

Soundwall Rock Music camp shakes, rattles and rolls UCSC

Alia Wilson - Sentinel Correspondent

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Today's technologically savvy youth are yearning for more from games such as Rock Band and Guitar Hero. But the rock and roll desires of students of Soundwall Rock Music Camp go far beyond the video games.

After 15 years of operation, Soundwall Rock Music Camp at UC Santa Cruz, which teaches teenagers the fundamentals of rock and roll -- from showmanship to songwriting -- has seen trends in music come and go. The staff is welcoming the excitement for music generated through Rock Band and Guitar Hero with open arms.

"Rock Band is really bringing the new generation to the older songs because they want to know how you really do it," said camp music director John Xepoleas. "We used to try and teach them older stuff but we just came off as old and out of touch, now they want to learn because it's on Rock Band."

Rock Band sold roughly 2.5 million copies since its launch in November 2007 and the game seems to have stoked passion for playing actual instruments.

The summer camp chooses to embrace the new technology rather than shun it's influence. For a

week at the end of June and again in July the UCSC campus is taken over by 12- to 17-year-old musicians as they learn what it is to be a rock master.

John Zouzounis, 13, has Guitar Hero on his iTouch. When he's not playing it, he plays the bass he has been learning the past three years.

"I'm pretty good at that, but an actual instrument is more fun and more challenging," said Zouzounis. Nothing compares to the experience of playing rock music, especially with people your age, Zouzounis and his fellow campers said.

"It is up to us as adults to teach our kids how to use technology," said Jason Wall, one of the camp's drum instructors.

Although some students get their motivation to play from games, others find it within their own homes.

Reece Levine is inspired by his father, Marc Levine, the only bass instructor on staff. Reece's specialty is playing the drums, but it is the support of his father that acts as the foundation for his musical passion. "This is the best thing that I've done in my life," Reece said without hesitation.

In 1993, Soundwall Music Camp was created as a place where the spirit of rock and roll could be passed down generation to generation. Jana Pantzelos was looking for a rock music camp for her son and took it upon herself to create an

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institution of legitimate rock and roll study.

Ann Hughes, the vocal coach, has been on staff since the camp's creation. Seeing an opportunity for her son in the camp, she enrolled him as one of the first students.

"There were no rock camps for the creator's son to go to so we started one and my son was the first to come," Hughes said. He later grew to be part of the second generation of staff members.

With a foundation sustained by developing and seasoned musicians, the students are able to become comfortable with multiple rock genres, gaining confidence to explore their own musical talents. Two of the bands during the concert in June performed original songs for the first time in the camp's history. Contact Alia Wilson at 429-2436 or jcopeland@santacruzsentinel.com .

If You Go

what: Soundwall Music Camp concert.
when: 7-9 p.m. Friday.
where: UCSC Music Center Recital Hall.
Cost: Free.
INFORMATION: 925-518-8289.

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