

## Lindsey Boullt | Artistic Entrepreneur | Interview

Lindsey Boullt ([www.lindseyboullt.com](http://www.lindseyboullt.com)) has spent his entire career building excellence and community in the music world. As a guitarist, creator, and instructor, Lindsey received international acclaim with the 2007 release of *Composition*, most recently earning him the [Note.com/Japan/EverydayFusion/2020](https://www.note.com/japan/everydayfusion/2020) ranking of #29 “best fusion guitarists in the world”. A former instructor at Musicians Institute in Los Angeles, Lindsey’s notable creations also include the *ChaoticArtCircus*, an avant-garde theater performance series and the *Musician’s Showcase* which ran from 1994-2019. Lindsey is a *Gibson Brands Artist* and has been a contributing writer for *Guitar Player Magazine*. A renowned guitar instructor, Lindsey’s students have been accepted into major music schools including Berklee College of Music/Boston, University of North Texas, Musician’s Institute/Los Angeles, and the NYU Clive Davis Institute.

At the age of 21, I began playing the guitar after what had been an extremely turbulent and dysfunctional existence. The gift of scarcity can present an interesting challenge: if all paths ahead appear insurmountable, then all paths appear the same. I had a choice with my life’s direction and who I believed myself to be. Even in the face of doubts. Was I willing and daring enough to dream big? Are the lack of ‘resources’ and the hardship in my life an excuse to let myself “off the hook”? Did I have what it takes?

Instinctively, I knew that I was musical, but prior circumstances disallowed any artistic discipline, so I leaned into my determination to imagine what was possible, and began mapping the steps to succeed. My ability to endure stress (shaped by that difficult upbringing) coupled with my ability to be extremely disciplined, were the success factors that enabled my sustainable and successful career as an artist and entrepreneur.

After purchasing my first acoustic guitar on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and immediately enrolling in junior college, I advanced within a year to working professionally as a guitarist. By year three, I was working professionally in two 3-week run local theater productions, two Dallas community college commercials, Deep Ellum arts festival gigs,

country band contest, Jazz Orchestra state tour and recorded album, and a working jazz fusion band playing Brecker Bros, Weather Report, & Steps Ahead in area venues. Receiving a scholarship degree in music and theater management at University of Texas-Arlington and graduating with honors at Musicians Institute/Los Angeles cemented my determination to advance. Criss-crossing the country with wife and son, living in LA, DFW, NJ, NYC, Brooklyn and Houston provided even more invaluable experience before eventually landing in San Francisco in 1998 where I fully realized my unwavering commitment to thrive solely as a musician.

But this journey wasn't without persistent hardship and cost. By 2000, my wife and I had split. I was in a town where I knew very few people and with bills (including my son's college expenses), mounting debt, no savings, and extremely high rent in the middle of the dot-com boom. My first month, I remember, I had two weeks to make rent and only had half the money. Frantically, I made rent & bills that month producing an artists' EP, and never looked back. The day-to-day was stressful and perpetually terrifying. It was all up to me to create something artistic every day, every month in order to survive. Many times on the brink, but never once missed any payment or deadline. Success soon compounded. It was exciting, I was collaborating with amazing people.

The harsh reality of the music business is that only a few players will make a sustainable living. The vast majority of musicians have to establish multiple ways of making money alongside refining their artistry and craft. One quickly learns that cash flow (or the lack of it) becomes the driving force of whether you'll make it or not in this business.

Once I understood this, I embraced the challenge, branching out in multiple artistic directions, establishing networks of partners who shared my vision and helped me build a pipeline of players, artists, students, businesses, sponsors, and clients throughout the communities in which I lived and played.

With no substantial network in the beginning, I canvassed the city with flyers in every coffee shop, corner store, and business that I could and as fast as I could. *Guitar lessons, Will travel* was my moniker. Because of my previous experience with staging,

performing, production, and networking, things moved quickly. Within my first few months, the first *Musicians Showcase SF* was booked. Soon after, an art house contacted me to produce the first multi-art performance event. These events produced higher income and an ever-expanding network. I performed most admin duties on every show to keep costs down. The notoriety of these first few events garnered access to high profile musicians. This high level musicianship is what would be needed to perform the highly technical material on my future album. In combination, the art scene produced numbers of cohorts and business contacts to perpetuate the entirety of the life-style. I needed to maximize my monetary income and my artistic impact, and not let these disparate 'groups' abate. So I combined the groups. Marrying theatrical performance art with high powered musical performances emerged and became a cornerstone of my brand. Additionally, the perpetual 'morphing' of high level musicianship, art performance, technology, music instruction, and community involvement became the multi-pronged life-sustaining art form. Each discipline created sustained energy & cash flow for the other disciplines.



Even more, by investing in communities of multi-discipline artists, performers, working bands, schools, individual students (all levels), I built my brand and led with this community-minded approach through the shows and community events I hosted and the media opportunities that increasingly crossed my path. It became very clear: if you help other people become successful, you become far more successful than you can ever imagine.



Gaining recognition and increasing status as a working musician and performer also meant staying abreast of industry changes, all significant given, for example, the emergence of music streaming platforms that by design, don't compensate musicians and composers enough to sustain a living. Closed venues, burnout, the great migration, one dimensional virtual connections, and over saturation of content on major Apps (TikTok) create new obstacles for the artist to navigate.

I learned quickly that the power was not only in how well I played, composed or instructed, but also my integrity, character and commitment to invest in my community and give opportunities to the next generation of players, artists and students to achieve their goals.



**Lindsey's students accepted to top music schools**  
Univ of North Texas | Berklee College of Music | MI/Los Angeles | NYU Clive Davis Program

When pandemic realities introduced new complexities and challenges, the power of the networks and communities I had worked hard to build ensured that I kept working, teaching and investing in a diversified ability to keep having impact as an artist and entrepreneur.

Despite the complexity of today's new normal, today's online opportunities to virtually collaborate, along with expansive databases of knowledge, technique, tools



and ideas are vast. The issue is chaos: with the tornado of information swirling around in our industry, the challenge is how an individual artist distinguishes themselves.

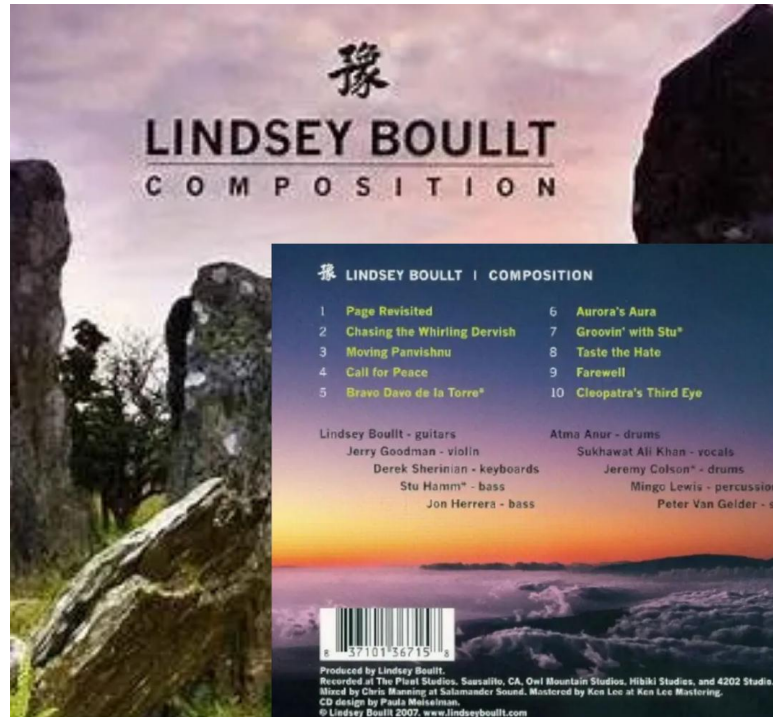
Historically, artists have always had a difficult time finding venues, housing, rehearsal rooms, wider acceptance, like-minded collaborators, audiences, and money. Despite our current unprecedented times, 2022 seems no different to me, it's just weirder. But my advice remains the same: immerse yourself, relocate if needed, seek and surround yourself with a community of like-minded people.

- **Hone your craft** | If you're an instrumentalist, focus on perfecting proficiency on your instrument. Jam every chance you can, rehearse more than you think you need to. There's a saying in our industry: you must play with the best to become the best. You must immerse yourself in real performance with real musicians to become the best artist you can become. If you have to, relocate to a major art center to do that. Always get involved wherever you can and advance from there.



- **Establish your product** | What's your artistry in service of? Live performance, content creator, recording & production, education, beat maker? The opportunities to apply your talents, musical or otherwise, are numerous. If you're composing, create a catalog of your work. Keep writing. Keep editing.

Stay on top of your online strategy. Find licensing agencies, collaboration networks, local radio, arthouses. If it takes longer, it takes longer.



- **Create a plan** | Make it cohesive and adaptable and stay disciplined. Talk to every business in your town—in-person and online—that is connected to your goal. You will find those opportunities, they will find you. Be curious and respectful.



- **Sustainability** | Acquire the experience, knowledge, merits, certificates, awards, honors, degrees. Always training up. Study. Refine. Progress. The 'higher up' you go, the more skill, expertise & integrity you will need.
- **Failure, Loss, Setbacks** | Toughen up in the face of failure. You are going to have setbacks, loss & crushing defeats. Get up. Go again. There will be more challenges ahead.

Stay excited. And be patient. Play the long game and be relentless in your pursuit of your vision. You never know where the strokes of luck will come from – connect your unique dots and never underestimate the opportunities within this chaos.