
Become a Background Singer

Career Description

The **Background Singer** provides backup to other Singers and musicians in recordings, commercial jingles, or live performances. Background Singers can be employed by a group, or they may freelance. Those working as freelance Vocalists go about their business in a slightly different way. Specifically, they must build up a strong reputation as a great singer who is flexible and available when they are needed. Being a Background Singer requires irregular hours, but these usually are not extreme every single day.

One of the most difficult aspects of background singing is having to walk into a recording studio, look over a song, learn it flawlessly and then perform it perfectly—all with little time to rehearse. The Background Singer must also be able to harmonize with a group of Singers with whom he has never before worked. Being versatile is a must, because they may have to perform different styles of music throughout the day as they work with different performers on separate recordings.

Background Singers find jobs through Contractors or Music Producers who work in the recording business.

Salary

An extremely successful Background Singer might earn up to \$100,000 or more per year, but the reality is usually much, much lower. Those starting out in their career often have to handle a “day job” and background singing jobs. There are some other factors that affect earning potential, like geographical location and reputation of the Singer, too. And of course, the more work a Background Singer takes on, the more money they can expect to make.



Employment

There are many opportunities available to aspiring Background Singers. Of course, these become more competitive as they begin to explore working with well-known artists or on jingles for well-known products. In order to land gigs, Background Singers need to pass auditions, which are either held directly by the band looking to hire, or Agents who will find them work.

Advancement

Because competition is steep, Background Singers looking to become major Recording Artists will have to work hard at advancing their careers and not getting stuck in the background. However, for those who have gotten their foot in the door singing jingles, and are performing well, there will be plenty of additional opportunities to get on higher paying jobs and continue working as a higher earning Background Singer.

Education and Training

You do not need a formal education to become a Background Singer. However, some may feel obtaining a college or music university degree is important to use as a backup plan. While some Background Singers have college educations, many have graduated from conservatories. Others utilize Vocal Coaches and Private Teachers, while some rely exclusively on natural ability.

Experience, Skills, and Personality

The ability to harmonize and sing many different types of music is necessary to become a Background Singer



Unions and Associations

The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists is a union available to those performing recording sessions or radio jingles; the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) and the Actors' Equity Association (AEA) are unions available to those performing in theatre. If a background singer is working on a television commercial, they might belong to the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) or AFTRA.

Suggestions for Getting Started

- Consider advertising your talents in trade publications or newspapers.
- Likewise, check trade publications and newspapers for possible openings.
- If you are a part of a union, check for information on job openings.
- Visit recording studios to get to know those who book studio time, as well as Producers and Audio Engineers.
- Sing at performance gigs whenever possible so others get to know your name and your voice.

Source: : <https://www.careersinmusic.com/background-singer/>



Vocabulary

background (noun)

something behind the main figure or object

jingles (noun)

short rhyming songs

freelance (adj)

working independently on short contracts

day job (expression)

job that occurs in the daytime between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm

gigs (noun)

short-term jobs, especially music-related

auditions (noun)

short try-outs for a job

gotten their foot in the door (expression)

to have a small job which could lead to better jobs

Questions

Question 1

What is the essential task of a background singer?

Question 2

What is a major challenge for the background singer?

Question 3

Which people do background singers consult to find jobs?

Question 4

What is the top salary a backup singer can earn?

Question 5

Provide three factors that can affect a background singer's earnings.

Question 6

Give two factors that can expand a background singer's opportunities for employment.

Question 7

Indicate two groups of people who hold auditions for background singers.

Question 8

What academic degree do you need to become a background singer?

Question 9

What talent do you need to become a background singer? Name two things.

Question 10

Name two unions that a background singer might belong to if they are working on a television commercial.

Question 11

When beginning your career as a backup singer, where should you check for job openings?



Answers

Answer 1

to provide backup vocals to other singers and musicians

Answer 2

walk into a recording studio, look over a song, learn it flawlessly and then perform it perfectly with little time to rehearse

Answer 3

contractors or music producers who work in the recording business

Answer 4

\$100,000

Answer 5

1. geographic location
2. reputation of the singer
3. amount of work.

Answer 6

1. working with well-known artists
2. working on jingles for well-known products

Answer 7

1. bands that are hiring
2. agents who will find work for background singers

Answer 8

No academic degree required

Answer 9

The ability to harmonize and to sing many different types of music



Answer 10

1. Screen Actors Guild (SAG); 2. AFTRA

Answer 11

trade publications and newspapers