

>>Snapshot

Linda Simpson

Singer and Guitarist

Musicians' Union

**Can you tell us a bit about your career to date?**

I have always wanted to sing and joined my first band at 14. Everything I did was focused on music. I met Chris Simpson who became my partner and for 26 years performed as a member of the rock group "Magna Carta".

On leaving the band, I bought and moved onto a narrow boat and travelled around. I experienced a bit of a lull at this time, having been involved with Magna Carta so intensely for so long, I wasn't quite sure what to do next, so my confidence took a bit of a knock.

At this point, I came along to my first FEU Training workshop, where I met some lovely people and got some great inspiration for my next steps. I have been coming along to events when I can ever since.

I am now back out there, writing my own songs and working with my new partner, a pianist, which is quite different from working with guitarists. I feel I am heading in an exciting new direction creatively and was thrilled to be invited to headline a folk festival in Holland this summer, which I am so looking forward to.

What do you like most about your work?

Music is what I am, it's what I breathe, it's my life. It's all I ever wanted to do. Everything else in my life has had to fit around my music. It is really wonderful to be able to make a living doing something you love.

I often busk because it gives me the chance to practice and sing to people. Not only do I enjoy it, I get quite a lot of work that way too.

What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?

The biggest challenges for me have been making initial contact with prospective clients and actually selling myself. Two workshops that really helped me with this was the Building your Confidence day and Negotiation for freelancers. The confidence day encouraged me to contact

people I had worked for before as well as following up introductions that people I met on the workshop gave me. The negotiation day helped me to ask for what I am worth.

Have you added new work/skills to your portfolio over time?

When I split up with the band I wanted to record my own compositions, so I bought loads of recording equipment, then spent time working out how to use it all. I attended a sound production workshop run by the MU and was advised to buy an iPad Pro and use Garage Band, which I did. This was so much easier that I sold all my kit, apart from the microphones of course, and bought a Rubix 44 to complete the set. It works for me.

I have learned other skills too. I can use a mixing desk, and when I set up a small festival at Whaley Bridge, I organised everything logistical and financially as well as rehearsing the acts and advising them on using microphones.

I also negotiated financial support for another project, which didn't fully come off, but what I learned from that was that I was capable handling the negotiations, which was a real boost.



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What is the biggest challenge of learning the skills that you need?

Finding time is the hardest thing for me. That's why I was so delighted to find a shortcut with Garage Band rather than have to master the complexities of the full version of logic

Learning songs takes a long time, so I now aim to learn things I'll carry on using. Busking is a great way to keep that fresh in the memory too.

What FEU Training courses have you attended?

- Social media for work
- Building your Confidence
- Negotiation for freelances
- Blogging for Creative Freelances

What are the most important things that you've learned?

I really have learned how to stand up for myself. When I am busking I often get asked to do a gig. Previously I would have quoted a low price because I was busking. Now I explain that I do many other things apart from that and ask for a professional fee, which is usually accepted. To know my own worth and be able to ask for the proper fee is something I don't think I would have achieved without the 'Build your Confidence' workshop.

I've also learned to use my computer better for work. A key point from the Social Media for Work course was that we need to sell the effect we have, not what we do. This was a huge revelation to me.

What has encouraged you to attend FEU training sessions?

I think what FEU Training do is fantastic – no one else does what they do. I've gained so many ideas, contacts and boosts to my confidence and skills that I wouldn't have got from anywhere else.

Making contact and knowing that you are not the only one floundering is a big bonus. I have met so many amazing people at these workshops. Apart from the great

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content the networking aspects are invaluable. When I was swimming in a sea of, 'what next?', I gave it a go, came along and am so glad I did. I love that I can also help and advise other, mostly younger, musicians.

In short, FEU courses have given me back the confidence to go forward, take on new challenges and contact people directly. I now know what needs to be on my website, Facebook page and Linked in and I am no longer under-selling myself. I am really looking forward to the next workshop.

Do you know any other organisation that offers business skills courses for creative?

No.

