

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Print Music Partnership

With hundreds of print music products coming out monthly, it's hard for a retailer to keep up with what to stock for a lesson program. So how can you expect your music teachers to know what's new in your print department?

I was talking to a guitar teacher at my store last Christmas and noticed him rearranging his grandma's old, easy organ music for his beginning students. I asked him, "Did you know there's a Hal Leonard EZ Play Today Christmas book out there that has 30 of these songs?" His response: "Man, I didn't know anything like that existed."

Another teacher had no idea that a rock guitar book would work well with his not-quite-ready, *Guitar Hero*-playing students. Whose fault was this? Mine, not theirs.

Print music and lessons go hand in hand, but most stores with lesson programs don't capitalize on this combination. Let's face it: Most stores don't have specialists in any department. There's a lot of cross-training going on, and print music usually gets lost in the chaos. Staff members assume teachers check out the new books. Teachers assume staff members will point out cool, new print stuff, which they don't. In the meantime, your print music doesn't get used in lessons. Retailers can avoid this ring-around-the-rosie marketing by creating a plan that puts sales staff, teachers and students on the same page.

from using the new book. Have them use it for one week, so they can give you a review. This way, the teacher takes on an important role, the book gets used in lessons, the student asks about it and you might sell some copies. Plus, you can tell other teachers and staff, "Dave thinks this book rocks." Based on the teacher's input, you have some added training pointers to share with staff. You will also notice more teachers checking out your print music area and asking more questions about what's coming in.

TALK TO STUDENTS

Ask your students questions like, "What's your favorite band? Who are you listening to on your iPod right now? What are you working on at your lessons?" This will help you get to know them better and show them the print music that works for them.

Merchandise print music in moveable racks in high-traffic student areas with targeted titles designed to appeal to students. Don't worry if your efforts aren't successful right away. Change doesn't happen quickly. Analyze what's working, and fix what isn't. By coordinating print music with your music lesson program, print can be a profit center. **MI**

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EDUCATE THE STAFF

Ask for teacher, staff and student feedback to ensure your print music stock gets used in music lessons

Train sales staff on the basic books in stock and which students use them. Go over the different formats available for piano, guitar, vocal, instrumental and drum print music. It's the retailer's responsibility to train staff. The Print Music Fairy isn't going to visit them at night and make them experts.

I have a NAMM Idea Center-style training presentation where I show the photo of a specific book and ask, "Why this book?" The presentation then points out that book's specific features for student use in lessons.

SEEK INSTRUCTOR INPUT

Pull teachers into your print music marketing efforts. Teachers won't use a book that sucks, even if you've bought 100 of them. When you order a new item, ask your sales rep for some pass-around copies. Get the book to your teachers, and ask for their input. Ask them how students would benefit