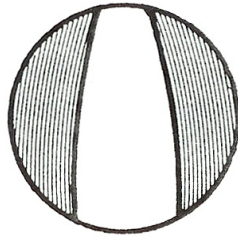
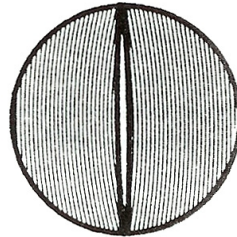

Focusing the Vocal Cords

(Techniques CD – track 7-11 / DVD chap 4)

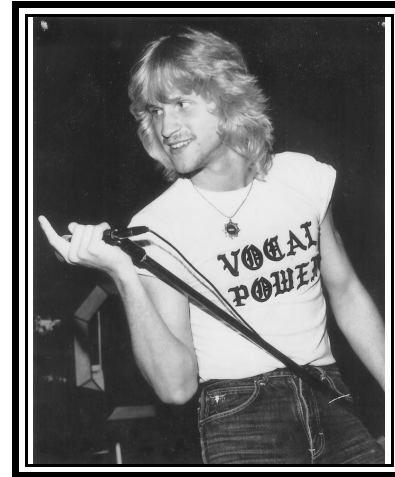


unfocused
fig. A



focused
fig. B

[Vocal Cords - schematic representation]



“Vocal Power Rocks”

When air passes through vocal cords that are approximating (focusing, adducting), the vocal cords vibrate, producing clear vocal sound. Focused vocal cords may be imagined as a drum-head stretched across a drum and slit down the center (fig. B). When unfocused, the vocal cords are too open (fig. A), allowing too much air through, resulting in a breathy and sometimes raspy tone. This can cause friction and irritation of the vocal cord tissue. You may even feel a tickle, which could cause you to cough.

Prolonged breathy or raspy singing can cause the build-up of excessive mucus. This is the body's mechanism for protecting the vocal cords. Remember, when singing high and loud, don't push the air so hard that you un-focus your voice and produce a breathy or raspy sound. However, even though the cords must be focused for healthy singing, in some isolated moments breathy or raspy sounds may be desirable for emotional emphasis. Because excessive air is used to produce the unfocused tones, it diminishes the length of continuous tone and makes it more difficult to sing long, sustained phrases. This is why some singers are constantly out of breath. Breathiness can be exhausting and bring down the energy level of the performance. Breathiness as an artistic choice is discussed later.

Focusing helps you to sustain tones, reduces throat problems, makes it easier for you to expand your range and improves your vocal flexibility and pitch accuracy.

FORWARD PLACEMENT (MASK RESONANCE)

Forward placement (*mask resonance*), is the sound and sensation of the focused tone resonating against the bony surfaces around the nose, including the bridge of the nose and the upper front teeth (see nasal, mouth resonances, page. 47). It is the result of the focused tone resonating through open throat, mouth and nasal passages. It is the sound of a professional singer.

The following exercises will help you to gain control over focusing the vocal cords and develop mask resonance.

EXERCISES:

1. Open your mouth, take in a breath and let out a breathy sigh. This breathy sound is the result of allowing excessive air through the vocal cords which are too open. This is an unfocused tone.

