

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Host Student Events

The dog days of summer can be the perfect time to host performance events associated with your store's lesson program. Parents are looking for activities for their kids, adults want to have fun, and retail owners can more easily withstand those "Death Valley" days.

These events provide stores with additional cash flow from sales related to the event, as well as increased retention of existing students, increased new lesson signups and a buzz about how "cool" your store is.

THE BASICS

A recital for individual students is a great place to start, but some of the best events involve students playing in ensembles together.

At Alta Loma Music, we do an annual rock concert associated with an eight-week performance instruction program. Last summer we had 33 bands; a total of 160 participants that paid \$160 and came into the store every week for eight weeks—plenty of opportunities to sell them new gear.

At the end of the program, we rent a hall (or in the old days, we used the store's parking lot), and each band gets a 20-minute set in front of family and friends. Every band with an original composition is recorded and placed on our *Rock Project* compilation CD, which we sell.

Parents get to see and hear the product of their \$20 per week, and more importantly, the students are stars. Someone might even sign up for an instruction program just for the chance to bring the house down at your store's end-of-summer battle of the bands.

The first few events will help you become familiar with the logistics, which involve deciding on a venue, seating arrangements,

making sure there are no potential hazards, finding potential sponsorship, etc. Once you're a pro, you can get creative and even develop instruction programs based on what kind of event you can hold at their completion.

EXAMPLES AND IDEAS

Here are some other events that we've held or still hold:

- **Jazz Project:** Same idea as the rock concert. Give lessons to horn combos and host their first gig. Have them play easy charts ("Watermelon Man" maybe) or record some originals. Try the same thing with bluegrass or classical chamber ensembles.

- **Musical Workshop:** Teach voice students through reproduction of scenes from various musicals. Put the scenes on as a performance at the end of the course.

- **Group Guitar or Drumset:** Have six-week group classes, and at the end, an event could take the shape of an ensemble performance or solo recital. For drums, target all those percussion/bell-kit rental customers—the kids that never got to play the drumset.

- **Drummer's Groove Project:** Sort of like a drum line, but cooler. Rotate players on set, snare, roto-toms, cowbell and so on. Have them break loose and find a groove. Any musically inclined viewer would be hypnotized and want to participate in a similar group.

Also, don't forget about NAMM's programs, like Weekend Warriors. Use them as ready-to-go ideas.

Every store has a different vibe, and if your events reflect that, they are effective marketing for family, friends and the students themselves. Just remember to target all ages—adults need to play, too. Some events will work better than others. The important thing is giving everyone the opportunity for something extra, some added value. **MI**

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