FIRST THINGS FIRST:
A Musician's First-Time Live Streaming Empowerment Checklist!

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There's a LOT of information out there on live streaming for musicians. For an artist like me, who lives for on-stage performance with actual in-person audiences across the country, I didn't understand the value of trying to figure out how to give a show in my own self-space while engaging virtual audiences on my social media outlets. But these days, it's not just a novelty or an option for touring artists: live streaming your shows a necessary part of your performance portfolio.

I've designed this introductory checklist to give you a few helpful tips that will hopefully bring you success as you plan and present your very first live stream concert experience. It began as a [YouTube video called *First Things First: A Live Stream Empowerment Checklist*](#); this is the hard-copy checklist to accompany the video.

There are plenty of things I'd do the same the next time I live stream...and a few things I'd do differently. But the one thing I definitely *will* do again and again is to ***JUST TRY!*** And I encourage you to do the same!

First-Time Live Streaming:
Empowerment Checklist!

❏ **Designate a Helper:** Teamwork Makes the Dream Work!

❏ **Choose Streaming Platform**
  ❏ YouTube (8 hr limit)
  ❏ Facebook Live (1 hr limit)
  ❏ Instagram Live (4-8 hr limit)

❏ **Sell Tickets and/or Suggest Tips**
  ❏ Ticket purchase link: _____
  ❏ Tip resource *(PayPal = email; Venmo = @username; CashApp = $username)*

❏ **Announce & Promote**
  ❏ Create TIMELINE for promoting via email and social media
  ❏ Create EVENT GRAPHIC(s) for social media
    (use different dimensions for different posts: IG square, FB banner, etc.)
  ❏ Create EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENT for mailing list
  ❏ Set POSTING ALARMS for social media (see Timeline ^ ^ ^)
  ❏ STORIES. Be brave and try out Instagram/Facebook Stories

❏ **DAY OF STREAM:**
  ❏ Create an IT'S TODAY! announcement on your socials
  ❏ Check BATTERY and fully charge your mobile device and/or computer
  ❏ SET UP Equipment: Sound, Lighting, Streaming Devices
  ❏ Print out a SET LIST *(inc. announcements, shout-outs, ticket/tip info, thank you's)*
  ❏ Print out "Welcome! We Go Live at…" SIGN to display when you go live, after sound check before your show starts

❏ **SOUND CHECK:** Go Live 45-30 minutes prior to confirm everything works

❏ **SHOWTIME:** Start (and end!) your set as close to "on time" as possible

❏ **HAVE FUN and ENGAGE VIEWERS!**

❏ **POST-SHOW:**
  ❏ DE-BRIEF: What worked? What would you do differently?
  ❏ FOLLOW UP: Thank audience for coming in via social media post/email

❏ **NEXT LIVE STREAM:** SET A DATE and start planning the next one!

❏ **Teamwork Makes the Dream WORK: Designate a Helper!**
A lot can be done in the prep phase by yourself…but **it's incredibly helpful to recruit someone to assist you *prior* to going live:** confirming adequate lighting and proper sound levels/balance; making sure your device is fully charged; setting camera distance of your live stream device (mobile or computer) so that your audience can see and hear everything you've intended; deciding what language you're going to use in your Caption and Pinned Comment that directs viewers to your tickets or tip jar. You know -- the Essentials!

Be clear about the things you'll need help with. Some people are intuitive with these details; others have a helpful spirit but won't know what you need until you tell them. Make sure you have a list of what you'll need help with, and give yourselves enough time to work through the list prior to streaming live.

If you're by yourself, consider incorporating a video chat or taking photos of your space and virtually sharing with your designated helper. It's not always possible to have someone in the room with you; again, you can find someone who can help from afar if you are clear about what you need them to help you with.

Your helper can also help *during* the live stream, whether they're in the same room or virtually present by:
- Checking and confirming your transmission quality: Is sound working properly, no distortion, levels are clear and present, nothing is muted? Is the picture clear? Reminders to close every other window prior to the start of your stream
- Continuing to monitor transmission and sound quality throughout your set
- Commenting periodically with info to Subscribe! to your YouTube and e-mail list, Follow! social media
- Reposting links to where viewers can leave tips or purchase tickets via Venmo, PayPal, Eventbrite, etc.
- Texting you so that you can see suggestions (if you have your text notifications show up as a banner) as you're performing: "Mention your latest collaboration!" "Announce your website!" "Tell people to Subscribe to your YouTube Channel!" "Speak louder...we can't hear you when you're talking!", etc.

❏ **Decide on Your Streaming Platform**
YOUTUBE. INSTAGRAM. FACEBOOK. All three have viable live stream options. Personally, I had the greatest success with the latter two in terms of ease of use in "just going live". If this is your first time live streaming, I suggest that you take a look at where you currently engage with your audiences the most, and then go from there. If, however, you're looking to be the most accessible to people who may not have Instagram or Facebook accounts, it would be a good thing for you to investigate YouTube live stream.

My first time live streaming, I wanted everybody to see everything, so I went live on Instagram,

Facebook *and* YouTube simultaneously, from 3 different devices. And YouTube crashed and burned, lol. We had to refresh the screen and subsequently lost the stream and disconnected with almost 1000 viewers who didn't realize we started a new stream. Ugh. It took about 15 minutes total before we could get back on track and resume a comfortable performance. I regret losing all those viewers; my intent was to make our performance available to as many people as possible. In retrospect, I should've started small, then added another using one multiple platform streaming service like [StreamYard](#) or similar. We live and we learn!

LIVE STREAM TIME LIMITS
At the time of creation of this document, Instagram Live's time limit is 60 minutes. YouTube Live Streaming events have an 8 hour limit. Facebook Live's time limits are 8 hours for computer/API and 4 hours for mobile devices. Again, MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH BATTERY POWER for your computer or mobile device prior to starting your live stream, particularly if you are using additional sound gear that also plugs into or is powered by your phone (gear is discussed a little farther down)

❏ **Selling Tickets and/or Accepting Tips**
Decide if you're selling tickets or suggesting tips, and then decide where you're going to set up your ticket and tip source. You can create a ticket link on places like Eventbrite, Brown Paper Tickets, or if you are already selling merch on your website and you already have a "store" set up, create ticket levels that resemble what your audiences would expect to experience at a live performance at a club or in an auditorium.

Perhaps your ticket prices can be based on things you'll offer your audiences: higher ticket prices solicit song requests; for the top-tier ticket prices, maybe offer a song creation or a specially-arranged version of their favorite song, recorded by you and emailed to their inbox.

For tips, Venmo, CashApp, and PayPal are easy links for your viewers to access. Make sure you let people know by announcing where people can send you payments/tips. This is where your helper will come in handy...they can periodically copy/paste your payment links in your Comments/Chat thread.

❏ **Announce That Thang**
Decide when you're gonna do this -- it can be anywhere from right before to a few days before to a week before. Create a simple graphic using Canva.com or PicMonkey.com, make sure you say LIVE STREAM and the DATE and TIME and PLATFORM(s), and then post that thing on a schedule that will inform but won't annoy folks because it's too much/too often. I don't know, you decide based on when you think your folks would appreciate knowing.

❏ **Day of Stream: Sound Check**
Test out your technology by having a sound check 45-30 minutes before you go live to make sure everything works. It's OK to let viewers know you're sound checking. Just create and post a sign that says "Going live at 3 PM!"; sound check and mute your feed if that's an option, until showtime.

❏ **SHOWTIME: Live Stream is Live!**
I would suggest that, for your first live stream, limit it to around 45 minutes. That builds in time for you to experience and overcome technical difficulties, play your intended set, and have a little room before any 60-minute time restrictions.

You should definitely have a set list, and definitely plan to build in dialogue to engage with your viewers. ***That's the best part of a live stream: INTERACTION!* And *have fun!*** Remember to tell your audiences where else they can find you: Subscribe to your YouTube or join your e-mail list, follow on Instagram and Facebook or wherever else you are. Sprinkle some thank-you's throughout your set, since viewers won't always be able to watch your live stream from start to finish.

Share one last reminder for where they can leave tips or if your ticket links are still live, if that's important to you. When you're almost done, make sure you let viewers know it's your last tune; if you have additional streams upcoming, announce them. **At the end, be sure to thank your viewers for spending time with you.**

❏ **ADDITIONAL HELPFUL GEAR**
  ❏ **Zoom H1 or H1n Microphone** will record your room; it's a great source if you want your live stream to have high quality sound for multiple people/instruments. I used it with my computer; you may need a different cable to go to your phone. Be sure to test your mic-to-streaming device connection and confirm sound levels/balance BEFORE the day of live stream.
  ❏ **Roland GO:MIXER** This mobile interface plugs into several inputs: voice, instruments, aux for mp3/backing tracks so that your sound is much higher quality than just your phone/computer mic. You'll need a high/low impedance adapter for your XLR mic cable into a 1/4" input if you're using it for vocals.
  ❏ **Wired Headphones** (preferably without a mic on the cord) to monitor your sound levels
  ❏ **LED Lighting** to ensure a well-lit situation. Lots of online resources for affordable LED lighting and adjustable stands. You'll look a LOT better than just a lamp with the lampshade off!

As with anything, do your own research...most importantly, HAVE FUN!

Shana's "First-Time Live Stream Empowerment Checklist" Video on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/br9r8406xPs

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