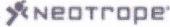


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Articles, commentary and opinion from author **John Scott G**

### Book Review: Vocal Essentials for the Pop Singer

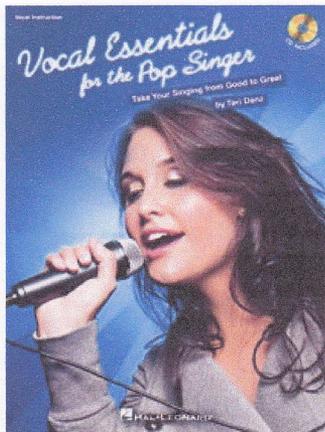
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BY [JOHN SCOTT G](#)

**REVIEW:** Singer and professional vocal coach Teri Danz decided to put her own private lesson plan into a book with accompanying CD. The results cover less than fifty pages but singers will find something valuable on every page.



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You can sing, right? You hit all the notes just perfectly, you're never short of breath, and you bring style and sensitivity to every performance whether on stage or in the studio. Naturally, your mom likes your voice, and all your friends attend your shows, every one of which garners strong applause. Plus, the audience never fails to demand an encore. More importantly,

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people you don't even know keep asking if they can buy/stream/play your recordings.

If all that is true, keep reading anyway, because you're about to discover how you can become an even better singer.

If none of that is true, keep reading, because you're about to discover how you might have a chance to become acceptable.

We're doing something here that we don't usually do: pleading for people to get this book and give it to the parents of that kid who is always butchering the latest songs at parties and social functions. (At least send this column to them.)

### Solving Sound Issues

There are lots of problems in the world and one of them is that too many people think they understand singing. Fortunately, Teri Danz understands singing, and quite a lot of her knowledge is in this dandy little book-and-CD kit. "The book is a primer essentially for what singers need to know, and what I always wanted to know from the start," Danz points out. What she is offering is "a guide to helping you manage your voice, your performance, your music theory and reading skills, and, if you choose, your career."

Having been a subscriber to the author's monthly e-mail, "The Singer's Newsletter," a missive offering advice, information, tips, and resources for vocalists in any genre, I have been aware of Teri Danz for some time. So when she got the contract with music book publisher Hal Leonard, all loyal readers of her newsletter probably thought "It's about time!"

### Packing a Lot in a Small Space

While she has a relatively small number of pages with which to present her case, Danz plunges into the heart of the matter in the opening sentence. "Great singers have a combination of skills that, from the outside, look like natural talent." Great teachers like Danz are here to help you augment, shape and refine your talent. You will find that there is plenty of theory in this book, but the main point of it is practical information that will almost immediately have a positive effect on revealing more of almost any singer's talent.

In combination with the 73-track CD that accompanies the book, Danz takes you through a terrific amount of information and exercises. By page 2, you're already into the basics of breath control, breath support, and the physical stamina necessary for proper performance. The lessons are for all ranges and both genders.

### From a Whisper to a Scream

Danz provides descriptions of things like pitch, intonation, vocal resonance, and timbre that go beyond the technical; they actually tell you a lot about your own voice as well as the voices of various singers you have encountered in clubs, open mic nights, and songwriter rounds. Example: "Overtones are related to the richness, sound color, and quality of your voice (also called timbre, pronounced 'tam-ber')." she writes. "If your voice is undeveloped with few overtones, your ability to express yourself as a singer is more limited. . . Many students say technology (microphones, effects, etc.) will be enough enhancement, but technology can enhance only what you have, not what you don't have."

(Note to self — find a genie and make this one of your three wishes: I wish every budding singer and guitarist would be made to memorize that last phrase: "technology can enhance only what you have, not what you don't have.")

Her explanation of the larynx (y'know, what many of us call the voicebox) is useful, and she follows it with advice that may help you avoid developing nodes, nodules or polyps (trust me, they are even more icky than they sound) and preserve your ability to sing soft, sing loud, or even wail like a banshee.

Singers whose work you have heard are used as real-life examples. "...a rock singer like Bono has a different resonance and timbre than an R&B singer such as Brian McKnight," she writes. In another section, she makes her points by referencing three versions of "Across the Universe," from John Lennon's original



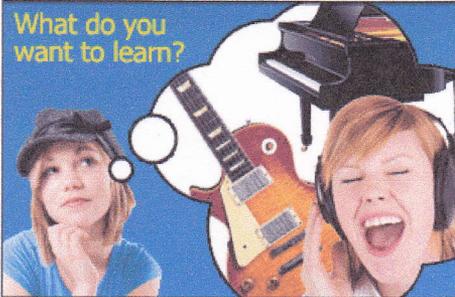
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vocal to Fiona Apple's version from the soundtrack of "Pleasantville" and then Evan Rachel Wood's version from the film with the same title as the song.

### Sounds Like

There is an interesting section that defines certain musical genres from the standpoint of their use of vocals. In the rock category, she writes "Rock singers cultivate an edgy, sometimes raspy, gritty sound (Kurt Cobain, for example) or a high-pitched wail (like Robert Plant)." Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson and Carrie Underwood are used as examples for country; Al Jarreau and Cab Calloway in jazz. (Interesting, 'cuz ya don't often hear a lot about Cab Calloway unless you're talking to a true aficionado of Max Fleisher's Betty Boop cartoons.)

### Contract With Your Audience

In the chapter entitled "Being a Professional," Danz can be unrelenting. In commenting on singers who complain about not being able to hear themselves onstage, she is quite blunt: "That's the deal! It's part of the job! Being able to hear yourself clearly onstage is a luxury, not a given.... Your vocal training and performing experience are what allow you to give a great performance and stay on pitch."

There is even a track on the CD that will help you focus on singing even when being bombarded by distractions.

### Private Lessons

Working from the text while using the exercises on the CD allows you to approximate the experience of sessions with a vocal coach. Much of her advice will be more productive the sooner you begin following it. As she notes ruefully, "Unfortunately, many singers wait to see a vocal coach until they are in distress."

### One Final Plea

Please, the next time you have to endure a bad singer . . . The next time you get to hear a singer with promise that is not yet fulfilled . . . The next time you hear someone singing with any kind of vocal glitch or obvious pain . . . Lead them to this book. Everyone's ears will thank you.

#### Book Summary:

"Vocal Essentials for the Pop Singer: Take Your Singing from Good to Great"

by Teri Danz

Hal Leonard, 40 pages + 73-track CD, ISBN: 9781423488293, \$14.99 paperback

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