



Music Interview Tips for Radio

Note: We've used the term 'musician', 'act', 'artist' or 'group' rather than 'band' because this guide can apply to music producers, composers, performers, DJs or solo musicians. You should consider how the artist likes to be referred to when interviewing them.

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

- Ask the musician to send a copy of their Biography (BIO) to you and a copy of their latest music so you can research questions.
- Have at least ten open ended questions ready to ask.
- Do NOT ask questions that only have a YES or No answers E.g. 'You've just released your 3rd album, is that correct?'
- DO ask 'open ended' questions that help the musician to explain information E.g. so you've just released your 3rd album, what makes this album different from your previous two albums?
- Keep in mind Musicians want to promote their latest activities so do make sure at least half of your questions are about their latest activities, not simply past achievements.
- Tailor your questions to suit the stage that the musician is at in their career. E.G It may be OK to ask a brand new emerging artist questions about their name or how the group act formed, but these questions will tire and annoy established artists.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- If unsure check the pronunciation of the musicians name and practice saying it aloud so you know their name, their album name and/or name of tour.
- Ask the musician which song (of theirs) they want you to play and cue it up so it is ready to be played.
- Tell musician if they need to cough or clear their throat to please move away from the microphone/phone.
- Tell them when there is '30 seconds' or '1 minute' until you go live on air, and again when there is 10 seconds remaining before you will turn on the mike.



DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Do start your interview by asking the musician about their most recent activities – e.g. new album, new tour.
- Do NOT start by asking the musician about old achievements or past hit songs.
- Listen to the answers musicians give and ask follow up questions that are relevant.
- Sometimes musicians might answer your questions before you've even asked the question. Tick off those questions from your list and do not ask them again if the musician has already covered that topic.
- Do not cut off the musician by talking over them. Do let the musician have the time to answer the question fully and you will often find that they will provide a more in depth or interesting answer.
- If you play one of their songs during the interview introduce the song name to the listener and ask the musician what the song is about.
- Back announce the song and reintroduce the musician to the listener when you go back into a talk break. E.g. 'That was dancing dame by Bob Smith. Bob is live in the studio with me talking about his latest album and tour (now ask the next question).
- Avoid keeping the musician in the studio for too long with music/announcements playing. Musicians often have to rush onto the next appointment so try to only play their song(s) before returning to the interview.
- At the end of the interview on air thank them for taking the time to talk to you and remind the listeners of the most recent activity. E.g. what the name of the new album is or where the musician is performing.

LIVE INTERVIEWS IN THE STUDIO

- Often more than one musician from an group will come into the studio. Ask the group who is the best talker and would like to be asked the most questions. Direct most questions to that spokesperson.
- Write down group members' names as soon as you're introduced. Draw arrows pointing to them on your page so you don't forget who is who when talking to them.
- Position the microphone in front of the musician and get them to wear headphones. Tell them that 'it might sound a bit funny hearing your own voice but they need to keep the headphones on during the interview'.
- Tell them that you can adjust the headphone volume for them during the interview if they simply point 'up' or 'down'.



IF THEY CAN PERFORM A SONG IN THE STUDIO

- Encourage acoustic instruments and to play 'unplugged'.
- If you're using the studio microphone get the musician to sit back from it.
- Ensure they keep their headphones on.
- Keep your headphones on. If it is too loud in your headphones turn yours AND the musicians down.
- If it sounds distorted turn the mic fader down a little bit on your mixing desk. If it is still distorting move the mic a bit further away from the musician.
- If the mic is 'popping' when the singer sings words with the letter 'P' angle the microphone away from the musician's mouth.
- Make these changes in a subtle and relaxed way so the musician isn't thrown off their performance.
- At the end of the song give the musician a clap with your mic turned on! It's important that they feel comfortable as they may be feeling like they are just singing to you – when in fact they're singing to your audience.
- Back announce the song and say 'live and exclusive in 'your stations name'.

PRE RECORDED/ OR LIVE INTERVIEWS ON THE TELEPHONE

- Try not to use mobile phones because the sound quality is often poor and the phone connection can be weak.
- Try to arrange for you and the musician to be on landlines. Even if you were told during planning that they can only speak via mobile phone, ask them when you get on the phone to them if they have a landline nearby that you can call them straight back on.
- Some phones have a delay so when you ask a question leave a space for the musician to hear and absorb your question and then let them answer.
- Give the musician plenty of time to finish answering the question as a phone delay may make it sound like they are finished when they are not.