

Got Recovery?

Many Recovering Alcoholics, Addicts, And Their Family Members Are Discovering The Value Of Listening To Recovery Music As A Tool For Staying Spiritually Balanced.

Whether or not you are in recovery yourself, chances are you know someone who is. As of January 1, 2004, Alcoholics Anonymous estimates over 2,076,935 members and 105,294 A.A. groups that meet worldwide.¹ Al-Anon Family Groups (a 12-step fellowship of men, women, children and adult children whose lives have been affected by the compulsive drinking of a family member or friend) estimates 26,000 groups.² Not surprisingly, Wikipedia³ lists thirty-two other 12-step recovery groups. Recovering alcoholics and addicts know it's important to stay spiritually centered in order to maintain one's recovery, and attending regular meetings is one means to that end.

Many recovering alcoholics, addicts, and their family members are discovering the value of listening to Recovery Music as a tool for staying spiritually balanced, evidenced by its steady growth in popularity in the recovery community.

Recovery Music is a category of music encompassing all genres, in which the lyrics often contain a spiritual message or share experience, strength, and hope from alcoholism and other addictions.

In contrast to songs about drinking that are played on country music stations across America, such as Brad Paisley's *Alcohol, Tequila Makes Her Clothes Fall Off* by Joe Nichols, and Toby Keith's *I Love This Bar*, **if you surf the Web you'll discover a movement toward music that appeals to a growing segment of the population who has quit drinking and no longer wish to romanticize the drink.**

Ray (who prefers to use his first name only in keeping with 12-step group traditions) worked for twenty-three years as a professional staff songwriter for Nashville music publishers. During that time, he accumulated sixty-four cuts and three top ten singles. In 2000, Ray stopped writing strictly for Music Row and returned to his hometown in Georgia to regroup after getting into recovery. He realized he had to change playgrounds and playmates if he was going to stay sober and it was at that time that he decided to change the type of music he wrote as well; he's always written songs about life as he sees it and now that includes life in recovery.

Ray's efforts have resulted in *Just Ray*, a band comprised of Ray and other musicians in recovery, and recently completing *Learning To Live Again*, a CD released in 2005 on the Wham Music label out of Georgia.

Besides commercial songwriters who have switched to writing Recovery Music, some artists aspired for commercial success but found their calling with Recovery Music.

Mary Lyn, another pioneer in Recovery Music, lives in Temecula, California. For several years, she was making regular trips to Nashville to meet with publishers and get feedback on her songs. During one of those visits in 2003, she met with Woody Bomar, V.P. and General Manager of Sony/ATV/Tree Music. Mary Lyn remembers, "After hearing my newest songs, he said, 'Mary Lyn – don't worry about writing for the Nashville market. Write about what you believe in.'" Armed with sage advice, her passion about sobriety, and transformed by her own experience with the twelve steps, she returned to Southern California and began a CD project about her journey with each of the twelve steps, aptly titled, *Twelve Songs*.

Once her CD was completed, Mary Lyn approached the organizers of the Annual Founders' Day in Temecula and offered to perform at their event. (Founders' Day is an event honoring June 10, 1935, the day the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous celebrates because its founders, William Griffith Wilson ("Bill W.") and Robert Holbrook Smith ("Dr. Bob") never had another drink from that day forward for the rest of their lives.) "I had no idea how people would respond to my music. I knew I had to do what I've been led to do so those following behind me can benefit from my life's lessons," says Mary Lyn. The response has been so tremendous that Mary Lyn recently performed at the opening dinner of the 41st Annual A.A. Women's Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, bringing strength and encouragement to the 3,000 sober women in attendance.

Despite the stereotype, not all recovery music is about alcoholism, nor does it have to always be serious. Speaker, humorist, and songwriter Greg Tamblyn of Kansas City, Missouri, records songs with titles like *I Have a Tendency For Co-Dependency*, and *Just A Little Soul Hangin' Out In Space*, winner of the Best Humorous Song in the International New Thought Alliance Music Awards. "These songs allow us to hold up a mirror and laugh at ourselves, which is a suspiciously healthy way to heal," says Tamblyn. Music from Tamblyn's CD, *The Shootout At The I'm OK, You're OK Corral*, is used by

¹ www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

² www.al-anon.alateen.org

³ www.wikipedia.org

some of the therapists during group sessions at Onsite Workshops, a provider of therapeutic programs designed for helping people gently rediscover the best in themselves and their relationships.⁴

In 2003, members of Nashville's AI-Anon community pooled their talents and created a collection of music from artists in the community, calling the CD, *Sounds of Serenity*. In keeping with AI-Anon traditions, the CDs were only sold by word-of-mouth. Everyone involved in the making of the CDs - including songwriters - the producer - and the manufacturer - volunteered their time and talent. Specific individual credit on the CD remained anonymous. The funds collected from the sale of 1,000 *Sounds of Serenity* CDs were contributed to help defray costs involved in putting on Nashville's AI-Anon convention. On the heels of the CD's success, two years later, *Sounds of Serenity - Volume Two* was created. Since Volume One quickly sold out, this time they doubled the number of CDs manufactured and 2,000 of Volume Two were sold, again by word-of-mouth.

In April 2004, 12-Step Radio⁵ launched its first broadcast on the Internet. The nonprofit station based in San Diego, California began with a play list of only forty-nine songs about recovery from alcoholism or addiction. (Both *Sounds of Serenity* CDs and Mary Lyn's *Twelve Songs* were a major part of 12-Step Radio's original play list.) Now, twenty-two months later, they have over 200 songs in rotation, with music being submitted for airplay faster than they can screen it. 12-Step Radio founder Bill Zimmerman created the station so others in recovery (like himself) could enjoy and benefit from the music he had been searching for (and found).

"We provide a community where quality music that is related to recovery and the 12-step message can be shared and enjoyed," says Zimmerman. **12-Step Radio has nonstop broadcasts, which makes hearing the message of recovery through music accessible to anyone, any hour of the day.** A sampling of guestbook entries on 12-Step Radio's website echoes sentiments of gratitude from listeners as far away as Scotland, Ireland, Nova Scotia, Canada, UK, China, Germany, Belgium, Australia, and the Middle East.

*I love music and I LOVE Recovery Music.
It just brightens my spirits and gives me strength
for another day of sobriety!*

-Rebecca S.

*I have been sober for over 90 days and I'm so happy to
hear some Recovery Music during the evening or late night
when I can't sleep. Thank you for having this –
it has saved me from drinking tonight.*

-Anna B.

In addition to broadcasting recorded Recovery Music, 12-Step Radio travels to sober music festivals like Recovery-Fest in Nashville and the 25th Annual Musician's Picnic in Los Angeles to broadcast live to its listeners around the world.

Besides tuning into 12-Step Radio on your computer, you can also find Recovery Music CDs on the Internet by entering keywords such as "Recovery Music" or "12-Step Music" in a search engine (like Google⁶ or Yahoo⁷). But **the easiest way to find the largest collection of 12-Step and Recovery Music under one roof is at SunlightOfTheSpiritMusic.com.**⁸

Nashville songwriter, author, and music publicist Gracie Hollombe Vandiver combined her passion for music and her love of living a clean and sober lifestyle and founded Sunlight of the Spirit Music, where every artist with a CD in the store is in recovery. Vandiver committed to creating the online boutique after she failed to convince other larger-known online stores to add a Recovery Music category to their offerings. "They always wanted to pigeonhole Recovery Music into an existing category like 'healing' or 'meditation'" says Vandiver. "So in my frustration and desire to connect the recovery community with talented artists in recovery, I started Sunlight of the Spirit Music."

Recovery gift stores and religious bookstores also carry 12-Step and Recovery Music CDs, which they purchase from independent artists directly or from Sunlight of the Spirit Music's wholesale distribution division. Eleventh Step Books in Westmount, New Jersey was one of the first stores to carry Sunlight of the Spirit's CDs. **"There are some wonderfully-talented artists recording Recovery Music and the news is spreading. The music is spiritually satisfying and uplifting,"** says Eleventh Step Books co-owner, Mae Jacobs-Skinner. **"I play the CDs in our store and they sell themselves."**

Sunlight of the Spirit Music recently filled its first wholesale order to a mainstream bookstore. **Davis-Kidd Booksellers in Nashville, Tennessee, added a Recovery Music bin, as well as placing CDs in the recovery section of their bookstore.**

"Music is the most accessible form of media in the world," says Vandiver, **"and Recovery Music is another tool for one's spiritual toolkit. It's a great way to hear experience, strength and hope when you're not sitting in a meeting."**

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⁴ www.OnsiteWorkshops.com

⁵ www.12StepRadio.com

⁶ www.Google.com

⁷ www.Yahoo.com

⁸ www.SunlightOfTheSpiritMusic.com