

Product Review

The Band Leader Software

www.thebandleadersoftware.com

By Dave Jackson Author of [Get Your Band Out of the Basement \(and keep them out of the Asylum\)](#)

Back in [October of 2003](#) I reviewed three different software packages created specifically for musicians to run their bands. I recently stumbled across a new one and thought I'd see what it had to offer. It's called "the Band leader Software" and much like the other programs, it covers many of the same things (calendars, contacts, musicians), but has some very unique characteristics. Let me share with you my experience.

I downloaded the software and installed it without any surprises (you can get a free demo version). When I installed the software it gave me a quick heads up, and prompted me to print a quick reference guide. This was very cool, but poorly formatted. This 5 page document could've been three if had been a pdf. Picture how things look when you print them from the Internet. Aside from the looks, it was helpful information. As this was the demo version some of the functionality was reduced (the number of items you can add, delete etc), but it still is enabled enough to let you take it for a thorough test drive.

I added a musician/player, and at that point was lost. (Being human, I refused to read the manual). I ran my mouse across the top of the screen and saw quick start up. Bingo. This launched me into setting up musicians, staff (lighting guys, sound crew), contacts (club owners), Venues (clubs), Gigs, and Contracts. I zipped through and added a couple of each as I was just playing. When I went to add a gig, it kept telling me I needed to add a leader to the group. Confused (and again being stubborn and not reading the manual) I went back to the toolbar and saw a button labeled, "Gig Manager."

This was pretty powerful. It seemed to track any detail you want. You can track the players, staff expenses, sets, breaks, agents and their percentages, etc. I saw ensemble at the top. I figured this was where you could group the players into the system into a "band." I was right. I went to the user manual and typed in "Ensem" into the index and found topics on how to create an ensemble. This was very easy and when I returned my previously started gig, I could add my ensemble and it added all the players. I could also add or delete players. It later gives you the option to divide the pay equally, or pay people separately. You also track expenses here and you can see exactly how profitable the gig is. When I clicked on the "Agents and Leaders" tab I saw what the previous error message was stating (I put myself in as the leader). Looking down the left side of the screen I could see exactly how profitable the gig was.

As this program was developed by a touring musician (who is also an accountant), it has some very cool features when it comes to payments. First you can put in what the pay is and it looks at the number of players and then decides how many 20's, 10's 5 bills you need. I thought this was brilliant as I hate trying to think about this at 2:30 when all I

want to do is go home. It also has a field for a deposit, and when it should be received. Everything in this program seems to tie in together. Consequently I thought it was cool when I went to check out the “To Do” list it was alerting me that my deposit for the gig was overdue. You then have different classifications to the gig (quoted, penciled in, and booked). Later when I went into to pay everyone it checked first to make sure I had everything in place. I could even print out a report showing all the details of the gig.

The calendar is very powerful. As you go through the different classifications of gigs (booked, paid out, etc) it changes the color of the gig. You can also enter in rehearsals, and note. One of the things that this program does that others don't is it will automatically create a calendar page for your web site (for your fans), and a calendar with all the notes for the band. “Now that's cool” I said to myself. While the calendar is “basic” looking, it's functional.

Later I went in and added some songs, and then turned them into a set list (these you can name and date, so you can go back later and see what you performed). It also allows you to print the set lists with the keys, etc). You can organize your songs in all sorts of different ways making creating a set list a snap. This was very, very easy, and I can see it being a very useful time saving tool.

Another feature tied into the calendar and gig information is the ability to generate contracts. If nothing else you could download the demo to peak at their default templates for contracts. Here again, you don't have to customize the contract as it takes the information you have entered into the gig, and uses that same information to create contract. You can even create your own templates, and edit the contracts.

The email features also offer some time savings. You can create GROUPS of email list. This is a very useful (and smart) way to manage your fans. You can create a template, and then have the system automatically enter the gigs for a band during a certain time range, along with information about the club etc (again requiring no extra typing from you it does it all). This again ties in with the calendar. Each fan can be involved in up to three mailing lists (so you'd make one for EVERYONE) and then you could set up another mailing for certain cities, etc. When I went to test this, it worked brilliantly. It uses whatever the default email account on your system (so if your personal account is your default you might switch that before sending out an email). The only other possible pitfall as this email is going through your ISP, if you have a large list, you may want to check and see if there is a limit to the number of emails you can send in a period of time. There was no “bounce” controls for the email system (like a list you might pay for online), but I still thought this was a pretty nifty tool.

Make it your own software. Another cool feature of the program is the ability to customize screens. For example when making a set list you can choose to have the list display just the name, or in my case I had it display the name and key. When I was working in the gig manager, I had it display the name of the gig and date. You seriously can customize the software to your own needs with just a few clicks.

I used the software for about 2 hours. During that period I encountered an error. I let the creator know about this error, he mentioned that typically people do not report errors in the demo mode (and hence they don't get a chance to troubleshoot them). He mentioned that they have excellent customer service. This was obviously true as not only did they track down the error and fix it, they answered numerous questions ON SUPER BOWL SUNDAY. For those not from the US, this is very impressive. I mentioned how the manual mentions a "Cancel" button, but there isn't one labeled (and they will either add cancel to the tool bar, or adjust the manual to note it's the same as the undo button). They are always looking to improve their product. For example, last week a new feature allows the band leader to track which players have been contacted to fill a position on a gig. If a leader books a lot of casuals and fills the dates with many different players the new feature displays, and prints, a list of who has been contacted, their status (i.e., Not interested, Not available, Possible), and who is "confirmed" on the gig. If you need to track merchandise sales (and not everyone does) you can purchase an additional "point of purchase" -package for this for \$19. You can purchase both "The Band Leader Software" and the Point of Purchase module for \$59 (Saving \$10 from buying the separately). You can also purchase an importing module (to import data from a previous system you used for \$25). Their site has many purchasing options (with discounts for the more options you purchase).

Lastly, I downloaded an animated video that shows you step by step how to get started with the software. This could use a tweak. I had the recommended settings, turned off everything on my screen to give it room, and it was still kind of hard to read. On the other hand, if you take time and use the manual, you won't need it.

As the system covers musicians, bands (multiple), gigs, quoting, distribution of promo materials, email list, reporting, publishing your calendar(s), contracts, song lists and more. It's hard to think of something this software won't do. I signed up as a referrer (as there will be link to this on the links page) at The Band Leader and if you use the referral code of DJ7KK you will receive free shipping.