

## Advice to jazz open-mic singers

Based on notes compiled by Romy Summers and Bob Stuckey while running their open-mic clubs.

October 2016 version. Public domain

The key you choose can make a big difference to your performance of the song. Accompanying these notes is a backing to "Summertime" in six different keys. See which one brings out the best in your voice. The keys, (all minor) are F, G, A, B, C#, Eb and back to F, so each time two semitones higher.

Bear in mind that when you get out in front of people you may want to sing in a higher key than if you were at home.

Unless you want to sing a very well know standard its best to bring three copies of the music in your key. Try to get music that's not more than three pages long, four at a pinch. Any more pages and the music tends to slide off the stand and page turns are difficult for bassists and drummers.

Jazz musicians prefer charts that are largely chord symbols rather than photocopies from piano books which give more notes than are needed and can run for pages and pages. Jazz pianists don't like being told what notes to play but would prefer to make their own choice based on chord symbols - and whatever the singer and other musicians are doing.

A word on band stand etiquette: you can see an open mic as a chance to develop your whole stage craft not just your voice. Stage presence, audience interaction, (introducing a song), directing the band, all contribute to the atmosphere.

It is important to give a brief instruction to each member of the band as to what the piece is. Is the song a ballad? A bossa nova? Is it in 3/4 time? Up tempo? Are all musicians in from the beginning? This essential information allows the band to support the singer to the best that they can.

Make sure you don't block the eye line between the pianist and the drummer - a vital channel of communication.

When your performance is finished remember to acknowledge all band members individually.

If your not used to using a mic the first thing to remember is not to wave it near to a speaker or floor monitor. This creates feed back, a high screaming noise, which damages hearing. It's easy to forget about this when your getting ready to sing a song, shuffling papers, discussing with musicians etc.