

A musical experience

Allstar Music Empire's talented staff share love of music with beginner and advanced-level students



Anthony Gemignani, above, and the staff at Allstar have impressive backgrounds and are keen to share their love of music.

Anthony Gemignani, a graduate of Berklee College of Music, has shared the stage with some of music's most recognizable names, including Billy Idol, Cheap Trick, Billy Joel, Loverboy and Sheena Easton. Although he is an accomplished guitarist who keeps busy perfecting his craft — laying down tracks for an artist, working on a movie score or playing a recent gig in West Hollywood, Calif. — his vocation is teaching private music lessons at Allstar Music Empire in Flemington.

As the owner of the music academy, Gemignani hired the best kind of teachers — performing artists who have toured as guitarists, drummers, pianists and vocalists. His talented staff at Allstar have impressive backgrounds in the industry but are keen to share their love of music with beginner to advanced-level students. One-on-one lessons with a professional who is a career musician

has many benefits, especially for students who might be thinking long range.

"You're not only getting the education that the (teachers) have but you're getting the road education and the career education of being able to make a living in this industry," he said about the wealth of experience his team imparts. "If (students) want to go any further, we can guide them in that way with what's worked for us in our life and what we know about the industry the way it is now."

Ensuring that in-person or virtual lessons are fun is the primary focus. Since learning to read music can be a complex chore, it is not a priority for guitar and drum students here. Rather, beginner pupils are taught the fundamentals and a few song chords and learn by repetition. Then, by following the students' lead, instructors tailor the lessons to individual abilities and interests such as emulating a favorite band or a familiar song to play or sing.

"It's really the experience of music we're



When his classes aren't in session, Anthony Gemignani creates and sells customized guitars.

trying to share with everybody in the most fun way that we can," he said, "but being professional at the same time."

Allstar also is an approved provider by the state of New Jersey to teach music to those with special needs. It is especially satisfying for the staff to connect with these students and watch their progress and, oftentimes, learn from the students.

"It's one of my favorite parts of the busi-



The primary focus at Allstar Music Empire is ensuring that in-person or virtual lessons are fun.

ness," Gemignani said.

With eight private rooms for Allstar alongside space occupied by Westling's Martial Arts Academy, activity in the 4,500-square-foot facility is usually humming with all kinds of vocalizations and sounds from students enrolled in the two diverse programs. The leased martial arts space was originally an Allstar showcase venue for live bands prior to the pandemic but is now rented by chief instructor Ed Westling, an eighth Degree Black Belt and owner of the multifaceted combat curriculum school.

While the two family-oriented businesses do not compete for students, they both emphasize the same important character-building disciplines of self-respect, motivation and confidence. When classes overlap with tunes, singing and spirited Kiai yells filling the air concurrently, Gemignani lightheartedly calls it "mayhem" in describing the energetic indoor environment. Jokingly, but somewhat serious, Gemignani believes he may have the only rock-n-roll dojo in the nation.

When his classes aren't in session, he creates customized guitars — many are sold for about \$1,500 — for clients in his shop on the second floor above Allstar. He founded Moxy Guitars about 10 years ago with partner and fellow guitarist, Jose Suros, who handles the sales and marketing of the high-end personalized instruments.

Allstar Music Empire is located off Route 31 at 17H Minneakoning Road in Flemington. For more information, visit www.allstarmusicempire.com or call 908-788-9800.

— Debra Stevko Miller

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