

# PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism or lack of it can make the difference between keeping a job or losing it. This applies playing music as much as to any other activity. It also applies to anyone who plays music, except for people who merely play an instrument at home. If you play in public or even just take part in a rehearsal band, on a professional or amateur basis, you are expected to abide by the general, mostly unwritten rules of professionalism with regard to music.

For something so important it is strange then that very few books on jazz even mention the word. So I shall try and outline some of the points here.

## Being on time for the gig

Everyone has those times when circumstances arise which prevent them from being on time. Fortunately these are rare. But if you are persistently late for gigs, you disrupt other members of the band when you arrive, give the band a bad name and the whole band may be sacked because of it. A band minus the drummer for the first half-an-hour in a funk or rock band would not last long, would it?

## Being prepared on the gig

Again things can go wrong for even the most conscientious players. But if you persistently turn up without a music stand, for instance, you will stand out like a sore thumb and pestering other people to lend you one every time is hardly likely to do much for your popularity.

## Being dressed right

If the dress code is smart casual, it means **smart**. Sloppy dressing annoys people who might book you and the band is tarnished by your sloppiness.

## Not messing about between numbers

It is not professional if you play snatches of tunes or practice things between numbers. Play when you are meant to play, and don't play when you are not meant to.

## Being unruly

If you behave badly on stage, shouting, drawing attention to yourself, or larking about, the band as a whole may suffer and you annoy other people in the band in the process.

## Drinking/smoking on the stand

Before you indulge yourself, check if it's OK with the bandleader.

## Being rude to customers

Guess who is paying you money!

Even if it's a freebie, you never know who might be in the audience.

### Slacking off other musicians

The worst instance of this is when singers or bandleaders use the microphone to criticise members of the band who are not in a position to defend themselves. Don't.

### Conduct at rehearsals

If playing from music, remember that someone has spent a long time writing out parts, especially if they have not been paid for doing so. Respect them for doing this. Criticism can often be offensive and can disrupt a rehearsal. By all means say if anything is not right, but be constructive and helpful.

From the other side, don't be too precious about your arrangements and don't pick on people and ridicule them if they find something difficult to play.

### Respond to offers of gigs

If someone contacts you about doing a gig or a rehearsal, reply to them as soon as you can. If you don't, it can be very frustrating for a person who is trying to put together a band and it could result in the gig or rehearsal being called off.

### Be honest with regard to money

If you are a bandleader or manager, or owner of a venue, pay musicians promptly what is agreed beforehand (or more!) If you are putting in a dep or sub, don't forget to pay them what you said you would and in reasonable time.