

Argumentative essay on why aspiring musicians do not need to attend college to ma...

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Aspiring musicians have their choice of thousands of music programs across the United States where they could spend four years and tens of thousands of dollars to position themselves to become a professional musician. Or they could just, learn everything that will be taught in the expensive classroom and learn everything they will get from college online and then use the money saved from college to record an album and market it in an increasingly friendly market to musicians releasing and promoting records without the need for a music education or a record label to sign them.

This essay profiles several successful musicians who aspired to fame without the need for college and also looks at what is taught in a music education and what is required of musicians to make a career out of their craft.

Even the way we talk about music rarely includes a background of where people studied. In many industries it matters. You might be a great psychologist, but if you do not have credentials as a psychologist no one is going to hire you. In the arts, this is rarely the case. Even more so with music. When looking up bios of bands, it is rare to see a mention of where they went to college. Even if they do list it, it is just there as a plain fact and in no instance that I have seen, linked to the success of the musician.

Music that we study that is important is more associated with the movements, or universal appeal of it. An example is Bob Marley, one of the most internationally famous musicians who did not go to college and has music that appeals still to this day to a vast international audience. He makes a strong case as to why musicians just need something to sing about, something to fight for and to speak a message that appeals to people rather than conforms to the current thought of what music is at the time. Many of

Bob Marley's contemporaries also did not attend college. Big names in Reggae music include musicians like Jackie Mittoo and Winston Wright. One person who made a commercially successful career out of music is William Adams who formed a group in high school and never went to college. He is better known as Will. I. Am from the Black Eyed Peas. As a band the Black Eyed Peas did not immediately become successful. They were formed in 1995 but did not release a hit album until their third, *Elephunk*, which in 2003 brought them widespread acclaim and soaring record sales. (Black Eyed Peas Website).

Though Adams, as a talented musician might have found success had he left the band to attend college, it could be argued that if he had not opted out of college to make music with the band he formed in high school, the other road might not have led to the level of success he has today.

British singer/songwriter Adele has a more direct situation with opting not to go to college leading to her success. After a single of hers was posted on MySpace in 2006, she was offered a record deal and decided to sign and pursue that opportunity rather than study music in college.

For someone wanting to teach music, a university degree makes sense. Also for students who want to play in a band or orchestra ensemble. This gives them the experience playing in a group, which if they want to pursue a career path in that, this gives them both practice and credentials and opportunities to network with and understand that particular industry.

Let's look at what students learn in a typical curriculum curtailed to a music major. From the University of Berkley's music program we see that a music major in their first semester learns about musicianship and harmony.

Students with limited keyboard ability are encouraged to take classes with that instrument. They learn basic skills and what harmony is. They also learn about music cultures, Western music, African musician, etc.

Then they must take 21 additional music courses from a variety of courses on music theory, music history, and also classes curtailed to specific instruments. Let's look at the price tag for all of that. Berkely students living on campus pay \$56, 400 a semester. That means for a four year major a graduate would leave with almost a quarter million dollars in debt. And this is in an industry that while you can make a lot of money, many, especially those first starting out do not. (Berkely Music School Website).

What this does is it forces a graduate to take a job in which they can make money rather than pursuing their dreams of being a musician. Putting off realizing ones dreams to a later date often leads to dreams left unfilled in life. Musicians generally make it when they are young. There is a formula for what breeds a good musician, and some of these things, yes, are taught within a University setting. But art is about personal expression. Sometimes the structure of academia could stifle an artist by laying down the correct way to do things rather than letting an artist find their own way.

The technical knowledge gained from the music classroom is also available in books. It is available in the Internet, self-teaching programs, or lessons, the price of which pales in comparison to the price of a college degree.

Musicians need time to play. Malcolm Gladwell in his book outliers analyzes key ingredients to success and looks specifically at master violinists and the Beatles. One of the things that he found was that an essential ingredient was hard work. Though he has gotten some criticism for his findings as being

oversimplified, one of the things he found that 10, 000 was a tipping point. From hockey players to master violinists, he found that there was no instance of someone putting in that much time and not being a master of their craft. (Gladwell, 2008).

Music majors also must spend their time taking classes like math, history, science, English, etc. It is not bad learning about this things, as it leads to a well rounded knowledgeable individual, but it also takes away time from an instrument and time that could be spent playing at small venues.

It is not very difficult for musicians to find a place to play. If people enjoy them, and let's face it, if they don't maybe a person should consider studying something boring like architecture. The best way to make it as an musician is to build an audience, and that can be done both through the internet, but most profoundly through the old fashion way of meeting them in the world.

Internet marketing, and sites like Myspace and Soundcloud that allow musicians to not only share their music with the world at large, but also to get feedback in real time from successful musicians. This I would argue, is more valuable then spending your time in the lecture hall. There are many success stories, including Adele in getting signed through the Internet.

Musicians that have build a following using the methods discussed can then possibly begin to get paid for playing live, can sell merchandise and share and sell music online. It's true that it takes a driven person to see dividends, and that it can be a long and arduous journey before one becomes successful, but if music is truly a passion that someone wants to follow this is a prerequisite, as it is in all of the arts from painting to writing, etc.

Also, if a person is not driven, not willing to give everything they have at overcoming that obstacles that stand in the way of musicians “ making it,” then it is unlikely that college can offer anything that would be of service. Music simple put, is about music. Today’s industry caters to independent people unafraid to challenge the current norms of the genres being played. Music rewards musicians who take risks. Not going to college is certainly a risk, because there are not guarantees that things will turn out or they will make it. But until one tries, it is impossible to go. If things don’t work out, a person could always return to their education and perue another course. But when first setting out, for the reasons listed it seems that going to college has more cons than pros

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