IASJ

International Association of Schools of Jazz

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THE CHANGING MUSIC WORLD

It is obvious to anyone connected with the music business that we are in the midst of a transition from the old to the new. The normal way of doing things is over and what will replace the old has yet to be settled. How does a young, well trained artist get along in this new, still unclear situation?

There are two sayings that to my mind will always be true: "cream rises to the top" and "water seeks its own level." If an individual is intent on attaining something and works hard there is always room for them somewhere, somehow. Surely the situation is not the way it was and a young artist must be even more flexible than ever before: musically, in business, and even socially. My period of breaking into the business was marked by intense jamming, doing gigs for almost no money, and actually waiting on line to be chosen by a master to serve in a sideman-apprentice role in order to be validated to the forces that hired and fired; which were record companies and club owners. You had to physically be at the right place at the right time to take advantage of an opportunity and you had only ONE chance.

Now the prerequisites are many, and one must be well equipped. At the Manhattan School of Music where I teach in the graduate division, the students have three requirements for the program. They must be performance ready, have the ability to write music in all situations ranging from small group to orchestra, and be able to teach proficiently (which includes giving clinic presentations). Add to that the obvious things such as computer-sequencing and the like, skills that all young musicians seem automatically to have, and the complete musician for the 21st century is ready to deal. With the internet and immediate global communication, musicians can find themselves in all sorts of favourable situations that can be applied towards progressing in the field: situations which may involve any or all these skills in various manifestations, and result in travelling, or even creating opportunities on the net itself.

Yes, the eyes of my generation have witnessed a world which has changed, but imagine what it was like for your grandparents from before the war in the 1940s when people didn't have so many of the basics of life. We live in a world where there is more opportunity than ever for a young person willing to work and learn according to the situation as it is now, not yesterday. History repeats itself. The hungriest will survive.

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