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Breathing & Support



Believe it or not, your loudest voice uses the least air –says Kim Chandler

It's time to tackle the somewhat controversial area of breathing and support in singing.

There are so many different opinions out there; you may hear breathing advice such "Take in as much as you can" or support advice such as "Push down like you're going to the toilet".

But I will outline what works in conjunction with how the body is designed and therefore what I believe is most effective.

Tidal Breathing...

Essential to life of course, 'tidal' (normal) breathing can be observed best when people are sleeping, i.e. the natural rising and falling of the abdomen.

This breathing pattern isn't generally enough for the requirements of singing, but it does show how things are designed to move.

Less is More

However, I've also observed that some singers tend to breathe in too much when singing, perhaps from a mistaken "more must be better" philosophy, which creates excessive pressure under the vocal cords.

The most air-efficient sound is clear tone.

Breathy tone has the highest airflow and clear tone the lowest.

I've found there can be up to a 5 to 6-fold difference in the length of a note between these two voice qualities, let alone the fact that breathy singing also dries the vocal cords out.

And believe it or not, your loudest voice uses the least air!

So when you're belting out that long 'money note' in a power ballad and you feel like you

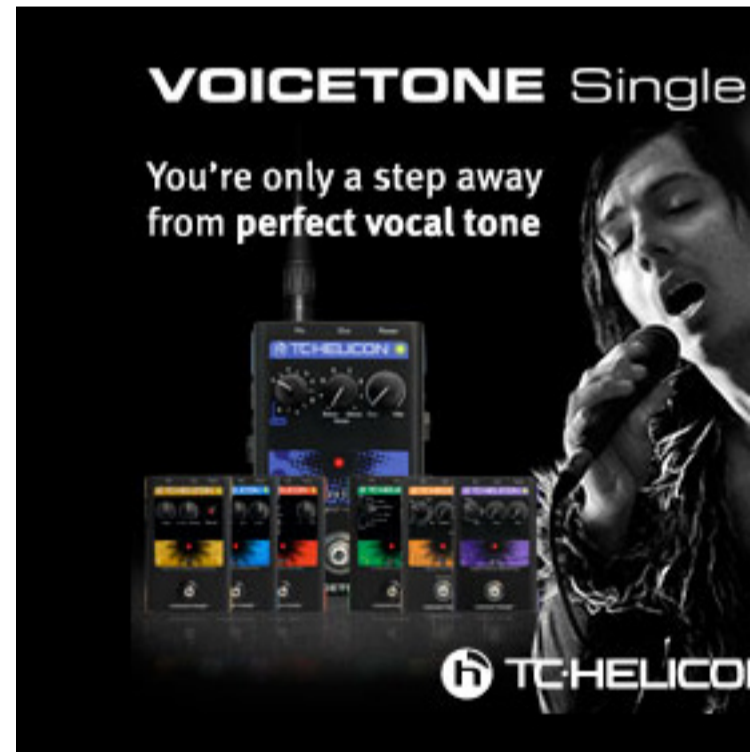
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can hold it forever, this is the reason why.

Your Support Strategy

The support strategy I support (excuse the pun!) is similar to what you can feel happening in reflex actions such as laughter, i.e. an inward/upward movement of the lower abdominal wall on voicing.

This movement happens at the onset of each sung phrase and should adjust reflexively depending on the intensity of your singing.

Find Your inner 'Rambo'

Lastly, if you wish to access a 'turbo charge' to stabilise and enhance particularly spectacular notes, you can also engage your 'wing' muscles or 'lats', thereby revealing your inner 'Terminator', 'Rambo' or 'Xena Warrior Princess'.

My Reactions to this Week's Peer Review Vids

[Louie Ongpauco](#) – "Collide" (Cover)

You have a pleasing voice that's easy to listen to, and it's an interesting angle for a fully acoustic version of this song that you slowed down the tempo so there's a little more room in the phrasing. You've taken the key down a half-step (semitone) and I'm not sure that was necessary. I also suggest you work closely with a reputable coach to help you with support, placement, agility and pitching – your voice deserves that investment ☺

[Dylan Trenouth](#) – "One in a Million" (Original)

This tribute to your friend is very touching. You deliver it with such feeling and you have a strong, well-developed singing voice for your age. Technically, I'd like to mention you're singing with some nasality that's easy to fix. To demonstrate, choose a short line of lyric in this song that doesn't contain the letter 'm' or 'n'. Block your nose off whilst singing it and you'll hear the difference it makes when you remove the nasal airflow.

-Kim Chandler



Kim Chandler is one of the UK's top contemporary vocal coaches. She has a busy private studio in London and her clients include well-known artists, artists in development, professional singers and other vocal coaches. She is a director of the British Voice Association, and is the creator of the popular "Funky 'n Fun" vocal training series.

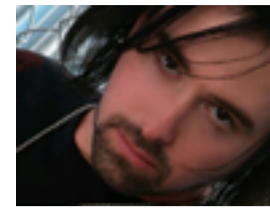
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Chip Jenkins · 8 years ago
Kim, I think that this article is brilliant & I 100% agree with your thoughts on this matter. Regularly I have made this very point about efficient breath control - so great to read your views on this matter - I will definitely be sharing with my students, so there will be some more subscribers coming your way ;-)

Chip Jenkins · 8 years ago
Kim, I absolutely agree. This is a great article, definitely one that I shall be showing my students!

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