

Disney Launches “Let’s Play Music” Site

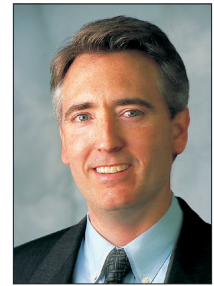
Playhouse Disney characters teach young kids about music, and parents will have access to information on getting involved

In an unprecedented move, entertainment giant Disney has launched a new Playhouse Disney Web site that aims to not only be fun, but also teach children about music and musical instruments, and encourage them to play. The site will feature an “Ask the Experts” section for adults where a group of MI industry associates will answer questions on topics of how to pick an instrument, where to get one, how to decide which instrument is right for a particular child, and more.



The development has far-reaching effect for those interested in the promotion of music making. In September, *Forbes* ranked Disney.com as the number one kids entertainment and family destination on the Web, and it's a site that continues to break records in "time spent online." In August alone, the related sites scored more than 32.3 million unique visitors according to comScore Media Metrix. The Playhouse Disney Channel, whose popular characters are featured teaching music on the site, is extremely popular with two to five year olds and their parents. "Mickey Mouse Clubhouse" and "Handy Manny" are consistently ranked

“MTNA is honored to be a part of this important music education resource.”



Joe Lamond

among the top ten for that demographic. That they are now teaching elements of music making will likely have a positive effect on growing the MI market.

MMR's managing editor, Kevin Mitchell, was writer/consultant to the project. The site is at www.playhousedisney.com/letsplaymusic.

With this new Playhouse Disney site, in addition to Manny and Mickey, preschoolers will learn from Winnie the Pooh, Little Einsteins, and the Imagination Movers.

Most important to the MI industry as a whole is that there is a section on the site called "For Grown-ups" which contains a glossary of musical terms; additional music-related activities; an in-depth and expansive listening list; and the "ask the experts" section. The experts include Jessica Anne Baron (Guitars In the Classrooms); Dr. Lynn Brinckmeyer (National Association for Music Education); Tish Ciravolo (Daisy Rock Guitars); Dr. Gary Ingle (Music Teachers National Association); Dr. Gayle Kowalchyk (music book author, editor, and clinician); Joe Lamond (president of the National Association

of Music Merchants); Mitch Newman (violinist for Los Angeles Philharmonic); and Scott Summerhays (National Association of School Music Dealers).

Bios and photos of the experts are included with their answers, and this portion of the site has already been expanded and will allow parents to write in with additional questions that will be answered by experts.

"NAMM and its members applaud Disney for creating this fun, child-and-family-centered music Web site," says Lamond. "The proven benefits of music are boundless, and the Web site invites children, parents, grandparents, and teachers to explore music and music making. It supports the reality that everyone is musical and can make music."

The launch of this extensive site shows that Playhouse Disney feels that music is an important focus of the brand. Also unique and important is that the site was designed for both child and grownup to participate. While Web sites for young children exist now, the vast majority of those are passive – they ask a child to watch a music video, listen to a song, or at best, sing along with a bouncing ball.

The new Playhouse Disney site encourages participation and active listening.

For the children, the sections include:

- Listen games. These teach high and low notes, music of different cultures, and explain the emotional elements of music.
- Play games. One teaches note sequences, another allows for pairing visuals with music, and another allows for the discovery of rhythms and ordinary sounds.
- Create games. In this section, kids get to create rhythms and sound, make their own melodies, and encourage them to compose.

While these are "games" in the sense that they are fun, the activities have real depth. In the Handy Mandy game, there is a real choir with real voices, and real instruments are used throughout the site, reinforcing exposure to quality music and performances. A multi-ethnic multi-style approach was taken, so in addition to an emphasis on classical music, the site teaches about jazz and world music, too.

The site for the "grown ups" and parents fulfills Playhouse's dedication to helping



Dr. Gayle Kowalchyk



Jessica Anne Baron



Dr. Lynn Brinckmeyer



Scott Summerhays



Tish Ciravolo



Dr. Gary Ingle



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parents engage their kids and music and offers plenty of tools to do it as well. The questions and answers by the panel of experts in particular take the mystery out of getting an instrument into the hands of a child.

"I am pleased that Disney is exposing kids and parents to the magical world of music making," Ciravolo says. "Their Playhouse site offers some great resources, advice, and games to keep parents educated while kids have fun learning to play. I'm proud that Daisy Rock could be a part of it."

"MTNA is honored to be a part of this important music education resource,"

Sample Questions for Parents on Disney's "Let's Play Music" Site

Is it expensive to learn an instrument?

Learning an instrument need not be expensive! It is important that you get a good quality instrument and find quality instruction, but there are many different ways for your child to be involved with music at a nominal cost. For example, children who want to learn a wind instrument can begin on recorder, a very inexpensive, easy-to-play instrument that is virtually unbreakable. Those who want to play the drums can start learning on a practice pad, which is much less expensive than a whole drum set. There are fractional-sized string instruments and guitars made for young children that are usually not as expensive as adult-size models.

Small-group lessons are often much more fun for the child, and much less expensive as well. Your local school music retailer will have a number of options for you, so that the cost does not have to be an obstacle in your child's adventure in music.

**—Scott Summerhays,
NASMD president
and president of Summerhays
Music, Salt Lake City**

Should I pick the instrument my child plays, or should she?

Parents should expose their children to many opportunities and

Ingles adds. "Music study and music making are necessary in the enrichment of our children's lives and in their development as individuals. We hope that through this partnership, parents everywhere will have access to valuable information regarding music study as well as a vital resource for helping their children grow intellectually, socially, and musically."

The site has been a year in the making, and commercials promoting the Let's Play Music site will run on the Disney Playhouse Channel.

potential creative outlets. However, it is also the responsibility of parents to make informed decisions about these opportunities and understand what the implications of studying music are going to be. For example, if your child insists on playing harp, you will have to buy a harp, have a van to transport the harp, and find a professional harp instructor!

Therefore, the decisions are then made on convenience and accessibility. Students will often gravitate toward an instrument that they have heard live and they perceive to be "easy" - not necessarily the criteria for choosing an instrument to study. Parents should help guide their child toward an instrument that is appealing and practical. In addition the instrument should be one for which they can find a professional teacher, have a quality instrument to practice on, and realistically make an investment in.

**-Dr. Gary Ingle
MTNA CEO**

A family member happens to have an instrument she isn't using - can I just start my child on that to see how he takes to music before investing in anything else?

Instruments, like clothes, need to fit our children well. Would you put your five-year-old child in a used size 8 pair of pants? Perhaps. That depends on your child...and the pair of pants. If those pants fit well and feel good, but are in need of repair, they could become the most beloved hand-me-downs ever inherited - if a skilled seamstress does the mending.

“It supports the reality that everyone is musical and can make music.”

The same applies to instruments, although they are trickier to evaluate and fix than those special trousers. Getting professional instrument help and repair is your best next step-one you can take with your child. I recommend creating a wonderful field trip by bringing both the instrument and your child to your local music store where someone very knowledgeable can help you evaluate both the match and the condition of the instrument.

**-Jessica Baron
Guitars in the Classroom**

My child wants to play the drums, but I'm worried they will be too loud - won't they?

I can't say that while growing up in East Aurora, NY, our neighbors didn't occasionally come over and ask me to play quieter! Drums are a powerful instrument but there are so many options today that would fit every situation and budget. There are ways to muffle acoustic drums, soundproof rooms, and perhaps most importantly, electronic drum sets that can be used with headphones have become increasingly popular. Whether in the office, garage, game room, or bedroom you can find an acoustic or electronic set of drums that will be perfect for you and your family. Of course, parents and professionals alike are aware of the importance of protecting your hearing from excessive loud noise, so you would want to take the same precautions as with an iPod or Walkman.

**-Joe Lamond
NAMM president**

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