

WHEN YOU GROW, SO DOES YOUR MUSIC



Guest Editorial by Jon Regen

Whether you're new to the music business or an industry veteran, it doesn't take a NASA engineer to see that changes are here to stay. From the decline of physical music distribution to the daily challenges of mounting and maintaining a performance or recording career, these are trying times. As massive as the upheavals in our professional lives are, though, greater causes need our support. From the recent events in earthquake-ravaged Haiti to crises in our own neighborhoods, we need only to look up from our keyboards and computers for a brief moment to see how much work needs to be done.

"Who, me?" I hear you ask. "I'm just a struggling musician." Maybe so, but your spare change – and more importantly, your spare time – go further than you think in making a difference to people in need. I also sincerely believe that one's music grows stronger when one's life experience does, so here are five ways to lend a hand where it's needed most.

1. Be a musical mentor. Remember that teacher who set you on a course for success? Those kinds of role models are in short supply these days, what with budget cuts eliminating in-school music instruction. Call your local school board, Boys and Girls Club, or after-school program and volunteer as a mentor. Teaching sharpens your own musical skills, so you'll be doing good while becoming a *badder* player.

2. Make a joyful noise. Don't just attend a free concert – give one. You can bet there's a school gymnasium, senior center, children's hospital, or other venue that'd be delighted to host a free show. You'll give the gift of music, while also giving back to your community.

3. Give away music. Give free copies of your CD and merchandise to students, youth, and seniors. Talk to them about how you did it, to build awareness about how today's technology lets people record and release their own music. One of those people may be giving you *their* CD in the not too distant future.

4. Donate instruments. Got an outdated or unused instrument that won't fetch you a ton on Craigslist? Donate it to a nearby school, teen center, or music program. It may well set someone on the path to a musical career, and as renowned pianist Mike Garson once told *Keyboard*, "If someone's picking up a musical instrument, they're not picking up a weapon."

5. Support Haiti relief. It made CNN that Stevie Wonder gave Motif and Kurzweil keyboards to a Haitian musician who was injured in the earthquake, but you don't need a rock star's paycheck to help alleviate the largest humanitarian catastrophe of our time. Even small donations help, and Charity Watch maintains a list of charities with the best track records of moving real aid to real people. Find it at charitywatch.org/hottopics/Haiti.html.



Beginning with the Feb. '10 issue, New York-based pianist and longtime Keyboard columnist Jon Regen joined us as an Editor at Large, overseeing our Play It! lessons. What's above was to be his regular Career Counselor column this month, but we'd been wanting to introduce him to you via a guest editorial, and this fit the bill perfectly.

—Stephen Fortner,
Executive Editor