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## Console games inspire 2.5 million young people to pick up real instruments

Over 2.5 million young people in the UK have been inspired to learn musical instruments because they have played music-based console games, Youth Music, the UK's largest music charity, has found.

A new report – “Why console-games are bigger than rock ‘n’ roll” – has discovered that the take-up of music-based console games such as *Guitar Hero*, *SingStar* and *Rock Band* is having a dramatic effect on people adopting an instrument for the first time.

The Youth Music research found that of the 12 million under-16s in the UK, 19% (or 2.5 million young people) said they now play an instrument because they were inspired to do so after playing a music-based console game.

The report comes at a time when various music games titles are riding high in the games charts following a swathe of new releases, demonstrating the enduring popularity of console-based music games.

Unlike violent games such as the recently launched *World of Warcraft*, music based console games are a family-friendly and inclusive alternative. Of the 12 million young people in the UK, over half play music games on computer consoles, and this is credited with the take up of musical instruments, the development of transferable musical skills and even the development of performance confidence.

The report predicts that the role of consoles in music-making and education will become more marked in coming years as players engage further with music titles and are able to do more with them – creating and sharing original compositions, for example.

As an indication of the impact these games are already having, the *SingStar* franchise hit 12 million unit sales in April 2008,\*\* and in May, *Rockstar's* Grand Theft Auto IV sold 926,000 copies in its first week in the UK, and six million copies worldwide.\*\*\*

The report's author, industry expert Andrew Missingham said:

“We have long known that young people are encouraged to take an interest in music if it is presented to them in a compelling way – by an engaging parent or teacher, for example. And we have watched the rising popularity of music-based console games – and the use of music in other games titles – with real interest.



"However, we never expected the influence of these kinds of titles to be so profound – according to my research, they could be responsible for as 2.5 million young people deciding to pick up an instrument."

Christina Coker, chief executive of Youth Music said:

"We have established that there is a huge potential audience of new musicians and music-makers out there playing these games. Now, we – and others in the music education community – should be capitalising on that interest and encouraging young people to take up real instruments. But we should also be thinking about how we can incorporate consoles and games into 'traditional' music education and be more open to embracing these tools in our teaching."

### **More than picking up a guitar ...**

The report found that console games do more than simply encourage young people to pick up guitars.

Playing music games help young people develop confidence in performance, and introduce many of the skills required to play other instruments – such as dexterity, inter-limb co-ordination, hand-eye co-ordination, pitch and rhythm.

Console based tools are currently most successful at introducing skills for music technology (such as sampling, step-edit sequencing and piano-roll arrangement).

### **Limits of console games means people turn to real instruments**

The report found that one of the reasons that people are taking up traditional musical instruments is because the opportunities for creativity are necessarily limited in console games. Players find that 'real' instruments offered a deeper, more challenging and worthwhile experience.

In addition, because gaming is perceived as 'play', some felt it lacked the purpose and passion of 'real' music making. This was found to inhibit a deeper engagement with music games, both from parents and children. In addition, despite the highlighted benefits and the commendable 'fiendish difficulty' of the games, the limited sophistication of music gaming was evident when compared to 'real' musicianship.

The report therefore concluded that new innovations were needed to increase the creative potential of music gaming, but saw this as a golden opportunity for games developers, the music industry and music educators to harness the enthusiasm (and sheer number) of games consumers for the benefit of themselves and young people.

### **ENDS**

\*\* Figures release by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe in April 2008

\*\*\* According to Gamesindustry.biz in March 2008



The findings come from a report commissioned by Youth Music on the relationship between console gaming and the music sector. The report found that:

- 33% young people in the UK play musical instruments
- Over half (51%) of young people play music games
- 8.8million young people between the ages of 6-16 play console games twice or more a week
- 100% of children between the ages of 6-10 called themselves 'gamers'
- console games provide an entry point into music for young people from low income backgrounds
- young people feel that music games **games** provide access to music making via genres that they cannot access in the mainstream curriculum
- young people believe that music-based console games support broader musical education, by inspiring them to be more interested in music
- even soundtracks in non-music games helped develop young people's interest in music

The report, which was compiled by industry expert Andrew Missingham on behalf of Youth Music over the period of **twelve months** from **[x x 2007] to [xx 2008]**, drew on online surveys, focus groups, industry luminaries, existing research and personal experience. Music-based console games are big business with SingStar, GuitarHero and Rock Band, having sold over 4Million, 5.5Million and 3Million copies worldwide respectively.

For more information and to download the report, go to [www.youthmusic.org.uk](http://www.youthmusic.org.uk)

**For more information, or to request interviews with our spokesperson, please contact**

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#### EDITOR'S NOTES...

**Youth Music** is one of the National Lottery's great success stories. Set up in 1999, with a remit to support music-making activities for some of the UK's most disadvantaged young people, Youth Music has gone on to reach over 2 million children and young people, encouraging their talents, building their confidence and transforming the landscape of musical opportunity throughout the UK. The music-making supported is of the widest variety, from hip-hop and dj-ing to classical and jazz.

**Youth Music** occupies a unique position – distributing £10m per year of Lottery funding on behalf of Arts Council England. Despite its success, Youth Music aspires to reach out to ever increasing numbers of young people across the country. The vision is to create a sustainable environment to channel young peoples' creativity, enabling them to express themselves and develop their skills through music. The aim is to reach 3 million young people by 2010.

#### Andrew Missingham Biog

Andrew Missingham is an independent consultant working on a wide variety projects across the creative industries. Recent consultancies range from writing an in-depth report for the British Musicians' Union and Society of Composers and Songwriters exploring the status of music creators in the creative economy, to devising and delivering a programme to develop the Creative Industries in 9 countries across Africa. After studying Performance Arts at Middlesex Polytechnic, he spent the first ten years of his career working as a musician and record producer with the likes of Labi Siffre, UNKLE, Urban Species, Howie B, Jocelyn Brown, Paul Oakenfold and the Young Disciples. Leaving the world of performance behind in 1996, he took a job at Paul McCartney's new Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts to lecture in music and record production. His return to London two years later brought him to the British Council where he was Music Projects Manager, programming in forty-three countries across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, then moving on to become Director of Performing Arts at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. In 2002 he started his own consultancy and event production practice. In 2004 Andrew was awarded a fellowship in the inaugural year of the Clore Leadership Programme – the UK's flagship cultural leadership scheme.

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