

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
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### **JAM SESSION ETIQUETTE.**

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Remember that in any group of musicians, each musician's primary mission is to *make the featured singer or musician sound better.*

Singers: Work the mike. Listen to yourself as you sing. When you sound too loud, back away – too soft, move in. Don't make the sound person change the controls.

If you are not sure of the proper chords, *back off.* Don't play wrong chords which might cause the singer to lose the melody or go of key. (See #1.)

*Do not play acoustic rhythm guitar thru an amplifier* at Valley jam sessions. When there are several guitarists, why should any one of them be louder than the rest? What if all of them played through amps? *Think about it!* (See #1.)

If you play a lead instrument, try *always to be conscious of your volume.* Do not play too loud. If you can't balance your sound, get help. Have someone in the audience listen and signal if you're too loud. (See #1.)

Be as prepared as possible when you appear in front of an audience. It is an insult to your audience to start by saying, "Well, I've never done this before, but...."

Unless you are confident and forceful with your melody, choose songs with which the other jammers should be familiar. How can you teach them a melody if your voice follows them when they play wrong chords.

Know your keys. Don't waste time by making the jammers 'find your key'.

If you play lead, share time with other lead players on lead breaks and fill work. Try to keep from 'walking on' other players. When playing background fill, remember that your goal is always to make the singer sound better – not show off your hot licks. (See #1.)

Plan ahead how you want to begin and end your song. Do you want an intro, or will you start it cold? Will you 'tag' the song? Fade it out? Break and ritard (slow down)? Or just stop? Communicate your plans to the other jammers when necessary.

Develop variety in your repertoire. Don't do only songs that are all the same tempo and type. If you already know several slow to moderate ballads, learn a fast or novelty song. How about a couple of waltzes? Polka? Gospel? Story song? Latin? Comedy?

Don't be upset if someone else does a song you usually do. Just because you think you are the 'first in the Valley' to do a song doesn't mean you own it. *Even if you WROTE the song, once you do it publicly anyone else can do it in a jam session or any other not-for-profit venue!* Have other songs ready in case your songs are selected by someone else.

Never forget that you can learn something from everyone. Go to every jam prepared to learn something from someone.

Do not let 'professional jealousy' creep into your personality. Don't resent other musicians who are doing their best, whether you think of them as better than, or not as good as, you.

Share your knowledge and abilities, and help other musicians in as many ways as you can. Always try to make them sound good, and feel better about themselves.

When an instrumentalist who is being featured requests a vocalist to sing a verse and/or chorus of his song, it is proper to do so. However, this singing should *only be done when requested, and the singer always gives the song back to the instrumentalist to finish.*

Jammers who make these suggestions part of the 'musical persona' will be invited to more invitational jam sessions, and make more friends than those who don't.

(Etiquette, website, 03-15-07)