

Songwriter Profile - Peter Aston (2)

What sort of venues do you play?

We do lots and lots of weddings...pretty well every Saturday during the Summer. We also play at all sorts of unusual places. One of the most unusual gigs was on a schooner owned by an exiled Cuban gold miner, complete with an all-female Swedish crew. That was a very interesting one! We play at private functions, also public ones, and travel as far as London, Birmingham, and Cornwall.

Do you get chance to sing your Christian songs with the band?

I guess you mean with my ceilidh band Cottage Industry rather than at out-and-out Christian concerts? Well yes I do, if I think I can get away with it...it's a matter of knowing your audience really.

And are they well received?

Generally they are - maybe because they stand up OK as songs in their own right, regardless of the lyrical content.

Do you have to consider a different promotional strategy for your inspirational songs?

Not really, the strategy as opposed to the detailed work, is pretty well the same - identify the target audience, raise awareness and then try to get the music to them.

Do you feel you are getting the Christian message across to the people via your music?

I hope so! The response at concerts of course is immediate but also it's amazing the number of e-mails I get from people who've bought the album and felt moved by the songs. It's very humbling really.

Is the Christian market a difficult one?

Certainly in the UK it's difficult to break through as the market is pretty well dominated by just one or two large organisations who, naturally enough, are inundated with demo songs. But I believe the old adage that the cream will always rise to the top of the milk - eventually!

Do you have plans for another CD like "Name In The Sand"?

I'm writing and recording new Christian material at the moment with the aim of a new release by the end of the year. So at the moment it's 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration!

Have you entered any of the songs in a song contest?

I haven't been that interested on song contests to be honest...although some years ago, I did enter a song in the Eurovision Song Contest, without success! Last year, I entered the Unisong Contest with "Make Your Choice" which was on the "Name In The Sand" album. It didn't get anywhere but I did get a very encouraging critique of the song. This years results have just come out, and although I didn't win, "Horton Tower" was a finalist - again, that's encouraging.

What about publishers? Have you tried sending your material out to them?

Yes. In the early days I sent a lot off to the various publishers which ended with a wall full of rejection slips...which is why I decided to go down the route of recording and putting them out myself.

How do you sell your albums - is it mainly at your gigs?

Yes, but also on my website. We've had a few inquiries from people visiting the site. I think the Web, and local promotions, are the way forward.

Do you have particular format when creating a song?

It varies. Generally I would say that the words come first, or the idea comes first which leads to the lyrics and the music follows. I suppose when I write lyrics I write with a metre in mind, either 4/4 or 6/8 ... whatever it is. So in a sense the rhythm is coming along with the words. The detailed melody often comes along later.

Have you found local radio and the press helpful?

Yes. The local press have been very good, they've used everything we've sent in, including the photographs. The local radio stations have been great, they are actually interested in local material. We were on Premier Radio in London a few weeks ago to chat about the album, and although they mainly broadcast to the London area, it is webcast and goes all round the world. So we've had enquiries from all over the place... Australia, New Zealand and Canada, it's staggering really how just chatting in a studio in London can get you world wide exposure.

What are your plans for the future?

Well, I'm 54 now so I guess I'm beyond seeking stardom or trying to make millions. I believe that I have been given the gift of creating music with lyrics that matter, that are meaningful - songs that hopefully give enjoyment and are helpful or can inspire those who hear them so it would be wrong of me not to use the gift I've been given. I think the future is to carry on writing for as long as I'm given - whether my music is good or mediocre is for others to judge really.

Finally Peter, do you have any advice you would like to pass on to songwriters?

Yes. I would say if someone is in my position, producing material they think is good, and they have faith in - then pursue it. It's easy to get discouraged. But today, there are so many opportunities for recording and for getting things broadcast on either local radio stations or the Web. So there is a market out there. I guess the secret is getting it known so that the people know it's there to listen to...and remember your best songs should always be the ones you're going to write tomorrow!

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UK Music Publisher Roster
UK Hits Achieved Since January 1996

EMI Music
(Continued From Page 2)

- Jimmy Nail
- J-Kwon
- Jodeci
- Joe
- Joey Lawrence
- John Alford
- John Lennon
- Johnny Cash
- Jo-Jo
- JoJo
- Jon Secada
- Jonny L
- Jools Holland
- Jordan Knight
- Josh Wink
- Joshua Kadison
- Joss Stone
- Juice
- Julian Lennon
- Juliet Roberts
- Jungle Brothers
- Junior Jack
- Jurgen Vries
- Justin Timberlake
- K Gee
- Kaci
- Kaleef
- Kandi
- Kanye West
- Karen Ramirez
- Kasabian
- Katrina & The Waves
- Kavana
- K-Ci & JoJo
- Keith Sweat
- Kelis
- Kelle Bryan
- Kelly Price
- Kelly Osbourne
- Kelly Rowland
- Kelly Clarkson
- Kenny Thomas
- Kevin Lyttle
- Killer Mike
- Kills
- Kim English
- Kirsty MacColl
- Kurt Nilsen
- Kylie Minogue
- Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- Laguna
- Lasgo
- Lauryn Hill
- Layo & Bushwacka
- LCD
- LeAnn Rimes
- Lemar
- Lemonheads
- Len
- Lene Marlin
- Lenny Kravitz
- Let Loose
- Levert Sweat Gill