Why musicianship makes me a *better accountant*

I did not leave music to become an accountant. I brought eighteen years of it with me - and it is the best training I ever got for doing this work well.

BY SAILOR SCHMIDTY, THE ROCK N ROLL ACCOUNTANT · ERIN, ONTARIO



The Rock The Jive Records coin - a vinyl record minted as a gold coin.

Most accountants will tell you about their credentials. I will too, when it matters. But if you want to know how I actually work - how I listen, how I practise, how I know when something is off before I can prove it - you have to start with the music.

I play drums, bass and guitar, and I love being well versed in all three. That is not a party trick. Each instrument teaches a different job, and accounting needs all three jobs done, every file, every time. A musician who only hears his own part is a liability in a band. An accountant who only sees his own spreadsheet is the same.

> *Keep the rigour, lose the costume. The music taught me the rigour. It also taught me the costume was never the point.*

THE INSTRUMENTS

Three instruments taught me three accounting jobs

Drums: Timing

Drums are time, made audible. Rush, and the whole band feels it. Drag, and the energy dies. Accounting lives on the same clock - filing deadlines, payroll, month-end, cash coming in and going out. Good timing is not being fast. It is landing things when they are supposed to land, calmly, every time.

Bass: Foundation

Nobody hums the bass line on the way home, but take it away and the song falls apart. Bass is listening first and ego last - holding the foundation so everyone else can do their job. That is bookkeeping and reconciliations. Unglamorous, foundational, and the first place I look when something feels wrong.

Guitar: Patterns

Guitar taught me to see patterns and move inside them - scales, riffs, the same shape in a new key. Financial statements work the same way. Once you know the pattern, you can spot the note that does not belong, and you can improvise a clean solution without breaking the form.

Put them together and you get how I approach a set of books: hold the timing, secure the foundation, then read the pattern. If one of those three is missing, I can hear it - usually before I can point to the exact line.

Practice is not a phase. It is the job.

I practise guitar every day. Not in a heroic, eight-hours-a-day way - in a real, sustainable way. New riffs. Scales. Working through songs from Apple Music, learning how other players solved the same problems. I have recently started building playlists specifically for practice time, so the reps stay focused instead of random.

I do exactly the same thing in accounting. I write case studies. I work through my CPA Ontario modules. I rehearse judgement on paper, where the stakes are low, so that when a real file puts me on the spot, the thinking is already in my hands.

That is the part people miss about talent, in music and in accounting. What looks like instinct is usually just a lot of quiet reps, done when nobody was watching. Clients do not pay me for the hour I spot a problem. They pay for the years of practice that made spotting it possible.

THE PROOF & THE LESSONS

An album teaches you to finish

Writing songs is easy to romanticise. Finishing an album is work. I have written and recorded two of them - *Something About Sailor* and *The Pirate of Pirates* - and then played the *Something About Sailor* showcase live, in front of real people, with nowhere to hide behind another take.

Recording teaches you to listen back honestly, fix what is not working, and commit. A showcase teaches you accountability: the date is set, the room is full, and you deliver what you rehearsed. Closing a file, filing a return, standing behind a set of statements - it is the same discipline. At some point the work leaves the studio, and your name is on it.

What the bandstand taught me about the books

1. Take the standards seriously

I have seen what happens when International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) are not followed with seriousness. It sounds technical, but the musical version is simple: if the band agrees on a key and one player decides it does not apply to him, everyone else pays for it. Standards are how strangers can trust the performance.

2. Care is visible in the operation

I have also seen a client operation where there was simply no care in the accounting. You can feel that in a band too - instruments out of tune, gear not maintained, nobody listening. The numbers are never just numbers. They show whether anyone is tending the thing, week in and week out.

3. Timing has to line up

And I have seen what happens when the timing of things does not line up. In music, a great part played at the wrong moment is still wrong. In business, the right payment, filing or decision at the wrong time creates the same kind of train wreck. Part of my job is conducting that timing before it becomes a problem.

FOR BOTH ROOMS I PLAY IN

This piece is for two audiences - on purpose

If you make music, or make a living creating

You do not need an accountant who judges the hustle. You need one who understands it - irregular income, gear, gigs, platforms, and a career that does not fit a tidy salary box.

- An accountant who speaks your language first, and translates the tax and accounting language second
- Someone who has stood on a stage and shipped creative work, not just reviewed it
- Rigour you can trust, without having to shrink who you are to get it

That is why Rock The Jive exists: accounting, tax and bookkeeping for musicians, creators, indie labels and creator-economy clients.

If you are a fellow accountant

This is not an argument for being less serious. It is the opposite. My case is that a life outside the file - practised seriously, over years - makes the professional judgement inside the file sharper.

- Listening, timing and pattern-recognition are transferable skills, not distractions
- Daily practice, case studies and module work are how judgement is built and kept
- We can keep the rigour of this profession and still let people be their true, honest selves in it

If that sounds like a practice worth building, we are probably going to get along.

However you found this piece, the offer underneath it is the same: serious work, done by a real person, who practises - at his instruments and at his profession - because he wants to be worthy of the trust people put in him.

I don't judge the hustle, I manage it.

Rock The Jive Records - accounting, tax and bookkeeping for musicians and creators, from Erin, Ontario.

Book a free chat and find out more at rockthejiverecords.ca | Instagram: @rockthejiverecords57

Sailor Schmidty records as a multi-instrumentalist - drums, bass and guitar. His albums are *Something About Sailor* and *The Pirate of Pirates*. At Rock The Jive Records, he works as The Rock N Roll Accountant for musicians, creators, indie labels and creator-economy clients, and is working toward his CPA through CPA Ontario.