

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Warped Revisited

In 2006, I went to the NAMM Warped Tour opt-in promo and was blown away. Live musicians, playing guitars, basses and drums — there was even singing with some horns and keys sprinkled in. Plus, thousands of kids — all potential music makers. Wow! In speaking with attendees, I also found out why most kids quit taking lessons. “They’re boring, and the teacher’s really lame,” they said. Gee, that’s no surprise.

These kids need a “Warped” approach to lessons.

I found out most kids would love to learn to play — their type of music. They had no idea that anyone would teach them how to play “Warped”-style. When asked, “Would you take lessons if there was a place that taught you this way?,” most kids said, “Hell, yeah!” And they asked me where to go.

I got so excited, I wanted to give every kid a free guitar lesson. I wanted to go to Warped and hand out free music drugs. “Here kid, try this guitar, learn to play it and you can make all the free music drugs that you want.”

## WARPED AGAIN

So naturally NAMM’s Warped Tour 2007 opt-in was the most exciting marketing opportunity I’d heard of in 28 years of music retailing, and it was free.

Here’s my log of what happened this year:

### Day 1: June 29; Warped Tour, Pomona, Calif.

The NAMM Wanna Play? tent was a cozy 10- by 10-foot space in a high-traffic area. My teacher and I talked to the kids and asked questions. We came up with silly but engaging lines like, “We’re curing guitar-phobia.” We had signs that read, “Just Don’t Play Guitar Hero — Learn to Play Guitar!” and “Take a Lesson — Enter to Win a

Free Electric Guitar!” We had hand-outs designed to direct kids to the store for a “Warped Deal” on a lessons package.

We even came up with a “Warped Lick.” It had to be easy enough that a 55-year-old trumpet player could do it. (Hey, that’s me!) We used the K.I.S.S. method — “keep it simple, stupid.” We used dropped D tuning, lots of distortion. Got the idea? Even with no musical training, this sounded “Warped.”

Unfortunately, we had some technological problems beyond our control (no electricity), and the Warped Tour had its own issues. Kevin Lyman, Warped’s

founder and organizer, apologized and extended an invitation to make it better on the Los Angeles Warped date. I accepted.

### Day 2: Aug. 25; Warped Tour, Los Angeles

This time, NAMM’s Wanna Play? tent was 10- by 20-feet, the perfect size to try it again. We had our “Warped Lick,” signs and hand-outs, but no teachers. This was the week after my store’s annual Rock Project and Be in a Band programs finished, and all the teachers were out of town. I needed a plan B.

I gathered a team of non-teachers, taught them the “Warped Lick” the night before, and we were ready to warp! The team included Adrian, a 17-year-old, new, eight-hour staff member that played a little bass and baritone in the high school band; Brett, a 19-year-old guitar player and my senior staff member of six months; and Raul, a bilingual, 30-year-old bank operations manager and guitarist. All of these guys were friendly, and that made it work.

In short, the response was amazing. We had non-stop lesson traffic. Of course, we weren’t sitting on our butts like NAMM show vendors. We were hustling the crowds, and it worked. Now I’m getting ready for Warped 2008. **MI**

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Pete (left) hangs with Warped attendees

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