

## 6 Questions on Demos with NSAI Executive Director, Bart Herbison

1) **What is your cost responsibility when you write a song with a songwriter who has a publishing deal and they demo the song?** There is a professional implication in the songwriter/publisher world that you owe the cost for your percentage of any song that is demoed by a signed songwriter. NSAI frequently gets questions about this after the fact, so it is best to discuss any reservations you may have about whether the song should be demoed or your assigned cost before the fact. Be aware that songwriters assigned to publishing deals may demo this song without your permission then ask for you to pay for your person.

2) **What is the average cost of a professional full band demo with a singer?** Typically you're looking at \$600-\$1200 if you go to a studio. These costs are substantially lower if these are done in house. Again, these are for FULL BAND demos (not for worktapes or guitar/vocal)

3) **When should I pay for a full demo of a song?** There may be no question in the music industry that has more answers than this one. My personal view is this: does a worktape -or- a guitar/piano vocal convey the emotion and meaning of the song? I am aware of many songs that were cut based on guitar/piano/vocal worktapes because the answer to that question was 'yes'. That's my guiding principal. There is a caveat: certain songs typically rockin', up tempo songs, or in today's market, songs that are very production-dependent may obviously require a full treatment. Second caveat: my truth applies to country music more than other genres (pop/rock). Use your own best judgment.

4) **I have a new song. Should I consider paying for a demo?** Ask yourself these questions: "Is the hook a common one? Is the hook worthy of it being done? Is the idea a common one? Has it been done before? Do you have a gnawing feeling you still need to make changes to the song? Take a moment to run an internet search of your title, and be sure to search the ASCAP/BMI/SESAC online repertoires. Remember, many ballads/mid-tempo songs can be communicated well with simple worktapes or just piano/guitar and vocals.

5) **How can I find a reputable demo studio?** Do your homework. There is no substitution for talking to other customers. If a studio is hesitant to provide that information to you, be cautious. Be informed about how a studio charges. For example, are they charging for one song? What type of instrumentation, engineering, or post-production comes with the cost you've been quoted? Do you pay extra for a vocalist?

6) **If I record a song at a demo studio and release it on my own CD, are there any payment implications to the studio musicians?** If it was a union session, you are technically required to pay a master scale rate if you plan to release the recording, even if it's your own songs. Ask the American Federation of Musicians for more information.