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## Royal Oak school teaches kids to rock

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There are jazz schools to educate musicians about Django Reinhardt and classical music schools to teach composers about Bach. There isn't, however, a high level institution to explore important rockers like Jimi Hendrix or Joey Ramone.

Every Detroit band learns the business aspect of music through trial and error - usually the only advice they receive is from friends or other bands with little experience.

Imagine an accountant trying to master his work without proper schooling.

Enter the The Detroit School of Rock and Pop Music in Royal Oak, which opened its doors just a few weeks ago. Here, students of all ages can practice musical instruments, try new instruments from horns to strings to drums, and perform with other people while being guided by professional music producers.

At the Detroit School of Rock and Pop Music there are summer camps, auditions to put new bands together, a recording studio, a gallery space for local artists to showcase their work, classes for adult musicians who want to stop playing in their basement and starting playing paid gigs, band rehearsals just for girls, sound & lighting classes, music business 101 classes, regular instructional music courses, and then ... concerts by those who go to the school.

We're not talking about cheesy recitals, we're talking real concerts.

The school is owned by Jason Gittinger, a classically trained jazz musician who is also a well-established rocker playing in successful bands like the Mega 80s - the 80s cover band that performs high-quality production shows with music mastered from nearly every '80s genre. He can play music from Prince to Poison - not an easy feat.

Gittinger was also a music and technology teacher at both Grosse Pointe South High School and a jail for teenagers in Highland Park.

Now he has a new goal:

To help motivated musicians become successful performers.

If you truly care about music and would rather play instead of talk about it - Gittinger opens the doors of his school to you.

"As schools continue to cut art programs in the educational system, we can provide important life skills that music endears upon young people such as self-esteem, organization and patience," said Gittinger.

The school's tagline is "Stop Practicing ... Start Performing."

Gittinger hosts auditions for the bands that he helps put together. Not everyone is accepted.

"I ask not whether they are good or bad, but rather if they really care," Gittinger said. "I can only help people who want to help themselves. This school is there to support them during hard times and teach the ins and outs of music theory."

Forget the starving artist attitude here.

"You don't have to be the tragic artist," Gittinger said. "You can embrace the community. If everything you do is high quality, if you strive for perfection, no one can stop you and say that you're awful. Everyday there are between 3,000 and 5,000 kids taking music lessons in Michigan. There's a lot of teachers who are more into selling kids new instruments rather than teaching music."

"My vision is to build a creative community for all types of artists focused on the greater good of helping each other," said Gittinger.

Gittinger's school is not associated with The Paul Green School of Rock, the school that inspired the Jack Black film "School of Rock," in Rochester.

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