



A Little Song He Wrote

Before Bobby McFerrin was famous, people sometimes asked him, "What kind of work do you do?"

"I'm a musician," he answered. "I'm a singer."

"Who's in your band?" people asked.

"Just me," he answered.

"Just you?" people asked. "Do you play the piano when you sing?"

"I play the piano," Bobby answered, "but not when I perform. I don't play the piano on stage."

"Do you play the guitar when you sing?"

"No," Bobby answered. "I don't play the guitar."

"So...when you walk out on stage, what do you do?"

"I just sing," he answered.

Actually, Bobby McFerrin did more than just sing. With his voice and with his body, he made sounds that imitated musical instruments. The sounds he made were his "band."



One day Bobby was in a recording studio, recording songs for an album. He thought about a poster he saw in a friend's apartment. The poster had only four words on it: "DON'T WORRY. BE HAPPY." Bobby liked that message. It gave him an idea for a song. He began to sing, "Here's a little song I wrote. You might want to sing it note for note. Don't worry. Be happy."

"That's good!" the people in the studio said. "Keep going!" So Bobby continued to write the song. A short time later, the song was finished and recorded. Bobby put on headphones and listened to it. As he listened, he sang along in a different voice. That voice was recorded. Bobby listened to the original song five more times. Every time he listened, he recorded a different sound.

The audio engineer took Bobby's seven recordings—the original recording plus the six others—and “layered” them one on top of the other. The song, with all seven “layers,” became one recording.

The song "Don't Worry, Be Happy" was a big hit, and Bobby McFerrin became famous. Most people thought a group of musicians made the recording. But there was no group of musicians—there was just one. Bobby McFerrin was a one-man band.

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