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Sing Your Life Newsletter -- July, 2002

Greetings!

Before I do anything, please let me profusely apologize to the all of you who sent in tapes for our contest. We have 5 winners and the singers chosen will receive my free audio aids AS PROMISED! Please accept my apologies for the delay, but I had some medical problems this month that ended me in the hospital for a bit. I'm okay now, except for a little weakness and dizziness. On top of this, my Mom isn't doing all that well and I may have hop a flight to Corpus Christi at a moment's notice. So the distractions keep coming, but I promise you winners, you WILL get you your audio aids as soon as humanly possible. They are personalized for YOUR voice, so it just takes little longer.

Again, many thanks to all of you who participated in our little contest. Here are the 5 singers we selected as winners:

- Marie Benard
- Carol Hahn
- Lisa Eisenman
- Darcy Marinelli
- Smeeha Prinja

Congratulations to each of you...and to the rest of you, let's do this again soon!
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Something Different!

This month, I want to do something different. I want you to get an idea of what a personal relationship with me as your coach is like. One of my students, Lisa, has agreed to have our emails back and forth to each other over the last several months published. As you read them, I hope you can see yourselves and relate to what Lisa goes through on a daily basis to be true to her dream of becoming a singing star. It all started when Lisa sent for our manual and let us know that she was thinking of leaving home to fulfill her dream. Here are some excerpts from our communications:

12/3/01 - Lisa writes: *I went to Minneapolis this weekend. My best friend lives there and we went to Britney. It was ok, not great but seeing her live, I thought, "Wow, I can do that", and yet it made me so so so anxious standing there, staring at*

that stage, like a starving dog staring at a bone. I have no doubt it is where I belong, but this weekend was also a huge eye opener, being able to experience the "apartment" life, and seeing exactly how attainable it is, and being in a big city, a new environment - so many cute places to perform, and being able to interact with people my own age, and talking to so many different people who have all these connections in Minneapolis, My whole spirits were lifted. As long as I would be in a city where I could make real progress, I mean it starts to wear on you, being by yourself, never going out, just working and going to school. I have forgotten what it feels like to even a boy call me. But, I already found an apartment, and met some people who could hook me up with recording and managers and stuff, and found people to even perform with and some clubs to sing at. It seems like a really good move for me if I am gonna take off from school for a while, cause then I think I would be benefitting in more ways than one. What do you think? My local voice teacher here says my voice won't be ready by January, but I am finally understanding all the things you say, and I think if I worked really hard, and just practice the exercises on my own, like even you said "a voice in 30 days", if you do it straight for 30 days until it feels like the back of your hand, you will have a voice for life.....but he thinks I would not be ready! and says it would be a bad move for me to leave. What do you think? I need your advice, I trust you. I am bummed cause I always know what I want to do but all these "adults" keep telling me what I should do.

12/3/01 - Chrys's answer: Well, I am not one to encourage young people to leave their homes and families, but you are an adult, and if you believe that moving to Minneapolis is going to benefit you, then you need to trust yourself. I'm sure you already know that this is a huge step to make, right? And you will need a job, and you will be lonesome a lot of the time. So, ask yourself. Is the dream big enough to keep you company in a big strange city? And are you tough enough to stay your course? And do you believe in yourself enough to go where your heart is telling you? Trust and faith are the key here, Lisa. Let me know what you decide.

12/7/01 - Lisa wrote: *Thanks! OK! Every day the idea of moving to Minneapolis excites me more, and feels more right. I even found someone just like me who I am good friends with (folk singer) who needs a change too. We might live together and turn our apartment into a music studio with mine and his equipment. Even if he decides to stay here, I found some nice studio apartments, and some reliable people looking for a roommate. I am going to go there next weekend to start looking for a job. But, what would you tell me about this? My family is against it. I have yet to talk to my dad and step mom, but I have a feeling they will be pissed cause they are big fans of staying in school no matter what. My grandparents told me they wouldn't help me with such a dumb idea, and my mom, my real mom who I tell everything, just told me to "just go do what you're going to do and don't talk about it to me". Ouch! That hurt. It hurts that no one understands how much this dream means to me, and I feel like you understand me more than they do. I know they are trying to protect me, but doesn't their child's happiness mean more to them????? I think I could do this on my own, live on bare minimums and be independent. If something feels so right Chrys, but everyone is turning their back on me. What do I do????? I wish you were here. I need your advice, I need you!!! It is scary thinking of being all alone in this world, but in a way, if I cut that constant flow of need from my family, I think I will get more done with music cause I won't be worrying what they think of*

every damn decision I make. Help!

12/7/01 - Chrys advises Lisa to take some college courses in Minneapolis and that her family might be a bit more supportive if she does. She decides to do that.

12/23/01 - Lisa writes to her friends and family: *I am definitely moving to Minneapolis. I know a good handful of you are worried, or thinking quite critically of my decision, but no offense, but for the first time I don't care what other people will think. I am doing this for me and for me alone. Sometimes you just need change, new people, new places. You just need to grow, and I came to a point where I felt I had stopped growing. I felt trapped. But, I am going to be living with 5 other senior girls in a house, really nice girls and totally into school so I know we will get along fine. I am getting a car in 2 weeks, will nail down a job. Minneapolis will be good for me too, to meet people and make some connections, Let me just take this time right now to tell you all to never be afraid to dream. Never do what you think you "should" be doing. As a matter of fact, you really should eliminate that word from your vocabulary. All I have to say is that when I get there, you will see it was because I believed. There are millions of girls out there who sing better than me, write better than me, are freakin models, but I hope I can be an example of what can be achieved by simply following my true passion and having enough courage to go get my ass kicked by putting myself in the situations I need to be to make it. I just don't want any of you to worry about me, 'cause in all honesty, you may think my head is in the clouds, but when you mix a strong faith in God and the common sense I have, I don't think I could ever go wrong. And the mistakes I will make, (and I know I will make plenty) I will learn from.*

Lisa moved to Minneapolis In January. I didn't hear from her for several months. Then in May, she wrote to update me on her life in the big city. She was quitting her waitress job and looking for a local vocal coach. She was disenchanted with the slow progress of her musical pursuits and was second guessing the move, even considering going home.

The Big City

5/10 Chrys writes: Lisa, Oh how wonderful to hear from you. I thought of writing to you several times, but didn't wish to intrude on the space you have made for yourself at school. I am so happy you finally wrote and let me know what is going on. I think I have enough of the essence of what you have told me to have an idea of how to advise you at this point. First of all, I have little doubt that you have what it takes to make it. Never having heard you sing, or seen how lovely you must look, I am certain of your talent because such passion and excitement is not given to us by a whimsical or cruel God. This passion is present because the ability to manifest is also present. In other words, you got it, Babe! You wouldn't be so passionate if you didn't have it! The fact that you are in touch with your inner voice so completely does NOT make you flighty or mean that you can't be happy anywhere. It means you have a rare ability to contact your inner core, the part of you that's attached to your Creator, the knower of all things and giver of all dreams. Years ago when I got to college, every music student I knew wanted to perform. So what did they choose as their major? Music Education! When I asked them why, each and every one of them said, "to have something to fall back on if I don't make it." And each and every one of them became teachers and not performers! Every one except me! I had a 25-year

career as a performer and THEN decided to teach others. I didn't major in Music Ed. I majored in Performance and Broadcasting! I didn't need a fall-back. AND YOU DON'T EITHER! And now that I AM a teacher, I can go anywhere as one who has DONE it, not just been classroom trained at doing it. I think you get where I'm going with this.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS!

You've got the whole world in front of you, so naturally you need to move into your future and not just talk about it. Yes! You'll make some mistakes along the way. So what? Who doesn't? But trust yourself to keep moving in the direction of your dream and engage on those activities that keep your passion alive! Take what you've learned and move forward. You have the right ideas, the right instincts, and the talent, so just be as fearless as you sound to me and keep going ahead into your dream. It will meet you and wrap itself around you with love and you will be places in all the right places with the right people and contacts that you need. I feel so certain of this, Lisa. I hear from girls every day with this same dream, and I don't hear the passion that I get from you. In most of them, I hear "little girl" dreams of being famous and rich. Like strolling past a shop and saying, "ooh, look at that! I want that!"

That is NOT a burning desire! In you, I hear it! And I've been able to spot IT when I've encountered it. You have IT! Can you record something for me and send it to me? Well aside from that, I want to give you all the encouragement that I possibly can to keep your dream alive in you with every action you take from now on. Minneapolis is a good-sized town. You don't need to wait tables if it's too exhausting or distracting.

There are jobs at Publishing Houses you can get where you can intern and learn the music business from the inside out. Or you can look into a reception gig at a recording studio or radio or TV station. You need to have a job where you can have sufficient time to sequester yourself and work on your music, your writing and recording demos. The last thing I would do now is quit and go home because you're in a place where things could pop for you with a little more effort. You can make the opportunities for yourself where you are. Have you found venues for performing yet? Coffeehouses? Clubs? I think the more you sing in public, the stronger and more confident you'll get, and more positive feedback you'll get and it will feed you to keep going.

This is what you should concentrate on...performing in public and writing, and playing for yourself. Gee! I hope I've helped you here. Let me know. I was delighted to hear from you, Lisa, and I am so grateful that you are sharing this journey with me. Believe it or not, it helps me too to stay on purpose myself. I sometimes want to just give up after hearing from some of my young readers who seem to want some hand to come out of the sky and make them famous, with no effort on their part. You are different! Thanks for writing.

5/12 - Lisa writes: I was listening to the recordings I made last week, and it is a bit unnerving. I have found when I am accompanying myself, the vocal technique goes out the window. Maybe it is a new concept to my brain, and I am thinking about a million different things, especially with my own songs, that I can't fully concentrate on my voice. It loses body and support and, UGH! It is still the biggest problem for me - pitch. I am so close to having perfect pitch, I do not have an ear problem AT ALL, I am in fact starting to pick up where exactly I am off. But I am either a bit too sharp and airy, or I sit just underneath the note. And then sometimes, I am RIGHT on and that is when my voice sounds best, I know you must be worried at this point,

thinking "What is she thinking if she can't even sing consistently. Now, I know when I am on and it is good, it is GOOD. I hear the potential in me. But I just can't seem to get over this problem. It has been around for 2 years now! and I know it comes from manipulating my mouth, or not enough support, but whatever it is I haven't come up with a good constant solution! And trying to fix being ever so slightly flat, I have brought my sound forward and made it a bit more edgier with my nasal resonance, which seems to momentarily fix pitch, but then I lose that big, deeper, full soft sound that I love. That is unique. I don't know what to do? What do you suggest? I wish you were just here to help me:(Thank you again. I know I can turn to you for anything because you don't say what I want to hear, or what you think I should hear, you just say what should be said and it is beautiful and perfect. You may be the only person in this world that I know that knows me. Love always, Lisa

5/12/02 Chrys's answer: Lisa, Let me suggest that you stop obsessing about your voice just for a while and hone your accompanying skills. It's easy to lose support when you're trying to do 2 things at once. You need to get your playing to a point where you don't need to think or look at your hands. Then from there, you put the two together and just sing from your heart WITHOUT listening to how it sounds. Keep remembering Sin#1, okay? I look forward to hearing from you again.

5/14 - Lisa writes: *I think I found a vocal coach here. In 2 weeks I am going to sit in a lesson and see what she could do for me. I get the feeling she may be a bit stumped with what to do with me. I guess I am just a unique case with voice teachers cause everyone I have had never knows exactly what to tell me, and I have found that with a bit of guidance, all of the important discoveries I've made with my voice have been on my own. Most of my teachers have been in the classical style. I know once you learn classical you can sing anything, but for some reason, every other style I try to get into other than "my" style, I freeze up and horrible things come out. It might be dangerous to get in a rut where all I can sing is my style, but then again, that is all I need. I don't want to master all styles, just mine. What do you think? The last thing I want is yet ANOTHER teacher stumped with my voice and instead of teaching me the way I understand things, tells me to TRUST them with their way, and then I don't "get it". And in the process, I lose money. I don't know. I recently read a book by Roger Love, a vocal coach for Hanson, Jackson 5, Matchbox 20, etc. He's in LA. Do you know much about him?*

5/15 Chrys - You DO NOT need to master styles that you will never need or use in your performance, and if this where this you new coach is heading, forget about her. I'm not familiar with Roger Love, but then again, I'm not an integral part of the LA scene. I live a few miles from the "hub" of Hollywood and mostly concentrate on my core student population while still making time for my Internet folks. I have a waiting list, but choose to work *only* with I can really develop as artists, and with whom I can have a rapport and collaborative sort of relationship. I guess I could be a lot bigger out here, but it's the way I want it for now. If you feel that Roger would be a help to you, then definitely go for it.

5/19- Lisa wrote: *I am having one of my friends send you a recording I did back in February at a show My voice has changed a bit since then, and you can hear where my pitch waivers a little bit, but overall that is my voice, the tone, timbre, and a*

taste of my overall style. Just so you have an idea. Let me know if you got it.

5/22 - Lisa wrote: Hi! So the tape is on the way, priority mail. I am so sorry, the recording is so poor, it is off a Sony tape deck but it is all I could afford to send. You will hear the pitch problems I speak of. They are not as bad as before, but it seems like every new song I write sounds bad until I know the music well enough to "let go". Anyway, I was just at home and I felt like I was reliving the past. Remember when I first wanted to move to Mpls, and how my whole family was against it from the start? And I thought I had to go about life without them?

Well, since I decided not to go to school this summer, my whole family questioned why, and as I tried to explain to them all that I want to be more serious with my music and the school wasn't doing what I needed and bla bla bla, they go off on me. How I will be unhappy without money one day, and how I am making a mistake, and how I am going to fail, and how I should be a doctor, and how they won't support me financially AT ALL if I am not in school. How I should be "realistic" and how I have to stop dreaming. Oh it hurts so so so bad, that my family thinks they know me enough to say these things to me. I know it all comes from love, and I know they just don't want to worry about me, but that is selfish of them!!!!

Because I am not happy. I am the ONLY one who has to fall asleep with myself every night. It will be hell if I am not content. They laugh at me when I tell them the great things I can do for the world, and that I was called by God to do this. They told me if I am not in school to just come home and work, but I think that is going backwards! They just don't understand. They make me feel like I am wrong, they make me second guess myself, they make me feel like the weakest person in the world. And they make me think I can't survive alone cause I've been spoiled all my life. Well anyway, I didn't even say goodbye to anyone in my family this time. It was horrible, and so sad to drive away leaving on a bad note yet I felt so free. Cause for the first time I stood up for myself. And I know that if one day I am in serious trouble they will help me out but I think I can do fine without them. Since I don't want to be a complete slave at work just to pay all my bills and rent and food etc, I am going to live out of a suitcase this summer.

Take turns sleeping on different people's floors. Maybe even my car. I would be able to support myself AND have time to write more songs, and practice to get where I need to be. And I don't care what I have to do, I am getting out to LA. I am bringing my cousin with me. And I am not going to tell my family until after I have left. If I have to, I will drive all the way there, eat canned food, wash-up at rest stops, and sleep in the car. Who knows how to get there, where we will end up, or what is in store for us, but we've prayed so so so hard and everything is pointing us in that direction (she wants to be a fashion major, and as you guessed the whole family is against her too) It is all up in the air now, but some of the BEST decisions are unplanned, and on a whim. And I know we would learn so much. I know we are taking a big risk for our happiness but some things you just can't learn in school. We may get our asses kicked but at least it is our very own asses. I dunno, all I know is even just since all of this came up my passion has grown so much more. Because now it is a form of survival, it is not just a hobby anymore. My goodness, I must love music if I do all these crazy things, and risk almost everything I have. I have one week to pack up before someone takes my room. I am kind of scared, but if all else

fails too, my pastor is making me a key for the church to practice piano whenever. So maybe I can even crash on a pew. Do I sound nuts to you? Sometimes I think I should just give this all up for comfort and safety, I am at a crossroads. I am being forced long and hard to think about all of this, and if this is really the life I want to go after. And I think it is. Humans were created to live from their instinct, and my whole body tells me this is right. I know if I get through this I will be unstoppable. I am ready. I will go anywhere, do anything, work my ass OFF.

I just saw a special on J-Lo, how she randomly took herself out of school cause she didn't have enough time to dance. And how her family was against her, and said they would not support her if she went after this, but she did, cause she loved it that much, and times got soooooo hard, she even called home once and they said "don't even ask us for anything, we told you not to!" but she kept going and the rest is history. There is a genuine beauty in a truly passionate artist. Something that is only exuded when someone had to hit bottom before making it to the top. I am scared, Chrys, but thank you for believing in me. For my passion and not my talent. I love you, and will be anxiously awaiting some great words of advice. Lisa

5/22 Chrys Writes:

You're amazing! Not just the courage you display, but the wisdom to see that when someone WORRIES about you, it may be out of love, but it's really an insult. The message that worry sends is that you are not competent enough to DO your own life and that you need to do what is safe and comfortable for THEM, so they won't have to worry. The message is "Make us feel better, make us comfortable, even if it makes you miserable." The fact that you see this is a beautiful sign of maturity that you are certainly going to need in the months to come. It's totally okay to be scared. Try thinking of that SCARED feeling as EXCITEMENT rather than fear. The same juices start flowing for both of those feelings, y'know. Adrenaline can be either totally debilitating, or totally inspiring depending on your view point. So next time you think about being scared, think instead, "I am excited about my future and cannot wait to walk into it". My favorite affirmation for fear or doubt is this:

"God goes before me to prepare the way. He makes all the crooked places straight, removes all obstacles, and leads me on my path to total fulfillment. I remain confident and at peace in the knowledge that I am being led to the exact places and people that will help me on my path. I am wrapped in God's love and I cannot fail! Thank you Lord!"

5/24- Lisa writes:

I am not sure how to start this. And don't feel obligated to answer in any sort of way, but something happened to me today. First of all, I woke up and had this gut feeling in the pit of my stomach that something was gonna happen. And for some reason I saw myself coming home after work to my computer and crying. I was kinda weirded out and I assumed right away you got my tape and wrote how horrible I was or something, or that you told me I should do something else. Well, I got home and there was an email from my, well, now ex boyfriend telling me that a long distance relationship was just too hard. I liked this guy so much Chrys, and our passion for music was a really special connection between us. Yet deep down I knew we were both there for each other in this moment in both of our lives, and it wasn't meant to

be forever. But this was just so soon, and it still hurts, and I kinda started feeling that I am just not good enough. I dunno. So anyway, I am just sitting here, kinda numb with pain and in complete shock, and I sit here and realize everything that was holding me back from my dream of singing has now been cut off. My family, friends, school, and now my boyfriend. I've never felt so alone and sad, but I've never felt so free and full of hope and excitement for what is coming. I feel so strongly that God has been trying to tell me something and now it almost makes sense. And my daily devotional for today just happened to be about how nothing happens by accident. It is all for a reason, and even though it may hurt now, God is working in ways we will one day understand. I am totally and completely weirded out by everything now, and I know I told you I was planning on driving out there. But I keep putting it off. I get the feeling I will continue to do so unless I just do it one of these days. And now for the first time in my life, I have NOTHING holding me back. It is almost like God is saying "NOW LISA!" [But my cousin is backing out, and I can't do this alone. Can't I just come out to LA and sleep on your couch for the summer?]

Chrys's answer My sweet Lisa, First off, I have not yet received the tape, but even if I had, and even if I thought it needed some help, I would never write that it was horrible. For one thing, I simply know it will not be horrible. There is no possible way that God could give you this gift and this passion without also giving you the ability to manifest it in your life. I get a lot of email from kids out there who tell me that their parents do not understand how important their music is. I read it, I hear the desperation, but I don't hear the conviction that I hear in you. I absolutely hate to hear about parents who are not supportive of their kids' aspirations, and at the same time, I do not like to criticize parents because, as a parent myself and now a grandparent, I know that it's too easy to criticize without all of the facts and without really knowing the parents myself.

But as much as I know in my heart that your parents truly love you and want only the best for you, they seem to be trapped in their own insecurities and may be projecting them on to you. They are undoubtedly afraid for you for they know that the life that you are choosing is a hard one, and they want you to be safe and secure. I will not say they are totally wrong about all this, but I believe in my heart that your parents have to have as much faith as you yourself are exhibiting in this tumultuous time in your life. Now let me address your request. What I believe was going on when you made this request of me was that you were in an emotionally charged head space caused by this email from your ex-boyfriend.

When we are reacting to our emotions, especially when they are fraught with feelings of rejection or loneliness, this is the worst possible time to make life-decisions. We should be still at times like these and let ourselves be guided to the next chapter in our lives. I will not say "no" to you, Lisa, but I will ask you to meditate on this for a long time before jumping in your car and driving out here for the summer. It may turn out that this IS the right place for you to be, or it may become clear that you were only reacting emotionally, rather than responding rationally to the email you received, and that the best course of action is to stay put until the time is right for you to make your next move. Does that make sense to you? Behind every single adversity in life, there is the blessing! We just need to see it! So before you start running, make certain that you are not running away from pain, but

to something that you are sure of. That's not to say, you need to have it all planned out, for we can only outline it. We need to let God handle the details, right? But know that you are totally correct in your thinking when you make big decisions. If you are sure about a decision, then you should feel JOY, even knowing that things could get worse before they get better. The JOY is your faith, and faith is never ignored! So contemplate and meditate about it, Lisa, and write me again in a few days. We'll work this out somehow, okay? Love,

5/27 - Lisa writes: *I will write more later, still meditating, but I have just been studying up on options, even have been talking to the family. I think I could convince my cousin to come out to LA with me, but I don't know. No one is as ambitious as I am, and even though I know my cousin wants to come along, I am just not sure she has all the will to make it work. Sometimes I sit back and wonder what in the world makes me do the things I do, and makes me wonder if I should even be going after all these things. And then, I wonder "Why LA? What can I do there I can't do here? I know there is still stuff I could be doing here, but I guess sometimes I hit a wall. I start to feel trapped, and then I get lazy. Just something about a new place, and new people really gets me going again, and gets me on the right mindset to work my ass off. And the whole attitude of that town, as in NY, completely blows the Midwest mindset. Anything is possible there, and people don't think you are crazy. To be surrounded by people who are living what I am going after will raise the bar and make me work a million times harder to keep up. But it scares me how close I am getting to wanting to give up. Yesterday I started to think about how nice it would be to have a family, and live in one place for a long long time, and have a nice little teaching job, and a dog, and a white picket fence. It all seemed nice for a split second, then I saw how unhappy I would be. I just don't think I could live like that, Chrys. And knowing that I never made it because I didn't try hard enough, I'd just end up regretful and unhappy, and that would be unfair. And, I don't really think I am running from anything or anyone. I think I am only running straight towards music. So where do I go from here!/? Thanks for your help, I would be lost without you. Lisa*

5/31 - After receiving her tape, I wrote:

Lisa, Listen to me! Please PLEASE listen to what I am telling you. You HAVE GOT IT!! You are AMAZING! You MUST MUST MUST get into a studio and make a demo IMMEDIATELY! Your songs, your voice, your expression, my God, your LYRICS, are simply fabulous! And your LOOK! You're gorgeous! You MUST get a demo together. Now, is that you playing the keyboard? Why are you wasting time on the guitar if you can play like that? Now listen to me, Lisa! STOP thinking and analyzing and worrying and speculating and wasting time dissecting the meaning of everything. Do NOTHING but work on your demo. If I ever heard an artist ready for a break, it IS YOU, my dear! And somehow I knew all along that you would sound as wonderful as you did. You made me cry. I felt your words so deeply. The song, "1000 miles" was brilliant. Put that on the demo. Edit it to 3 1/2 minutes, add a strings line maybe, (maybe not), and put it down. Then the song really broke through to my soul was "The Wall Song". Good Heavens, girl! It is filled with such pathos, and such a flowing melody line and your playing is simply exquisite! You should be doing absolutely nothing outside of eating and sleeping and writing songs and recording them. When you

record, put the keyboard track down first, then sing with the accompanying track so you can concentrate just on the expression of the song.

And what are you talking about - flat? Okay so you went somewhat flat on the cover song, but you had no accompaniment. The more you write, the better your ears will get, and the fewer pitch problems you'll have down the road. The quality of your voice is beautiful, and although you did great on the Etta James tune, the true beauty of your voice comes through on your own material. I know that you were probably trying to show off your technique on "At Last", but I think that vocal calisthenics can sometimes detract from the simplicity of a lyric or melody. Let Mariah do that! Just do what is YOU. A gorgeous song, heavenly words and a simply liltingly magnificent voice. That'll get it done every time. Have you heard me? Do you get what I am saying to you? Don't let me hear you doubting yourself for another second!! Just go and do it! I am here, and I will support you any way I can. Get me a demo that I can get people to listen to...and do it SOON!

6/2 - Lisa writes: Chrys chrys chrys, I couldnt say it enough but you are truly my very own earthly guardian angel. Time and again God has proven to me that he brought you in to my life for a purpose. Honestly, you have done more for me than you will ever know. your email came to me at a perfect time. All these plans to move to LA, have brought out so much. Whether or not I go out there, the plans have helped me out. Cause see, for the first time I think my family saw I was serious, and they finally admitted and accepted that this dream of mine was real. And they stopped denying it and fighting it.

My mom has again become my best friend and biggest supporter. We talked long and hard about this and I understand where she is coming from, and she understands me now. And now we work together and come up with the best decisions for us both. It is so nice. And, my older brother who also decided to go with his instinct and pursue his music(mixing beats and raps and stuff) is so happy that my family has finally accepted him as well. And now he and I, who never got along, have now become quite close. I was just getting to the point where my family was accepting my life, and accepting my decision to take off of school and move. And at just that moment I got your email.

Chrys, I didn't know whether to cry, or laugh, I could barely even finish reading it before I bounced into the kitchen yelling at my mom to come read it. I was getting to a point where I felt so far away from music, and making it, and even started to think more realistically. It scared me, and then reading your positive feedback, I have never felt so close! I realized how much my music means to me, and to have someone else feel the same is the proof I needed to go on. I have always hidden my songs and my voice at home, but now I am singing out loud and even showing my friends my music. See, I have been so private about it cause my songs are like my babies, and I would feel too "exposed" if I let them out in the open. Because your own song is so personal, and so deep, you are completely vulnerable when you let someone else in. Oh, I don't even know how to thank you for giving me the confidence I need to go all the way now.

AND, my family is seeing it too. Already they have taken it more seriously and have offered to help pay for a demo. Speaking of demo, one in my friends is a good

enough producer to do bass and guitar and strings. He told me to just go all out. He's going to help me get a whole CD together. Ummmm, yeah. I want to get this done right away, even if it's a home recording. I mean, Christina Aguilera's was done the same way I made that tape for you. Her agent called her up, said "just quickly get something on tape for me to get to this guy", she did it in her living room, sent it out, and got called to audition in front of him, and the rest is history. The best part about this is I can do these things from where I am. I don't have to move! I mean, eventually, I may have to go different places, but getting the grunt work done here will save me TONS of money, and will make it easier to get in a plane with a day's notice to go somewhere I need to go, ya know? Well, I love you tons, hope to hear from you soon. BTW, My mom was always hesitant about this "Chrys" person I emailed all the time and mentioned every now and then, but now she finally sees how good you are for me as a person, and now we talk about you like you are a friend. You are a friend to me. One of my best. Lisa

6/9 - Lisa writes that the recordings in her friend's basement are going beautifully! She is excited and focused! And time is flying by as she engages in the activity of her heart and gets lost in the music.

6/9 Chrys writes: Hi Lisa, Sounds like everything is moving along as it should. And yes! I can surely relate to how fast the time goes. When I am writing or recording it's just like that. Once when I was arranging a collection of songs for a vocal ensemble to record, I would come home from my day- job at around 6PM and work on the arrangements. This one night, I was really hyped up all day 'cause I had an idea for one of the tunes. I was starving, but I decided to go straight to the keyboard and put down the idea I had and then take a break for supper, which is what I did. I worked for what I thought was about an hour and then decided to eat something. I looked up at the clock and it was 2AM!! You have EVERYTHING necessary to make a successful life for yourself in this business. You have the talent, the looks, the smarts, and the faith! Yes! Go ahead and market for yourself...AND also send out your demo to whoever you can find to listen. DO BOTH! Get me the finished versions and I will do the same with the people I know. About copyrights... It's not enough to simply record it. The cheap way to do it is to put all your songs on a disk or tape with the names and lyrics to each song and mail the package certified mail to yourself. Then DO NOT OPEN THE PACKAGE. This dates the material and proves that you are the creator. The "legit" way is to send the entire collection with titles and lyrics to the copyright office in DC, but you don't have to do that right now...UNLESS...you are starting a business and need to declare the expense on your tax return. Some where down the road, you might want to think about that, but probably not necessary now. Good Luck, sweetie. Sounds like you're on your way. I'm so proud of you.

6/13 - Lisa writes: *Something weird happened tonight. I was recording and I heard one of the other song we recorded and it sounded just horrible to me. It sounded like 1 out of 5 notes were right. Maybe I was that girl in the mirror who thought she looked fat even though the rest of the world didn't think so. All I know is I have never doubted myself so much. And I know I shouldn't, but my self confidence is an issue and I am afraid it always will be.*

From middle school when I had only one friend, to my super gorgeous ex boyfriend's girlfriend who everyone stops to look at. And I started to think, if I am "off" on so

many notes, what kind of producer is gonna wanna work with me? I am so envious of the girls out now who can hit every note without even trying. I don't know why my pitch fluctuates. It is never like I am singing a wrong note, I am just always above or below. I want to have control because I feel like my whole life isn't in any sort of control. I am living out of my car, I can barely afford my own bills and food and to record what I am recording. And that is my fault cause I can't work for long before I start to get stressed out because I would rather be doing music. And I can't even sleep well at night cause my songs roll through my head and I write and constantly work on them every minute of my life.

My social life has been basically thrown away so I could do this because nothing makes me more happy, I feel maybe my family is insulted that I would rather spend time doing this than anything else. I just feel like my whole life is out of control and the only thing that ever makes sense is this. But even now, I question it all. I know no one can tell me what will happen, and what I SHOULD be doing, but I just wish I had people TRULY believing in me enough to coach my vocal problems away, train my body to be dance ably fit, help co-write my "good" songs to great, and make the world believe in me as I do. Because I am afraid, I can't go through this alone anymore. I know I will probably wake up tomorrow and think that was I am thinking now is foolish, but right now this is how I feel. I need something to happen. Something big! Something to convince me that what I am doing is right 'cause you can only have yourself convinced for so long until you find out you are on the Truman Show and you've been living a big joke. I am sorry for letting you into the part of me I am not proud of. But that is still part of me and I have to learn how to deal with it or everything in my life will be destroyed. I feel so stuck. What do you think I should do? I know you are running out of things to tell me but now I see why so many entertainers have drug problems. If something doesn't go perfect, we feel like our lives have ended. The funny thing is, I have barely even exposed my music to anyone so how can I be feeling so defeated already? I wish you were here. Or I were there. But what can we both do from where we are at? Love, Lisa

6/13 Chrys - Lisa, You may change your mind about wishing I were there after you read this. One thing I promised myself when I started teaching was that I would never lie to my students. And also that I would always speak to them from my heart and from my personal experience. This endless over-analysis of your abilities is destructive Lisa, and also unproductive. If you are not hitting notes, its because you are over analyzing every single one instead of just communicating through your music. And your music is good enough to communicate the essence of your soul without you self-editing every note.

That being said, if, as an objective listener to your recordings, hear a note that's off, the thing to do is go back and fix it! But going inward and tearing yourself down just gives life to all your fears and insecurities. Remember that Sin #1 of the 7 deadly sins of singing is listening with self-criticism, rather than being objective and just doing the work that will move you forward. Let me illustrate this point. If you came upon a child trying to tie their shoe, and not being able to do it, what would be your response? Would you criticize that child and make her feel small and like failure? No, you wouldn't. You would sit down on the floor with that kid and help her slowly and with loving care to tie her own shoe. You wouldn't tie it for her, but you would show

her what she had to do, and sit with her until she succeeded- on her own!

That's doing the work! I know you realize that no one and nothing is keeping you from your dream except **yourself**. And being jealous of others who can do it more easily gets you nowhere fast! Is this your dream or isn't it? Are you willing to follow your bliss and your passion no matter what? Then stop this diatribe of self condemnation and feeling sorry for yourself and get back to the work. Where's that faith I heard in your last email? Where's the absolute KNOWING that you were meant for this? Do you really believe that God has given you this passion only to let you fail miserably? What kind of God does that? None that I know, that's for sure.

Okay, so I agree that you have some ear issues. I heard that clearly in the cover tune you sent me. You have difficulty staying on pitch and in the key of the song your singing when there is no accompaniment to keep you centered in the tonality of the song. So get some ear-training books and work with them. Listen first to a note and then go there and sing it. If you can hear that you're under it, then you can hit it squarely! Work on your ear training until your muscle memory can do it without you having to think about it.

A singer from the 50's, his name was Johnny Ray had a similar passion to yours. He just wanted to sing. But he was deaf. How in the world could he be a singer if he was deaf? Everyone told him to forget it. And he spent as many endless hours in deep depression as I am sure you spend thinking how hopeless it was to dream his dream. Well, a doctor came along and told him that with surgery and a hearing aid, he could have partial hearing restored, but it was doubtful that he would ever be able to sing professionally. Well, Johnny Ray decided to take a chance, and had surgery and was fitted with a hearing aid, then GOT TO WORK! He worked for months, years even, to train his muscle memory to find the notes. I am very sure that during that time, he had moments like yours where he doubted himself, but the voice inside him told him to keep going, that even if he never made it as a singer, he would at least know that he gave it everything he had to give.

Well, Johnny Ray had several #1 hits on the charts in the 50's. You can go to WinMX or Napster, and listen to them if you like. When he performed live in Vegas, where I met him in the 60's, he would always cup his ear so he could hear better. It became a sort of signature, that simple gesture that no one knew the origin of. When you're on a roll, Lisa, the worst thing you ever do is to stop and think. You must keep the momentum going! Get out of your head and keep working. You knew it wouldn't be easy, didn't you? What worth having ever is?

On the other hand, if this soul-searching is truly and honestly and objective analysis and not just pity-pot stuff, then perhaps you *should* look at alternatives for your life. If you're gonna fall apart every time something comes up, well maybe you're not as committed as you thought. Only you know what's inside you, Lisa. But be sure that you are listening to the life spirit inside of you and not to external opinions that you may have taken on as your own.

There are the inner critics who will try to save you from failure by telling you to quit, but they are not you. They are the well-meaning voices that have made decisions for you since birth. The INNER SPIRIT OF LISA is the voice you should be listening to, the

voice you sing with. If THAT voice says quit, then, and only then would it be something to consider.

You keep saying you need others to believe in you, to help you write your music, and help you with your vocal problems. Well, all I have to say about that is that if your dream depends on the approval of others, you are doomed from the start. You have to learn how to be your own cheering section, Lisa. This place is on your path is a lonely one with only you and your faith for company. If that isn't enough to keep you focused and on track, then you're in trouble. But hear this! **YOUR MUSIC IS BEAUTIFUL! YOUR VOICE IS ENCHANTING! YOUR LOOK IS GORGEOUS!** So why are you looking for trouble? Just get back to work and have faith that it WILL pay off....or not! So are you in this for the finish line or for the journey itself? Don't you think that maybe you'll learn a little bit about Lisa along the way? Something that will inspire you and catapult you into a whole new world of thoughts and feelings and creativity? Ask yourself right now. What will my life be if I quit my dream? Picture it! Visualize the house and kids and office job. Or maybe the job working in a recording studio, or teaching school. Can you see yourself happy in that place? Will you be fulfilled? It's up to you, Lisa! It's ALL UP TO YOU!

Conclusion!

6/16 - Lisa writes: I just came on here to write to you again to tell you where I'm at. To answer your questions before you asked them. That night after I wrote you I went home. And the next day was simply the saddest day of my life because all I could think was "I can't do anything else. I would not be happy". To think of a life without music, a life of writing FOR people, or recording FOR people, or whatever, that is the saddest life for me. And the worst part was that night I not only affected myself, but the 3 other people in the room who experienced our recording and are now devoted to this project. And I made them believe in it! The guy who was producing finally found a meaning to his studio, who just before working with me on my songs, was thinking about selling all of his stuff. And working on my music made him happy and giddy again because he had a purpose. And I couldn't believe that giving up on MY music would affect people so much. But it made me realize what it was worth. As far as pitch, you should hear how far I've come from just learning to play for myself. I can hear that when I don't hit the note square on the head, it is because I begin to think too much. I know it will be hard work, but I also know I am a hard worker.

I am not sure what got into me. Sometimes I just hit those really low points in my life, where I question everything I am. That self pity thing has a history in my family. Nearly everyone has suffered from some sort of depression, but so far I am fighting it off. Without music I know I would fall into that trap too. And I will work! I also was frustrated because when we got back into the studio, I tainted everything with my image of perfection, all my impossible thoughts to make the song we recorded into something it definitely wasn't. I started to fear my song did not stand up to the other songs on the radio so I listened to song after song and tried to copy everything. And 20 more hours later, we ended up right where we

left off minus a few touchups. It was funny, that so much work for nothing, but it wasn't nothing, Cause I learned that when you try to be something you are not, it isn't any good.

*My music is exactly what it is, and is not meant to be played with, or it loses its true meaning. And since that realization, people have been calling me and telling me about people who don't even know me who've heard it already, and think it is amazing and should be on the radio, and its been great! And I know I can't live off of other peoples expectations, and praise. And I know I can make it alone cause I have so far. I've been my only fan for so long, I know I will be my number one fan until the day I die. And when I start letting go, and letting everything just be, I have no doubts that people will respond positively, but even if they don't, I will be ok 'cause I am happy [doing what I love!] I am so sorry I brought you into that [head space], and I can't promise I will never think that way again, but I am pretty sure I have something too special to give up, and that is coming from ME and no one else. We're not done, but I want to send you what we have done so far just cause I am anxious for you to hear it. Anyway, thank you For being honest. I appreciate you so much. And this isn't even close to over!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Love, Lisa*

Lisa is still at it, making demos of her songs and getting stronger every day. She is learning that every performer has days of fear and doubt. We wouldn't want to perform if we always had total confidence in ourselves, and it is the very angst of our lives that gives birth to our art. Stay tuned for more of Lisa's journeys, and feel free to comment on this story on the Bulletin Board! I'm sure Lisa could gain much from your feedback! Thanks always for your support. See ya next month!

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