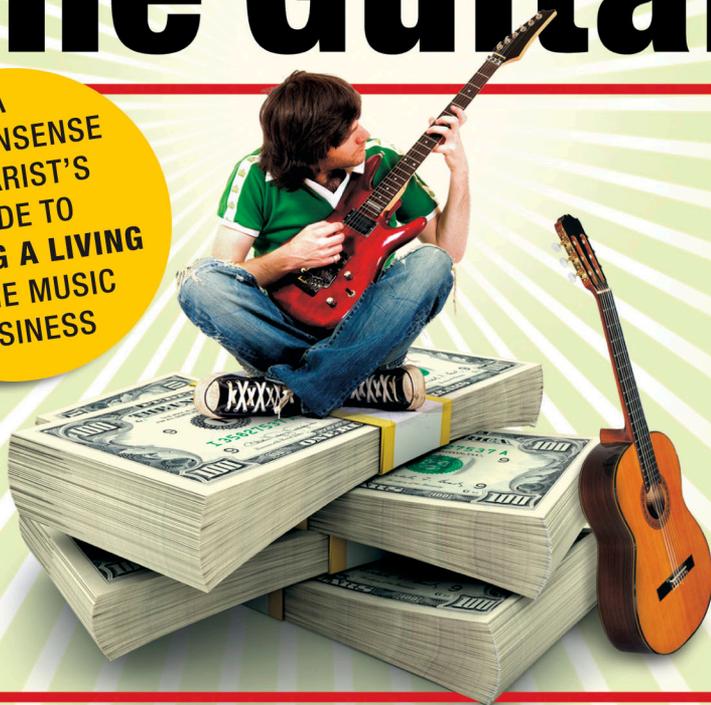


How to Make a **Million** **Dollars** Playing the Guitar

A
NO-NONSENSE
GUITARIST'S
GUIDE TO
MAKING A LIVING
IN THE MUSIC
BUSINESS



By Douglas Niedt

QUITTING?

The thought of quitting my pursuit of the guitar as a career has never entered my mind. I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I couldn't imagine anything else giving me the pleasure, happiness, and contentment that playing the guitar provides. I love the freedom of setting my daily schedule the way I want it. I enjoy the independence of not having to work a real job or of working for someone else. I enjoy earning money by, of all things, playing the guitar. I enjoy feeling that I have made and continue to make a contribution to the world.

Throughout history, people have done horrendous things to each other. In today's world, the news media tend to emphasize the horrific and the negative—that's what sells newspapers and holds viewers glued to television screens. But what the world needs is a constant reminder of the *best* that humanity has to offer. I believe that works of artistic creation display humanity at its best. I am proud to be a small part of that. The thought of giving it up has simply never occurred to me.

For many others, however, the door is always open to quitting. Quitting is easy when your idea for a project has been rejected thirty-five times. Quitting is easy when you're out of money, or owe money to everyone you know. Quitting is easy when a concert goes bad, or you just can't seem to get out of a creative rut. Quitting is easy when people whose opinions you respect tell you your music isn't any good. You will

find hundreds of reasons to throw in the towel at almost any given time in your career when things aren't going well.

Before success comes, you are certain to lose many battles, some small and some huge. You will make mistakes and suffer failures. When confronted with defeat, the easiest thing to do is to quit. That's what most people do. When Napoleon Hill, author of *Think and Grow Rich*, interviewed more than 500 successful people, *all of them told him that success came just a few steps beyond the point at which defeat had temporarily overtaken them.*

An excellent example is Patrick and Barbara Kavanaugh's story of two young failing songwriters:

In the late 1960's two young men in England began to write songs together. After months of work they actually wrote a musical. The response to the musical was terrible—it was never even performed. But they continued to write songs. They got nowhere with that either. No one liked what they were writing.

After a few years of constant rejection, they were ready to give up. One day the principal of a small school in London (who knew one of the boys) asked them to write a "religious work" for an end-of-the-year school concert. Looking into the Bible, the boys chose to base their music on the story of Joseph and his brothers. Eventually, they turned the small project for the small school into a full musical, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

If Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, both in their early twenties, had given up just a week earlier, before the school

principal called, they would have missed their boat to becoming arguably the best writers in history for the musical theater. Just imagine—after trying and trying, when they were going to give up, when the school principal called, they had no idea what was just around the corner....

In *Success Built to Last*, Jerry Porras tells this great story:

The fellow asked the bearded sage he met on the path, "Which way to success?" The monk said nothing and gestured down the path. The seeker was elated by the prospect that success was so close and so easy, and rushed ahead.

Suddenly, there comes the sound of splat. In a little while, the seeker, now tattered and stunned, limps back, assuming he must have taken a wrong turn. He repeats his question to the guru, who again points silently in the same direction.

The seeker nods, turns, and heads back in the same direction as before. This time, the sound of splat is deafening. When the seeker crawls back, he is bloody, broken, and angry. Screaming at the monk, he demands to know why he was sent off in the direction of disaster. "No more pointing. Talk!"

Only then does the guru speak. "Success is that way," he said. "Just a little past splat."

You have no idea what could be right around the corner or a little way further down the path. Sometimes you have to wait years, maybe

decades, for the fulfillment of your vision. I believe a timetable exists for all our lives. If you are a Christian, you know God has His timetable for your life and knows best when you are ready to be used for His glory.

Yes, the time will come when you will have to cut your losses, look reality squarely in the eye, shut a project down, or change directions. If the first plan you painstakingly put together didn't work, replace it with a new plan. If that one doesn't work, try another. This is where many people meet with permanent failure. They don't have the persistence to keep creating new plans or altering plans to take the place of those that fail. Remember, temporary failure is not permanent failure. It means your plan was unsound. Make another one. Start over. But quit? That word doesn't exist in the vocabulary of the true entrepreneurial guitarist.