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The Power Chord Academy

Students learn the tools necessary to succeed in the music business

By Oscar Jordan

Dazzling your friends at a jam session using the fourth mode of the melodic minor scale is cool, but it won't help you swim the treacherous waters of the music industry. There are many music programs available geared toward showing young artists the ins and outs of music theory and performance. Few spell out the nitty-gritty of making yourself attractive to record labels.

The Power Chord Academy provides kids between the ages of 12 and 18 the opportunity to learn what it takes to put a band together and go through the process of songwriting, performance and marketing. Students learn the tools necessary to understanding what it takes to succeed in the music business. As an added bonus, they take home the discipline and self-esteem they need to carry with them for the rest of their lives.

With locations in San Diego, St. Louis and New York, the academy is accessible to kids everywhere. These one-week sessions take students on an incredible journey. They put a band together, write a single, record it, shoot a music video and perform it live. It's a step-by-step education on how to go from the garage to the arena in the space of a week.

"There's nothing quite like The Power Chord Academy," says Executive Program Coordinator Zak Einstein. "It's so in-depth and geared toward the business side of making it in the music world. It's a lot more than learning music. When the kids come in we put them in a band based on the age, experience, and the music they're interested in. Immediately they start writing a single. We record that single within a couple of days. We shoot a music video immediately after that. They play two live concerts, one for the camp and one for friends and family. We bring in big national touring bands to play a private performance and have question and answer sessions. It's pretty awesome. Kids get to actually meet rock stars. We also bring in music industry players to discuss the nuances of the music business. We give seminars on the music business and we try to fit that all into a week. It's a pretty intense schedule, but a rewarding experience. Our student

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approval rating is at 96 percent.”

Past performers and speakers include: the All-American Rejects, the Donnas, Rise Against, the Unseen, Joe Sib owner of Side One Dummy Records, Joe Escalante of the Vandals and owner of Kung-Fu Records, and Cyrus Bolooki of New Found Glory. This year attendees will find themselves rubbing elbows with the likes of Thrice, Story of the Year, Local H, Powerman 5000, Louis Posen founder of Hopeless Records, as well as representatives from Atlantic Records and MTV to name a few. Last year 17-year-old guitarist Chris Buckhout attended the July summer session and left the program a better musician and a better person.

“It really improved my playing and helped me develop songs,” says Buckhout. “The teachers were really cool. They sat down with us individually if we needed help. They’d show us different kinds of scales for soloing. They also covered songwriting, how to write lyrics and how to put a press kit together to promote your band. It pushed me to be better and I learned a lot about the business. It seems like a huge industry, but if you know the right people you can get into it pretty easily. It was very informative since we had people there that were in the industry like producers and artists. I learned to stay away from sleazy business people and to take your time and have a lawyer with you when you sign a record contract.”

Seminars are given daily and sometimes twice a day on various topics within the music industry. Topics include: How to get signed, what does publishing mean and what do performance rights societies do? In addition they learn their instrument, how to play in an ensemble and how to actually form a successful band. Some students enter the program along with their entire band with the desire to develop group skills. They’re given professional advice and a hands-on guide to give them focus and direction. “We consider our staff more than just camp counselors,” adds Einstein. “We consider them producers, because they’re working with the bands to help develop their sound. We want our staff as involved as possible in the writing and recording process. We don’t want them writing songs for the kids, but we certainly want their production input. We make sure the students find their voice within the band. Our staff are people who have been signed to major and independent labels. They’ve been in touring bands, are music teachers, music industry professionals and they’re our full-time staff.”

The Power Chord Academy also presents the opportunity for seasoned industry pros to share their experiences and knowledge with young music hopefuls. More and more industry professionals are taking three- and four-week breaks out of their summer schedules to give something back to the music industry. It’s the perfect opportunity for the jaded industry exec to step out of the business realm and help young musicians avoid potential pitfalls. It’s the ideal platform to provide real world advice and first hand information.

“Performing onstage through big Marshall amps was the coolest,” says Buckhout. “We played the song we wrote as our final concert. It gave me a lot of confidence and made me feel good about playing. I definitely recommend it to people my age. It’s for someone who’s a serious musician, not someone who just wants to do it once in a while. They really push you hard. If you come in with a good attitude and be open-minded you’ll meet some cool people. It’s a great experience. It really improved the way I play. I’m playing more solos now and I’m looking forward to going back. I made some really great friends and I’m going back for two more sessions.”

Contact www.powerchordacademy.com



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