

Speed ... Maker or Breaker

by [Jay Leach](#)

Many years ago my main mentor as a studio musician was Jay Graydon. He gave me many valuable insights about being a WORKING musician but among the most important was this: "You gotta read the scene." Simply translated, this means you need to be very aware of as many elements as possible on any gig, but especially in recording. One of those all-important elements is the **speed of the gig**.

If you are playing on a jingle, a lot of times you will be moving quickly because the composer may need to e-mail his sound file a couple of hours after your call time to make **his** deadline. In other settings you may be working on an album where the pace is one song every 2 or 3 hours or, though I have never had this luxury- sometimes a song a day or a week (usually in the case of band projects).

"Reading the scene" in this context means WILLING yourself to move at the same pace required by the situation. You may be the fastest sight reader in the history of creation and have your part perfectly scoped out in the first 4 seconds, but if you're working for a producer who has a slower internal creative clock and is used to letting the song "evolve"- you may have a problem.

Your speed and lack of sensitivity to the "creative timeline"- just so you can show everyone how quick you are- may be admirable, but in that context it can create a weird vibe- and that's the last thing you want in the creative process. Conversely, if you feel like you're about to uncover the great and so far undiscovered "**missing lick**" on a producer's jingle while the FED-EX truck is idling in the parking lot waiting to pick up the mixed master and the booth is full of ad-execs that want to get it done and go to lunch- there's a real possibility YOU might have a future as a FED-EX driver rather than in music.

Be aware of doing your best in whatever musical situation you're in, but also be sensible and always remember to "read the scene", especially when the clock is involved..... because it always is!

Blessings,
Jay