

Life's Little Fake Book

**Congrats, music school grads.
Now the real education begins...**



Good evening, graduates and faculty. Thank you for allowing me to be your commencement speaker here at the Tommy Tedesco School of Applied Music. You've survived those classes in voicing and ensemble playing. You've even stayed awake during those 9 A.M. *How to Be a Better Player* clinics. Now it's time to put everything you've learned here to use.

But before you walk out that door, head held high and floppy disks in hand, be aware that a lot of what you've learned in school may have a slightly different meaning out there in the real world. For example . . .

Musical Terms. There's more to the lingo than *pianissimo* and *mezzoforte*. Learn and memorize the following.

"The gig is 99% sure!" (Translation: It's not going to happen.)

"It's great exposure!" (Translation: They'll charge you for beers, and you can't use the dressing room.)

"It's a laid-back venue." (There are two possible meanings here. West Coast Translation: it's a tiny room on the first floor of a vegetarian bed-and-breakfast place. They'll monitor your volume with a dB meter. There's no smoking in the club, on the terrace, or in the dressing room. The soundperson is a fetishist with multiple piercings. East Coast Translation: It's a beach gig. There's no stage or A.C. Half the patrons are middle-aged acid casualties who claim to have played with the Turtles. The other half are bikers who have had their driver's licenses suspended.)

Tempo Tips. Forget all you've learned about *moderato* and *allegro*. Here's all you have to remember: When a fight breaks out,

don't quit playing. And be prepared to play "Last Date": This beautiful, soothing piano classic by the late Floyd Cramer is the musical equivalent of St. John's Wort for agitated rednecks.

Reading Charts. Sure, you can sight-read all those badass Gm7+5-9/C configurations. But there's another mode of sight-reading you'll need to learn as well. In order to tell how the gig went, memorize this chart:

RESPONDEE	THEY LOVED YOU	NOT BAD	THEY HATED IT!
Bartender at the club	VERBAL: "Awesome! What are ya drinking!" NON-VERBAL: High fives you while nodding head enthusiastically.	VERBAL: "All right!" NON-VERBAL: Points index finger and winks. Continues talking with blonde at the bar.	VERBAL: "That was...different." (inflection rises at the end of sentence) NON-VERBAL: Makes no eye contact. Continues watching ESPN2.
A&R Person at SXSW	VERBAL: "All right, guys! By all means, call me, here's my card." NON-VERBAL: Hugs band members, ignores ringing cell phone.	VERBAL: "Personally, guys... I like it. Listen, send me a tape." NON-VERBAL: Makes "I'm sincere" gestures with hands. Answers cell phone.	VERBAL: "Guys, that was interesting, really, you know, different." NON-VERBAL: Gives you brief thumbs-up sign, in between making cell phone calls.
Highly Attractive Audience Member	VERBAL: "Dude! that absolutely ruled!" NON-VERBAL: High fives and hugs you. Shows you tongue piercing.	VERBAL: "Right on, Dude." NON-VERBAL: Smiles, lights clove cigarette, checks beeper.	VERBAL: "Dude! That was, uh...like, different, know what I'm sayin'?" NON-VERBAL: Smiles, gets in car.

Chord Structure. Always remember Wirtz's Universal Chord Law: "Never use a maj7 chord in any bar that is named after a deceased NASCAR driver, a large-calibre firearm, or an intoxicated farm animal."

In closing, let remind you to always be kind to your soundman—especially if she has multiple piercings. Thank you, and good luck.

—Reverend Billy C. Wirtz