

Communicating with the Band in Their Vocabulary

The following is a glossary of terms, some of which you won't readily find in music textbooks. These are practical, on-the-job, day-to-day terms you will want to know in the real world of performing and singing on stage. These will aid you greatly in communicating with the band in **their** language.

A Capella – Singing alone or unaccompanied, literally in a chapel style, i.e., vocal music without instrumental accompaniment. This can be another good style in the singer's palette of colors.

Accelerando - Means to speed up the music at this point little by little.

Ad Lib - **Also means** rubato and colla voce. This is music that is played out of tempo or **out of time where the musicians** follow the singer word for word. This also means that in rubato sections of your "Do-it-yourself" charts, you **MUST** write all the lyrics so that your musicians can follow your words. Otherwise, they haven't the slightest idea where you are at any given point in an ad-lib section. (All music is either in some tempo or it is not.)

Agent - One who actually finds you work and books your act.

Arrangement - A completely original musical interpretation of a song arranged for one or more pieces of a band.

A & R Man - Stands for Artists and Repertoire. This is the person at a record company who listens to your original demos or cassettes for possible consideration of a record deal.

Back Beat - Traditionally, beats two and four of a 4/4 repeating pattern. You want to feel the beat on two and four because that is where most musicians reference the tempo, i.e., one AND two AND. etc. In a Motown groove, back beat used to be referred to as "fat back." In either case, try to snap your fingers on two and four so that your band won't drift away into a confused slumber.

Bar Line - A vertical line drawn through the staff to mark off measures.

Bass - Refers to a bass guitar or upright bass. If you want to remain on good terms with the bass player, PLEASE don't misspell his instrument "BASE," as is commonly seen on many primitive sheet music arrangements. This is his baby, and it annoys him greatly when you don't spell his baby's name right.

Bell Tone - This is a single note given to singers so they may find their starting pitch, usually at the beginning of an a cappella, or unaccompanied, introduction to a song. It is commonly played on piano or guitar softly enough for only the singer to hear and is written onto the chart as "BELL TONE."

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Booking - A booking means getting hired for one or more nights in a location. A one-nighter, obviously, refers to being hired for only one night.

Break - In singing, break refers to the register break in your singing range, i.e., the abrupt change in vocal sound when you shift from chest voice (lower register) to head voice (upper register, or falsetto). When your musicians speak of the break, however, they are definitely not referring to your voice, but rather to the fifteen-minute, union-specified break they will insist on every hour. This is commonly expressed as, "Hey, man, when are we gonna get our break?"

Bridge - The bridge of a song is used to connect the choruses of a song together in a smooth transition. This is often a short, two- or four-bar, new thematic piece of material introduced into a song. Many times, after singing an entire song once through, a singer will choose to repeat the bridge of the song, which is referred to as "singing the song one-and-a-half times through" (written "1 1/2x's" at the beginning of the chart).

Bright - Refers to tempo. The term bright, often written on charts as "brite," refers here to a lively tempo and a generally upbeat lyric.

Casual - Refers to any music gig where one is playing a private party such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, or other private parties. This is considered different from doing an act where an audience is sitting down in a club or theater to view your show. In casuals, oftentimes, you are hired to play dance music or background music and sometimes take requests.

Changes - In musician's lingo, refers to the chord variations, or chord changes. Musicians often will compliment the arranger in absentia on his/her good or "hip" changes. Marked as letters and numbers above the staff.

Chart - This kind of a chart is not a nautical map, although like a map, it should give your players good directions on how to get where you want to go. The chart is the arrangement. This comes in several different styles.

A) Chord Chart - With some lyrics and chords on one staff;

B) Lead Sheet - With the specific written melody, lyrics, and chords (also using only one staff [treble clef]). This much information defines an original tune and is the minimum requirement for copyrighting a song;

C) Rhythm Chart - Using both treble and bass clefs. This two-staved arrangement can be used by all members of a rhythm section (piano, bass, drums, and guitar), as it spells out specific information for all four rhythm players;

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- D) Conductor's Chart - A three-staved arrangement consisting of a lead sheet-type line in the treble clef with melody and lyrics, coupled with a rhythm section-type, two-staved arrangement of treble and bass clefs which precisely defines the entire song.
- E) Sheet Music - Store-bought arrangements (you know what they look like). Only original or handwritten arrangements have the distinction of being called "charts";
- F) Head Chart - Unwritten charts that are stored only in the head. As we discussed earlier, if you know your key to a certain song, and tell the band what style and tempo you do it in, then the band and yourself spontaneously create an improvisational arrangement called a head chart. Singers should write down the keys to many of their songs and keep that piece of paper handy in a wallet or purse for emergency situations which require head charts.

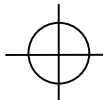
Chops - Refers to the technical playing ability of a musician or singer, as in: "He's got great chops."

Chorus - The strong or main theme of a song, usually containing the hook. This is referred to as the "A" section of the song. Many contemporary songs are composed in an A/A/B/A format, or an A/B/A/B format, where "B" is the bridge. Usually the verse and chorus alternate in varying configurations every eight bars or so.

Chromatic Scale - Simply put, all the black and white notes on the piano played from one octave to the next.

Clef - A sign written at the beginning of the staff in order to tell the reader which particular note is in or on each particular line or space. There are two primary clefs used in modern popular music. The "G" clef, or treble clef, which resembles a backwards letter "S"; and the "F" clef, or bass clef, which resembles a backwards letter "C."

Coda - The coda is generally the final major section of a song and should be one of the most important and easily readable indications on your "Do-it-yourself" charts. The coda correctly looks like this:



This should also be highlighted in red, as this is THE major freeway off ramp your musicians will look for. If your musicians don't easily find this sign in the heat of battle on stage, this will cause major train wrecks in your musical performance and as much frustration as would an unmarked freeway exit that you are desperately seeking while

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streaking down the highway at sixty miles an hour, which is a fair analogy to your musicians reading your music

Concerted Rhythm - Strong rhythmic patterns that entire groups of the band would play all at the same time. For example, strong brass section punches or repeating rhythmic phrases that entire sections of the band would all play at the same time to highlight or accentuate a strong lyric. A rhythmic punch.

Count In - The number of beats you will be counting for your band before the tune begins. This tells them exactly when to come in and also the tempo of the song.

Count Off - Same as "Count In." Often done by the drummer. In the case of long pauses within a piece of music, or near the end following an extended rubato section, the singer, or conductor will often "count off" the last "in tempo" phrase.

Cue Or On Cue - Written boldly on your "Do-it-yourself" charts to signal an important change in the music. Often you must cue the band out of a vamp, on a stop-time figure, when you take the coda, or simply to cut the band off at the end of a song. Cuing means simply to conduct or point out important musical information while the ensemble is performing. Cuing the band is wisely done by both you and your conductor as a double failsafe approach to performance.

Dark - This means that these are the nights in which the club is simply not open for business. A "dark date" refers to a gig not reported to the Musicians Union.

Day Gig - The job you have during the day that pays the bills while you're developing your musical career. This is the thing you don't want to quit until the last minute, when you're assured of lead-pipe cinch success.

Diatonic Scale - Simply put, the common scale which we recognize as "Do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do."

Dictated - Written boldly on your "Do-it-yourself" sheet music arrangements, this is a section where you must cue the band note for note. Examples would be the pickups to the song "If My Friends Could See Me Now" from *Sweet Charity*. "If - They - Could - See Me Now"; or the elongated ending from "Theme From New York, New York" accentuated by dictated beats: "It's up to you - New - York - New - York."

Downbeat - Beat "one" of a bar. The first beat in each bar. It is important to cue a band at the beginning of a song with a strong downbeat. Hopefully, you will feel the downbeat of a measure at all times so that you don't become hopelessly lost. The term downbeat also has a second meaning, that is, what precise time a job, or gig, starts. "Downbeat at eight" means that you are set up and ready to play at eight. This allows for the fact that it takes different musicians a different amount of time to set up, which is not the singer's or band leader's concern.

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D.S. al Coda - Means go back to the sign and play only as far as the coda, at which point you skip all the way over to the next coda sign. D.S. is the abbreviation for the Italian "dal segno," which means to the sign. This sign and coda combination is, in effect, a major freeway exit for your musicians and should be marked very boldly on your charts so as to be easily seen under the low-light conditions of normal club or concert hall performance. It is a good idea to highlight the sign and the coda by boxing them in red pencil. The sign, or segno, is only written, as follows:



The Edge - The edge is the very tiptop of the chart, including the intro (i.e., the edge of the paper).

Eyeglasses - (Commonly penciled into music to indicate a particularly difficult passage coming up. This means to the player to look closely at a passage that he might need to rehearse at home or to watch the singer very closely in performance for a specific and important cue.

Figure - A tiny lick or a small melodic pattern consisting of just a few notes.

Food And Beverage Director- In seeking long-term performance employment at hotels, casinos, restaurants, and lounges, this person is most likely responsible for hiring entertainment and, in most cases, is the person you audition for before getting a job.

Four Wall - Four walling a production means that you, as the performer, also produce the act. This means specifically that you hire the band, rent the theater, pay all the overhead costs (like light and sound), and take in all of the monies.

Gig - **Any music job.** Don't find yourself saying to the band, "Hey, guys, we have this keen JOB tonight playing music." You might give away your amateur standing.

The Head - The head is the top of the tune where the singer would come in, i.e., not including the intro.

Hook - The unique, catchy phrase in a song, often the title. The strongest or most memorable repeating phrase or "lick" in the song.

The Ink Is Good - This phrase means to play the chart exactly as written with no alterations, often ignoring other pencil markings. Over time, your charts will collect lots of extraneous pencil markings, which is why you should keep the original onionskins in storage at home or with your copyist. By the way, markings



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on music should only be made in pencil, as it is considered a blasphemous sin of the highest order to mark on music with ink.

In One - Often referred to in the beginning of a chart near the tempo marking, commonly when there is a bright or fast 3/4 meter. The tempo at that point feels so bright that one does not hear the pulse as three specific beats, but rather the three beats in a measure feel like one pulse. For example, the song "Show Me," from *My Fair Lady* is written in 3/4, but designated in one. Other examples would be "Bluesette," "My Favorite Things," or many jazz waltzes.

In The Pocket - You might hear a musician speak of an arrangement or a performance as being "in the pocket." This means that you have tapped into that inside groove of singing a song with the absolute correct intention of the way it should be done.

Intro - Means the introduction of the song, often four or eight bars, or an open, repeating vamp.

Key Signature - The sharps (resembling a number sign)  or flats (resembling a lower case letter "B")  at the beginning of each staff to indicate the key of the composition.

Leading The Singer - This is where a singer will want the accompaniment to deliberately anticipate his/her entrance at every measure. This is not rushing the tempo, but rather giving a strong downbeat on every bar so that the singer may back phrase each line.

Lick - A lick is a short, isolated melody or rhythmic pattern in a song.

L'istesso - Means the same tempo as before, even if you go into a different meter. For example, if you are performing a song in 4/4 time, and the song suddenly goes into 3/4 time, but the basic pulse remains the same, then the word *L'istesso* should be written over the transition so that the musicians will not suddenly play the song faster or slower.

Lotsa Footballs (AKA Lotsa Goose Eggs) - This refers to a string of whole notes that the band, usually horns or strings, play as an accompaniment to the singer. When you are creating a head chart with the band, due to lack of time, and you have horn players on a gig, it is easier and safer to tell the horn players to play "lotsa footballs," which they will interpret as meaning slower-moving notes on the various chord changes. This approach, by the way, works well for romantic ballads and slower tunes in general.

Manager - One who directs your career in terms of image, material, etc. A personal manager is often the liaison between agent and artist. My own opinion is that

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personal managers are not needed in the beginning phase of a career but can become invaluable as an artist's career starts to take off. (With the combination of an agent and manager, each taking ten to fifteen percent or more, this can add up quickly to a substantial percentage that you, the artist, will have to pay out. It is better if you can become your own agent and manager until your career merits hiring these people.)

Measure Or Bar - The space filled with musical notes or rest marks between the bar lines.

Medley - A combination of two or more songs in a single arrangement. Three is considered optimum.

Mix - In a demo or master recording, this refers to the overall final balance and blend of all the recorded tracks on the tape. Perhaps the most common phrase heard in any recording studio is, "We can fix it in the mix."

One-And-A-Half Times - (Written "1 1/2 X's" at the top of your sheet music.) In a standard song, this means to play one complete time through and then repeat back to the bridge. For example, in the song "When You're Smilin'," this means that after playing the entire song, the band repeats back to the bridge, "But when you're crying . . ." or in the song "Stormy Weather," repeating back to the line, "When he went away . . ."

Onionskins - Translucent music manuscript paper with bar lines printed on the opposite side of the writing surfaces so that you or your copyist can write music in ink, and where there is a mistake, erase the note off the paper without erasing all the bar lines as well. These serve as original charts to be used only for Ozlaid-type reproduction to make copies that you will actually use in performance.

On The Nose - Also referred to as "on the stick." In your conducting of the band, this means that there is no count off into a tune, there is just a downbeat that is given. This is important for certain situations where one must go into the tempo immediately, either from the beginning of a song or when coming out of a rubato section.

Phrase - Occurring from breath to breath, a phrase is a group of words connected and unified by the single thought or image it represents. A "musical sentence." You can find the best phrasing by reading the lyric as if it were a script, to determine where the natural breaths occur. Breath marks are written into the music using an apostrophe or a check mark. Studying phrasing is helpful to a singer and is best done, in my opinion, by listening to recordings of the great masters in a particular style. For example, in jazz, listening to Ella Fitzgerald or Sarah Vaughn's phrasing; for a blues style, Joe Williams; R & B, Aretha Franklin or Gladys Knight; pop ballad phrasing, Barbara Streisand; opera, Luciano Pavarotti or Joan Sutherland's phrasing.

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Platform Act - A self-contained act like a comic, juggler, ventriloquist, or solo singer, perhaps playing guitar or singing to tapes. Doesn't require a band or extensive staging. An act that generally requires only a microphone.

Punching In - Most recording equipment today affords the luxury of recording over part of a take to change a few bad notes. In a studio, you may find you like a certain take the best, except for a small part of one phrase. You can then overdub this pass by punching in, or re-recording, this short segment of the song.

Repeat Sign - Looks as follows



and simply means "go back to the nearest other repeat sign." Make them big, bold, and highlighted in red pencil on your chart so that they can be easily read under low light in performance.

Rhythm Section - A combination of rhythm instruments which are thought of today as piano, bass, drums, and guitar. A piano trio usually means piano, bass, and drums. A guitar trio refers to guitar, bass, and drums. A piano duo refers to piano and bass or piano and drums, etc. Common nightclub act configurations are piano, bass, and drums; common rock and roll acts are two guitars, bass, and drums. (A small horn section commonly refers to one trumpet, one trombone, and one sax in addition to the rhythm section, and, of course, bands get larger from there.)

Riff - A riff is a short pattern in a song but is generally more extended than a lick. It is often a repeated or sequential pattern, found many times in a song.

Ritard - Abbreviated Rit. on music, means to slow down a section. Please don't spell it "retard," which is a mentally deficient person.

Segue - Pronounced "seg-way," it literally means "follows." This means go on directly to the next song.

Segue As One - This means to go directly to the next song with no break at all in the music, as if it were all connected. This segue does not allow for audience applause at the end of the song.

Applause Segue - Written on the chart as such (at the finish), this instructs your band to wait until the crest of the applause starts to diminish and then start the next song. Waiting until the applause has crested is important so as not to cover up the first part of the next tune. UAPPLAUSE. SEGUE" should be written in pencil

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at the end of the chart. This will change from show to show as you restructure your set.

Set - A set is one show within a "gig," usually lasting 45 minutes to an hour.

Short Ending On Cue - Written as such on your charts, you are alerting the band that there is an abrupt ending coming soon on your chart. Sometimes restating the obvious is an insurance policy for everybody to end together, thus eliminating the egg-on-the-face syndrome.

Single - A single refers to a self-contained act that has been booked where the singer becomes his own band by accompanying himself on piano or guitar.

Staff Or Stave - A series of 5 horizontal lines separated by 4 spaces on which musical notes are written. It is used to indicate both the pitch of the notes and the intervals between one note and the next.

Standard - A song that has become so popular that it is generally regarded as one that all musicians would know without music. In performing on short notice, a singer is well advised to have a list of standards that most bands know, and the keys written on a piece of paper so that he/she can create head charts on the spot, on stage, in front of a live audience. By cuing the band appropriately (which I discuss in Chapter 5, "Head Charts And Conducting"), you can create no-rehearsal arrangements. Standards are considered songs like "Misty," "Bye, Bye, Blackbird," "Chicago," etc., and generally are written in an AABA form, or verse, verse, chorus, verse; or chorus, chorus, bridge, chorus.

Stop Time - An instruction to mark on your charts indicating that the band comes to a complete stop in the music while the tempo keeps going. These are open rhythmic sections where the music appears to "stop" or where the band is playing a concerted or tutti rhythmic phrase. It is commonly written as "Stop X." You have heard an example of this approach in choruses of "Tea For Two", where a tap dancer is doing his or her thing and the band plays chunks of phrases in tempo, opening up enough sections for the tap dancer to be heard.

Sweetening - Sweetening the song means to fill out the basic vocal and rhythm tracks with other instruments like strings, horns, or synthesizers. "Sweetening" the tracks will fatten up the overall sound to create more of a "production" demo.

Tacet - Written on music where you want the player to lay out and not play during the entire course of the tune. This can also mean to rest in major sections of the song. If you are singing a song a *cappella* (unaccompanied), for example, then everyone in the band would still get a part, but it would be marked "TACET" boldly across the top so that everyone would know the order sequence of the show and not start playing the next piece of music in the show.

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Tag - The end of the song, often the last few bars, sometimes made as a reference to the coda. Often, the tag is a repeated last phrase of a song.

Take - A take is one performance or a "pass" of a song by an artist in a recording studio. Often designated as Take One or Take Two, etc., a singer may choose to sing several versions or "takes" of a vocal on separate tracks.

Takedowns - An arrangement that is literally transcribed from a recording as opposed to the term "arrangement," which implies an original interpretation of a song. Good arranging is creatively as much work as good composition

Tessitura - The general register of a song. The predominant inclination of a melody to tend towards either the high or low range, i.e., if a song has mostly high notes in the melody, it is said to have a "high *tessitura*" *Tessitura* is not to be confused with the range **of a song**, which is the absolute span of a melody encompassing the very highest and lowest notes. The range of a song always stays the same regardless of the key. Many contemporary songs are written with an absolute range of an octave and a half and voiced with a generally mid-range *tessitura* so that most people can sing them. (The majority of people only have an effective range of one-and-a-half octaves.) Irving Berlin, for example, kept many of his songs to less than an octave range, thereby making it possible for almost anyone to sing his songs!

Three Times And Out - (Written U3X's AND OUT) This is another standard way to end a song by repeating the last phrase three times before the band plays the ending.

Time Signature - The time (meter) is indicated at the beginning of a song by two numbers, one above the other. The lower indicates the chosen unit of measurement (half note, quarter note, etc.), while the upper number tells you how many of those particular notes are in each measure or bar.

Track - This is a narrow strip designated along the continuous length of tape as being independent and isolated from other tracks. Multi-track recording refers to having more than one mono-track, giving you the advantage of recording live with pre-existing tracks to fill up or "fatten" the overall sound. The number of tracks on a tape recording commonly varies from two to twenty-four, depending on the tape head configuration.

Tumaround - Found at the end of a song, a repeated tag or vamp to extend the ending of a song. This can be signaled to the band by rotating the hand in a small circle.

Tutti - **From** the Italian, meaning "all." Similar to concerted rhythm, except the entire band is playing the same lick or phrase simultaneously. In Italian, *fuffi fruffi* is all the flavors. "Tutti" on your "Do-it-yourself" charts means that all the instruments are to play the same rhythmic and/or unison line.

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Tutti Break - This means that all of the instruments in your band rest, or "lay out" at the same time. Does not mean the band all goes out for a Miller Light at the same time.

Two Wall - Two walling a production means that the theater or club owner will share the costs with the artist by providing the theater at no cost, often paying for the promotion and publicity, and sharing costs of lights and sound with the artist. In return, this businessman who is underwriting your act splits the take with you on a prearranged percentage agreement, often fifty-fifty.

Vamp - Any short repeating figure or phrase, often accompanied with instructions like, "Vamp till cue," in which the singer cues the band out of the vamp. While a band is vamping, possibly under some dialogue, you, as the lead singer, decide when to come back into the tune out of this repeating vamp.

Verse - Often the initial or "story" part of a song, usually found at the beginning of a tune. This is sometimes referred to as the "A" section of a song.

Vibrato - A tone fluctuating slightly in volume and pitch. We may also refer to the rate or width of a pulse at which this fluctuation occurs. Wide vibrato, narrow vibrato, and straight tone (without vibrato) are additional vocal colors a singer can use. Vibrato can be created from the diaphragm, throat, or vocal cord flutter. Try to use vibrato techniques appropriately. You might consider using a mixed combination of various kinds of vibrato, alternating vibrato technique with pure, straight tones, depending on the circumstance. Vibrato is generally inadvisable for group singing, although acceptable in large church ensembles. Collectively, vibrato tends to "muddy the waters" in group singing, if you want a clean "commercial" sound.

Vocal Coach - Someone who may assist in any number of areas that include expressiveness in vocal performance, including embellishment, finding a key, arrangements, and overall artistry. Someone who specifically concentrates on a singer's abilities related to clarity, projection, range expansion, etc., is referred to as a voice teacher.

V.S. - An abbreviation for the Italian phrase "*volti subito*." This means to turn over the page quickly as there is an important figure or cue coming next. By putting V.S. at the bottom of a page, you are telling the band to be aware of an important page turn that they need to make rapidly in order not to miss an important cue on the top of the next page.

Walking Bass - A constant and linear moving bass line on each pulse of a 4/4 swing tune, often played using a chromatic or diatonic scale.

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Weekend Gig - Refers usually to a Friday and Saturday night. (A "three-nighter" commonly refers to a Thursday through Saturday night gig, and a "five-nighter" generally means a Tuesday through Saturday night gig. The point here is that most clubs are dark Sunday and Monday nights.)