tools.

One of my favorite functions of such devices is as a portable press kit. I love busking as much as I love playing shows in venues. Many times people who book such venues, will see me on the street and hire me to play. But sometimes I happen upon a place or person and strike up a conversation and said person wants to see what I do. So, I whip out my trusted iphone, which i have preloaded with different types of videos. Some more “jazz” oriented for cafes and jazzier places, some more “dance oriented” for clubs and bars, and some live “street oriented” vids for farmers markets and street fairs. A picture

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may say 1000 words but a video says it all. The video quality on the iphone is extremely high and the volume is adequate. Very useful and powerful.

If you keep a blog, which you should, being able to photograph and post the many wonderful locations you find yourself a part of, builds excitement about you and your art. On my summer 2010 busking tour, I blogged daily with nothing more than my iphone, even without a cellular data account in the countries I went to. I simply took pictures and notes then the following morning during breakfast, I would summarize the previous day and include a pic or two that was the most descriptive. Afterward, I would use the wifi connection to upload it to my blog where an automatic link would be sent to my twitter feed and facebook account. I received loads of very positive feedback from the people who follow me online. Some of whom commented back instantly asking me to do such things as “take a picture of yourself for in front of the Eifel Tower”, which I was more than happy to do! All of my fans came with me on my adventure!

So here are are few suggestions for incorporating a smartphone into your busking concept.

Pick a smart phone that has apps. That may sound silly today, but there are still a class of these devices which look like modern smartphones, but are really just holdovers from a bygone age. I prefer the android, Just make sure that you are able to acquire apps that allow you to do the following things.

Take and EDIT photos and video. Although the capability to edit video wasn't even around just a couple of years ago, I find it indispensable

now. Being able to edit in the device allows you to record your career without having to go to the financial and temporal expense of laptop/dedicated camcorder based editing. You can take your pics/vids and do what you want with them, instantly. It also allows you to take pictures of the many flyers, and business cards you receive while playng in the street.

office software. Knowing when and where you can perform is very important. Such as knowing the local farmers market schedule and the name and mobile number of the person you must speak with there. Having decent contact management and scheduling will make your life much easier as you jump around from place to place.

GPS. Having a database of map points with associated information such as event schedules, crowd type (local/tourist/festival), event type, trouble makers (drunks, jealous vendors, cops,etc), will make your busking much much more efficient and therefore stable (ie profitable). If you share your mappoints with other like minded buskers, and they with you, you will have a viable “busking circuit” that will allow you to work consistently, anywhere in the world. I will cover this topic later in the book.

Always have performance videos, pictures and audio recordings of you act. You would be amazed at who you meet and when. Many times, upon seeing what you do,people offer up valuable information concerning everything from potential busking locations to potential paid gigs. Make sure that the media that you share, is of high quality and focuses on your art, so no “drunk at a party” pic or vids, please. Your media should show what you would look like or bring to a particular place so different videos or different types of performance may be necessary.

Payment systems. There is no reason not to have paypal on your device. Same goes for Square, which is a credit card merchant account type system that allows you to swipe credit cards using a small “square” reader that plugs into the headphone jack of your device. All processing and verification is done online and the purchaser gets a receipt sent to their phone as an sms msg. elegant. This will increase your sales potential and best of all, both of these are free to download and use, except for a transaction fee.

UPDATE. I wrote this in 2010, before I was into bitcoin and before I realized that paypal and credit card companies are the devil. I can not recommend these technologies anymore. I believe that Bitocin is the technology that we as artists need , for us to evolve in the direction of true artistic autonomy.

Musical controller. There is currently a revolution in mobile music making, not seen since the rise of laptop music making. From guitar fx to vocoding to midi controllers to gestural-multitouch synthesizers, to full DJ applications and sheet music, these devices are becoming powerful musical devices. So much so, you may find that you need more than one; one as a dedicated musical device and another for the functions I mentioned above. My iphone/touchOSC based system is so integrated into my live performance and studio music making concept, that I can no longer perform what I now consider as “my music”, without it.

These types of connected smart devices will only get more powerful and the above suggestion only scratch the surface of what is possible so, as soon as you are capable of absorbing the cost of one of these device, you should definitely acquire one and learn how to use it. You will be happy you did!

Finding a Pitch

Types of shows

Yaaaaay! Today is your first day as a busker! You've got your rig together, and you're feeling cautiously confident about going out on the street for the first time. So now it is time to go find a place or places to play. I call this task "Pitch Recon". Today you go out and find a pitch!

Finding a pitch is as much of an art as playing music. It is not necessary to always go to places that have lots of people or many tourists. Depending on what you do, a quieter location can be just as good or better than a lively pitch. I myself shun touristy locales in favor of places that are out of the way and have some sort of ambiance that inspires me to play in a more uninhibited way. But it depends on the performer and the type of show that performer is doing. For the purposes of this book, there are 3 types of show categories that you will probably fall into;

A Traffic dependent set. This type of show, depends on a steady flow of traffic. The objective is to make as many people stop as is possible, put on your show, usually with frequent breaks, and attempt to convert that large number of patrons into a large number of tippers. When you draw many people quickly, they expect to be "entertained". They are expecting something great, and by great I mean big. Non-musical buskers usually call this a "circle-act" because the crowd is instructed to form a circle around the performer(s). There is usually a slow build up to a climax then, just before the climax, you lay out your heartfelt pitch for money, end the show to wild applause and adulation, then "pass the hat". A good circle act/traffic set can net large sums of money in very short amounts of time. But the impetus is

on you to have a high energy act and to do this act somewhat flawlessly. Its probably not the ideal type of set for beginners. The other drawback is the crowds. Crowds draw cops. Crowds draw pickpockets and jealous vendors/store owners. But if you keep your crowds contained, ie, out of the street and not blocking pedestrian paths, AND you are somewhat aware of the business makeup of the are you are in, you shouldn't have too many problems (more on this in a moment)

Ambiance set. This type of set is usually in areas where you are somewhat off to yourself and the foot traffic is somewhat sporadic. You can use the "ambiance" to inspire patrons to tip you. Locations like bridges (overpasses and underpasses), transit system connecting halls, river banks, parks...anywhere where your sound can drift and you can bring people to you. Many times, people like the feeling of "discovering" you, and it can show in your tips and sales. And if you find a place that is reclusive enough, you will never have to worry about noise complaints. If you have discovered the right location, people can hear you waaay before they reach you ,which, if they like you,will increase your chances of getting a tip/making a sale. This type of set is PERFECT for those that want to practice. You can pace yourself in a different type of way and focus on aspects of your music that need work. The drawbacks are that you really must kinda connect with just about everyone one that passes or connect really deeply with afew, because there aren't that many people to begin with. You must maximize every interaction. But you will know freedom like you've never know, when you do.

A hybrid set of both ambiance and circle. If you want to really maximize, develop the ability to play anywhere. Its more than doable to play in the subway for the (ambiance) for people goingto work in the morning, which gets you warmed up, then do a lunch time set (hybrid) where you are doing a bit of a ambient set for people eating

lunch (captive audience), then later in the afternoon go where the tourist hang out and do a few short up-vibe touristy sets. If you've still got energy after that, you can always do some grooving late nightclub foot traffic sets and/or find a little bridge overpass and serenade passing couples. There is no drawback to this one because if you go to a pitch that one type doesn't work, you can try the other, or you can go somewhere that one of the three will work.

I would suggest starting with the ambient set, just to get used to busking in general, then move up to the Hybrid set, meaning, doing the ambient set in a traffic pitch then develop a traffic/circle act more organically. I find that it is easier to go from ambient to traffic than the other way around.

Pitch Recon

Recon is short for Reconnaissance, also known as scouting, is a military term for performing a preliminary [survey](#); especially an exploratory military survey to gain, or collect information. This is especially poignant for busking. You need to develop a skill for finding a pitch that is high in profitability and low in drama. Doesn't matter if there are half a million tourists if you've got some old lady across the street calling the cops every single time you show up, or if it's an area of rowdy young people who like to amuse themselves by tormenting buskers and vendors. You need to pay attention to multiple variables that relate to your ability to busk, stress free.

I suggest going to the potential pitch without your rig, if possible. Be sure to bring your map so that you can keep note of the good pitches as well as the ones to avoid and why (this is where your smartphone starts to come in handy). Go, have a cup of coffee, and just chill. Watch people.

What is the "vibe" in the air?

Is it relaxed?

Is it hectic?

Is it oppressive?

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Do people seem to be suspicious of each other?

Are people on their phones?

Sitting at outdoor cafes?

Do they have shopping bags from local stores?

These questions relate not only to whether or not people feel safe in the area, but whether they are spending money as well. shopping bags are a biggie. If you see lots of shopping bags from local stores, then they are spending money are some of it can be yours! But also pay attention to;

Are there a lot of police officers?

Are there groups of shady looking kids?

Hell, are there groups of shady looking ADULTS?

Are there many panhandlers(beggars)? How do the cops respond to them?

These variables let you know if there is either a propensity for crime in the area and/or if there is a heavy-handed police presence. If its overrun by rowdy types, its probably not the best thing to break out a laptop and other expensive looking gear unless you look like it would be a mistaketo mess with you. But if its some Disney-esque police state, you will probably get “moved-along”, get a ticket and a fine or even get arrested, although the later is very rare.

There are still further things to take into account;

Is it a residential area?

are there offices in the area?

is everything street level or are there residences/businesses above street level?

If it is residential, I would suggest finding other places to play as these will be the people that will complain ceaselessly and anonymously. Unless you are are playing music at a speaking-level volume (which is a creative option), just

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don't...its way more headache than it is worth, 99% of the time. as for offices, most of them are closed by 5pm in most cities in the world and during lunch (12-1pm) so during lunch and after 5, you can perform in most business districts without too much problem although I would wait til atleast 6 or 7 pm to do any sort of traffic/circle set in these areas. Ambient sets, should be no problem and in fact, if you frequent a particular spot, you will find that you have "regulars" ie, people you know and who know you who tip you regularly.

And lastly, you will probably encounter other buskers. This at least lets you know that it is possible to play music in this area, but be careful because if too many buskers start crowding an area and don't have respect for the area or each other, most police officers just shut everyone down. So while doing your recon check to see ;

Are there more than one busker in this area?

WHAT type of music does he/she play?

for how long?

where? in the middle of the square? Against a wall? In an adjacent tunnel?

do they have a license?

is there a busking system in place in this area?

how forthcoming is said busker with information about busking this area?

In some cities, buskers are a family. They watch each others backs and share information freely. In other places, they are worse than gang-bangers and they will sabotage you at the first opportunity. Taking a moment to suss this situation out, is useful. Also, peeping the type of music that is played and for how long. There may be an official or unofficial system in place already. If it is official, you can simply find the office where you may sign up to be on the rotation for locations. Some places hold auditions. Some cities have a licensing system. Many of these things you can find out online at the city's website, but somethings you can only really gain a proper perspective on them by being there and seeing it first hand.

So, as you can see, recon is of the utmost importance. You really need to pay attention to where you are going to set up your rig. If a place “looks” ok but “feels” wrong, side with your gut, until you have assessed the area. Trust while developing your instincts about where to go.

Don't be a dick...But, Don't be a wuss, either...

I feel that, at this juncture, we should take a moment to consider the “politics” of busking. Busking, like almost everything else in this world, has its own politics. Your way of dealing with everyone from friends and associates while on the pitch, to dealing with police, vendors, and even hecklers. There are ways to deal with all of these types of interactions but you need to keep one phrase in mind;

Don't be a Dick...Don't be a Wuss! (DBDDBW)

Being a dick is a sure way for people to band together to screw you. BUT, Don't be a wuss. If you give off the scent of a wuss, it's like blood in a fish tank full of piranha. This is where politics come in. When dealing with people, one must understand and wield the art of politics to their advantage (I suggest reading “the Art of War” as well). Everyone thinks they are right. And the more you argue with someone, the more they dig their heels in, determined to “win” what is now a battle. You need to be smart when dealing with people and compassionate, to a point, about their concerns. From this point of view, you can better determine whether or not they are full of shit. I will give you a short run down of the characters and plot developments you may encounter in this play. These are generalities and your experiences may differ, but these are some of the basic interactions you may encounter.

Suggestions

Never “ask” anyone if it is ok to play, because the answer is almost always NO. especially not police officers! They will almost always say

that its not legal or that you need a license that may or may not exist. Use the notes you took while doing your recon and simply go, and tread carefully,unless you know for a fact that its not allowed. Then just don't.

Don't "set up" on anyone. To "set up" on someone, particularly another busker or a street vendor is to position your pitch close enough that it actually does harm to their ability to perform. Just because you may be louder or flashier does not give you the right to be a dick. Always try to be at least 50-100 feet from another busker. Preferably, ask them when their set will be concluded. If they are cool, they will give you some indication and you can start after that point. If they are not cool they wont. At which point "Do unto others..." but don't be a wuss. respect them the way you'd want to be respected WITHIN REASON. Make sure you are 50-100 feet away from them with your speakers angled away from their direction and DO NOT GET INTO A VOLUME WAR WITH THEM. That is the primary reason amplified buskers have such a hard time and bad reputation, EXCESSIVE VOLUME! When in doubt, swallow your pride if you weren't there first, and go to one of your other locations. Angle you speakers so they aren't pointed into someones place of business. Speaker angling is also for businesses and vendors as well. don't point your speakers at someone knowingly. Especially if you may be interacting with these people daily. Eventually you will wear out your welcome. Its best to angle your speakers in a direction with no businesses, which, I have found, can be straight up, if there are no high rises around. This is not applicable if you are in an ambient area like a bridge underpass where there are no other performers, businesses or vendors.

Keep a copy of the the local city ordinances with you at all times. As I said before, the police and/or business owners sometimes lie. They will tell you that there is a license or noise ordinances or whatever, to keep you from playing,and possibly making money that they feel is

rightfully theirs. By having a copy of the local ordinances with you, you can check the validity of their statements as well as communicate that you aren't stupid and that you understand the law, which will make them interact with you much differently than someone they feel they can get over on.

Keep a small notebook or your smartphone with you at all times. If you are getting harassed by any entity repeatedly, you may need to keep notes. If a vendor or busker or vagrant is constantly and persistently aggressive or constantly doing things to dissuade you from playing in a location, you should note the time and date as well as get as much video, photo and/or audio evidence as is possible. You may have grounds to press charges. Be careful though, because people are much more anxious about having their bullshit recorded and can become even more aggressive. But it can also spare you the "his word against mine" dilemma that buskers are sometimes faced with. Try to work with others until it is just obvious that you can't. Most people see the value of compromise. Some people do not. As a musical busker, why, for instance, compete with the breakdancers? Hell, join forces every once in a while and draw your collective audiences together. You may make more money. You may have more fun! You may just want to collab just to work on your beats, but the outcome can be amazing every once in a while. Sometimes you just can not work with some people and in those instances, it's best to just respect that person as you would want to be respected, but DON'T BE A WUSS. Respect and wussiness are two different things. Always take the higher ground because eventually buskers that are headaches find that they have no where to go when everyone turns their back on them. Stooping to their level only puts you in their category. Don't set up in residential areas. As I stated before, residential areas are no no's. because, in the instance of an apartment block, you have anywhere from 1 to 40 anonymous chances of getting the cops called

on you. Its just not worth it and its easy to avoid. Simply look around before you setup. If you are in a residential area, keep going... Just because someone say that "this"location is theirs, doesn't mean that it is. Buskers and vendors may try to run a "seniority" game on you,ie,"I've played in this spot for 1000 years" blah blah blah...don't fall for it. Don't be a dick, but don't fall for it. Unless, as it is in some locations here in berlin, that person has a license for that pitch (although most buskers here don't have the license), chances are, they are just mad that you beat them to it. Respectfully inform them that you got here first and give them some indication of when you may leave,even if its not for quite some time. but don't just pack up because they say its their pitch. If you do, you will be moving from this point forward. You will stink of wuss. Hold your ground. If there is a Permit, get it. Yeah,yeah, yeah, 1st amendment (if you are American), blah blah blah...get the permit. It's a headache, but do it. One benefit I have found with getting a permit is (DISCLAIMER; this is a dick move and of questionable legality so take it with a grain of salt) that I have used mine in areas where its not applicable. Someone will come up and tell me that I need a permit, then BLAM! I slap em with it. They don't know that its only for some small area, they just see an official document. That wont work on (most) cops, but it will shut vendors and other buskers up pretty quickly. Many times its just a recognizable looking piece of paper that licensed buskers put on the front of their tip container. Most inquisitive parties will simply look to see if said paper is there, and move on.

Dealing with Police

You've probably noticed that I have mentioned police quite a bit in this section of the book. Police officers are not all bad. In fact even most of them aren't bad. But will get some that are bored...and yes,some that are assholes. You are, what I will call, low-hanging fruit. If you are a bored cop and you don't want to have to deal with real criminals, you can always go harass musicians.

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Note that this doesn't apply to 95% of police officers, but the other few percent can make your life hell. Most cops are very cool people. They listen to your music, they buy CD's, and they come to your shows so this is not an indictment on police officers in general, but when they get the call about some guy playing music outside their business or apartment, they have a job to do. Some do what they need to do as officers of the law, and some are assholes. These are the ones you need to be aware of.

First rule when dealing with cops. If they say leave, LEAVE! You can give all the speeches you want but at the end of the day, they can arrest you and take all your gear for varying lengths of time, depending on the city you are in. Leave and come back another day or after that cops shift. You would be amazed at how pleasant one (non-residential) pitch can be once the offices are empty and sergeant prick has gone home for the day. This is where your recon notes come in handy. There is no use in arguing with a cop on your pitch (with all of your "confiscatable" gear). But, if you are in the middle of a set when you are told to leave you can spin it to your advantage. Politely inform your audience that you are being asked to leave and that you appreciate them watching your show. Most times people will tip double what they had intended to, out of spite! You may make 2 hours worth of tips and sales, in 20 minutes!

Be sure to keep a list of ordinances with you at all times, so you can show them their error. You'll still have to leave, but they will know that they have to come to you correctly in future interactions.

Theives

Where there is money, there are thieves. This is a fact of life. Thieves are usually opportunists. They try to find the easiest, most clandestine means of separating you from your stuff. In busy areas, they are not overt. They don't want to be detected. They wait for you to slip up, so they can pick your pocket or grab your money or whatever. Best way to handle this situation is to not leave things laying around "loose". Phones, money, small items, put them in a bag or a box and put that in something that can't be easily grabbed and run off

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with. As for your money, if you have collected a large number of big bills, take those out and put them in the safe place that your other items are stored in. Do this regularly. If you are in an area that has a known pick pocketing underworld, just announce ever so often for people to be aware of their belongings because pick pockets work the area. They will thank you for it.

When leaving the pitch, try not to go anywhere too solitary. If possible, deposit your money at the nearest ATM. If this isn't possible, put your money down in your equipment luggage and leave it there until you get home or to the bank. You probably won't get mugged or robbed, but better safe than sorry.

Tramps and beggars

These guys are reeeeeeeally irritating! Usually they aren't dangerous or violent, but they can screw your whole day up. Most times they are extremely passive aggressive and will wait till you are playing to pan-handle your audience. Your audience is there to listen to you but if this person is aggressive enough or sticks enough, he will clear your crowd. If you scream at him, then you look like an asshole, so you must tread carefully.

What I will usually do, is stop playing and ask them to leave. If they comply, I will give them a buck or two as they are walking away. That way they've gotten some money and the crowd sees that so if they come back, they know they will get fronted on by the crowd.

Your First Show

OK. You have;

Put together the perfect "you" rig.

Scoped and recorded many potential locations and probably times you can perform

An understanding of the politics of busking

You are now more ready than I was when i began my busking journey years ago. So let's set up your pitch. How you set it up depends on the type of crowd you want to or think you might draw. If you are planning on drawing a big crowd, find a location with some room and some space where you can more easily contain a larger crowd. If it is ambient, then find a place where your sound can drift, yet where people can come and give you money, should they be so inspired. And if it is a passer-by crowd, find a creative "bottle neck" where you audience can enjoy your sound before they reach you but must go past you, like a long hall way or bridge. Location location location! When you find a good location or locations, it is religious. there are things you will play in this place that will define your artisitic trajectory and people may eventually come looking for you there to bring you money for a time they passed by months earlier or to offer you a gig. Don't get too attached though. It does not belong to you and if another performer is there, then better luck next time, but while you have it, enjoy it.

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First thing to do is layout your pitch. I like to place the signage and the tip container out first. This gives potential listeners something to see/read while i setup. Over time i have found that laying my signage on the ground right next to my tip container works best. Why? Because one of your missions is to get people to come closer. But people, for various reasons, associate proximity with intimacy. They feel reserved about being too close because they feel as if they owe you something. Your job is to get them over this hurdle. By placing the signage on the ground next to or underneath the merchandise, they must come closer to read it, which brings them closer to you, your merchandise and your tip container. Make sure that what is there is succinct and magnetic.

Setup your tip container and merchandise at this time as well. This is your little store. Your place to make it easy for people to part with their money, so be creative. Remember though that you have limited space, but within that space, go crazy! Believe it our not, people carry money around with them TO SPEND IT. When you don't want to spend money, what do you do? You leave your cash and cards at home, so if they have money on them, they want to spend it. People allot a certain amount of the money they make, to random purchases. Why not on you? So make them HAVE TO have you merchandise. And one way of doing that is to have a nice display area.

when putting out your tip container, "prime the pump". this means, place an example of what people "should" tip you. for instance, i offer my discs under a "pay-what-you-want" model (more on this later in the book) so when i put out my tip container, i place a 5 and/or 10 euro note into my tip container. it raises the level of what people will allow themselves to give yet still gives them the option of paying less.

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The only time this is not recommended is when/if you have to be low key. In that case, do all of the above stuff but in an even more compact fashion. Maybe have a combo tip container/merchandise display box that can just be opened and closed. Or pre-decorate the inside of your instrument/laptop case.

Now setup your instrument. This can be as entertaining as your main set! This affords you an opportunity to chat with potential listeners and explain what you do, why, where you are from, etc. This little chat combined with your later obvious musical genius, can coalesce into a sale or gig, so don't pass up the opportunity to interact at this time. You are busking from the moment you leave your home. Act accordingly.

If you use a laptop, or other gear, try a camping store for very compact tools to put your gear on. I like folding camping stools for my laptop. Tripod music stands are good for lightweight stuff. And try to minimize errant cabling. Keep it neat.

Hmmmm....is there anything else?! Oh yeah, that's right...PERFORMING! Finally! And it only took half a book to get to this point. You are finally ready to display your art! At this point remember to breath. And i suggest a warm up period.

Warming up does a couple of things;

It allows you to get warmed up. It is important to be loose and limber for your set. Your warm up doesn't have to be long although i would try to structure it. Unless you are busking as practice, i'd save the super low level warm up for before you leave home. Things like scales or clip editing. on the street,

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warming up lets you make sure everything is working and optimized for the location that you are in and get yourself warmed up so you can just let your ideas flow.

Allows you to draw a crowd for the REAL show. People will usually see your flurry of activity and come to investigate. At this point, you can set up the premise of what you are doing. You can interact with those that are assembling in a manner that makes others want to come and see, which draws even more people.

After you are warm, remember a few things;

Try to do as much live performance as possible, unless you are specifically trying not to. In other words, don't be a karaoke-esque busker UNLESS you are a karaoke-esque busker. People like to feel that you have "earned" their money. In a related note, do not stare at your computer screen unless that's part of your act and, optimally, everyone else can look at it too.

Make sure that your sets have a beginning, middle and end. This doesn't infer any set length. You can determine that based on how you feel, where you are at and your audience. But setting up your narrative and giving some sort of resolution, allows your audience to also punctuate the moment with a purchase or tip. If you are doing an ambient set for a large audience and have a leisurely crowd, you can get for 30-40 minutes or more and just give a general nod towards your merchandise area. If you are doing traffic or passerby sets, then you may want to structure a narrative with more "peaks" and "valleys". what this means is that you don't necessarily have to stop and start a lot, but if, say, a hallway is 100m on either side of you, that gives you approximately 3-4 minutes from the moment of first hearing your sound to the moment they reach you, to make a decision to give or buy, so that means you have 2 1/2 minutes to oscillate a satisfactory sonic trajectory.

while playing

depending on your audience type, some artists like to talk between "sonic thoughts" (i don't want to say "songs" because we live in the age of dj culture where we have grown accustomed to continuous sonic trajectories so i reference these moments as peaks, which are full on sonic expression and valleys which are less dense and maybe even no music) . if you don't feel like talking between pieces, i suggest putting on your signage that it is acceptable for audiences to do their own transactions with change that is in the tip container. i have found that in 99% of cases, most people are very very conscious of being perceived as a thief so they usually go overboard trying to show you that they are making correct change or getting a piece of your merchandise.

If you like to talk between sets/pieces, this is your opportunity to tell your story in less than 20 seconds.

Where are you from?

What are you doing here?

Some interesting detail about your merchandise

A thank you that is relative to the personality you are projecting.

If it is at the end of the set, let people know that you can chat and answer questions. And do that! This is where the exchange really happens. Your music drew them but your personality between pieces is what makes them take out their wallets.

People love to feel that they are important and it is part of your job at this point, to make them feel good about "bothering" you. Take a moment to tell

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them some bit of trivia about the music or the instrumentation or whatever is relevant. People really want to know. And the personal attention you show one person? The persons around them want to feel that special connection as well, and you should take the time to give it. It is as much a part of your artistry as your music and merchandise.

There is one simple thing you can do that will help you sell more CDs than anything else you can do besides playing brilliantly; SIGNING THEM! Sign each and every cd for each customer. Use a nice marker. I love metallic paint pens. There is a cosmic thing about getting something from an artist and when that artist has put a piece of themselves on it for you, it makes it even more special.

This starts what I call a "sales cascade". Understand, that even now, in the age of downloads, people aren't buying a "CD", they are buying an artifact of their interaction with you. It works like this; one person buys a disc, you take a bit you TLC time with them and make them feel special. Others around them want to feel a bit special as well, especially if your music has touched them as a group. so they each grab a cd from a now quickly dwindling stack of discs, each waiting patiently for a bit of attention and a signature, until your stack is gone and you have a line of people waiting to interact with you. At this point, AND ONLY AT THIS POINT, replenish your stack, if you have more discs. The act of replenishment serves as a catharsis that makes those that wanted one but weren't quick enough feel a flush of relief that they won't be left out of this moment. As the line builds, you must widen your "attention bubble" carefully. Too much attention on one person at this point and the others start to feel dissed. But talking to too many people at once makes each person not feel as special as they perceived that the first person felt. A bubble of 3-5 strangers or 7-10 people, who know each other, is a good size.

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Rinse and repeat. There you have your first full set! Congratulations! Take a bit of time to get a drink or eat something light and start again. Pace your self. Enjoy yourself. Enjoy interacting with the people that are taking the time to absorb your vibrations.

These are the basics of Busking for the 21st century musician. With what you have learned up to this point, you are a busker and there is a whole world of opportunity that awaits you!

Remember to mention, at the end of your set, that you appreciate any tips and donations...Thank you!



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