

# For the RECORD

A compilation of facts, large and small, about our community

- Number of chicken wings sold by Fire on the Mountain on Super Bowl Sunday: 25,653
- Percent drop in Seattle-area 911 calls during the Super Bowl: 31
- Percent rise in Seattle-area 911 calls after the Super Bowl: 75
- Dollars per container the Port of Portland will pay Hanjin Shipping to keep calling on Portland: 20
- Days after a gun-buyer's background check before the State Police purge the information: 10
- Number of traffic crashes the Portland Police Bureau responded too during the snowstorm: 302
- Number of "hazard" calls the Portland Police Bureau responded to: 196
- Percentage that emergency calls to Fire and Rescue increased during the snowstorm: 50
- Number of miles of roadway the Portland Transportation Bureau cleared during the snowstorm: 518
- Number of calls the Portland Water Bureau received for busted pipes during the snowstorm: 904
- The number of shelter beds available in Multnomah County for people experiencing homelessness: 1,350
- Number of Street Roots issues published in 2013: 26
- Number of Street Roots covers featuring a female in 2013: 7
- Number of Street Roots covers featuring a male in 2013: 7
- Street newspapers worldwide: 122
- Street newspapers in North America: 39
- Number of street newspaper vendors worldwide: 14,000
- Number of Street Roots vendors in 2013: 460
- Average number of children conceived in the U.S. on Valentine's Day: 11,000
- Average distance roses travel from production to sale: 5,000 miles

Sources: Street Roots; International Network of Street Papers; KGW; AccuWeather.com; Gallup; Fire on the Mountain; City of Portland; Statistic Brain; MSNBC

## Don't just listen to music — UseMusic

Portland musician's innovative website UseMusic.org joins artists with nonprofits for charity

BY DEVAN SCHWARTZ  
STAFF WRITER

Ezra Holbrook has already made a name for himself in Portland. He is a founding member of the Decemberists and has collaborated with numerous Northwest artists. He's currently planning a second record with his current band, The My Oh Mys.

Holbrook, with years of experience playing fundraisers for organizations, such as the music nonprofit Ethos, had an idea for a website: UseMusic.org. It was born out of years of his own philanthropic work and a desire to get more people involved to maximize music's role in fundraising.

It works like this: Musicians can upload their songs, with proceeds going to the nonprofit organization of their choosing. Visitors can purchase the songs for sliding scale prices; anything above a dollar is a tax deductible donation. Aside from credit card processing costs, 100 percent goes to the charity.

I had the chance to sit down with Holbrook on a windy morning in Northeast Portland.

**Devan Schwartz:** So how did UseMusic.org get its start and what is the mission of the website?

**Ezra Holbrook:** The idea has been brewing for a few years and it came out of two converging things: I've played music in Portland for 20 years and done many fundraising concerts for various nonprofits over the years, and I love doing them. Musicians, in general, feel indebted to the community they play in and it's a good way to give back.

And though I love doing fundraising concerts, I've also found that for the amount of time and energy that gets put in not only by the musicians but the nonprofits, and the money upfront for promotion and renting a venue, it's like the amount of man-hours doesn't seem to equal the amount of profit that you help raise. So for a long time I've been feeling like there's got to be a more economical way to accomplish the same thing.

For a number of years I've thought about some kind of website that sold music, but I always got to a point where mechanically it didn't work. Either my idea didn't work or we hit some kind of stumbling block.

Over the last couple years, seeing Kickstarter and Indiegogo, these crowdsourcing or fundraising platforms, I got kind of reinvigorated. Mainly I was just surprised by how enthusiastic people were to get involved with stuff like that. The public seemed to really get behind this idea of financially backing things — whether they were technological ideas or music or whatever. I was taken aback by that. I wouldn't have thought the public would be so interested in backing projects like this. I guess I'd accidentally become cynical or something.

It was also watching the success of friends funding their records and their short films — that's when I got the idea to kind of combine those two things and use music.

It's still been two years of trial and error. The public launch was Dec. 21, 2013.

**D.S.:** Explain how UseMusic.org worked with Bunker, the local web development company?

Ezra Holbrook



PHOTO COURTESY OF EZRA HOLBROOK

**E.H.:** Once we got the basic concept ironed out, it's very simple: a website where a band can upload a song, choose a nonprofit that that song fundraises for, and the only thing taken out is the credit card transaction (cost), and we hope to eliminate that over time as well.

It's been two years since the initial idea. The first year was brainstorming and the second year was building the website.

Once the actual build started, we tried to break it a couple times, which we did. The Bunker guys warned us this was coming ... but when people start using it, you find out all sorts of things you never even would have thought of. The guys at Bunker have been doing this out of the goodness of their hearts.

The board is made up of me and four other guys:

Matt Garboden is a CPA (certified public accountant) and a good friend. He was involved in the initial brainstorming. Matt has been very good about keeping me on task.

Nate Merrill helped organize the Cover Your Hearts fundraising events for the musical nonprofit, Ethos. His day job is running Bunker. We took him out, bought him a couple drinks, pitched the idea, and he was interested in not being a consultant but a board member. Drew Dunn and Mark Wyner also joined from Bunker — and we knew it was the right team.

It's pretty much my job just to annoy the other dudes and I think I do a pretty good job of that.

**D.S.:** What about licensing?

**E.H.:** There's no exclusivity, no publishing or licensing. The band just has to certify that they own the rights to the song. Bands still have 100 percent ownership, they can take it down at any time.

When possible, we're encouraging people to use stuff that is exclusive to them. We're hoping this becomes a little music boutique, not a music label, but a music vendor — where most of the music you can only get there.

**D.S.:** For musicians and charities who are interested, what's the best way for them to get involved?

**E.H.:** The process is about two minutes to register if you're a nonprofit or a band. We just need a contact and a place to send

checks.

You just put in your contact information and upload a photo.

If anybody has any questions, there's a contact part of the website that emails each of the members of the team, usemusic.org/contact-us.

**D.S.:** How are you marketing or trying to get the word out about UseMusic.org?

**E.H.:** We're doing a Facebook and Twitter campaign.

And we're actually starting a campaign with XO Publicity (a Portland-based publicity firm) to do a nationwide press campaign — because we realize there are thousands of nonprofits just in Portland and Seattle.

Ideally, through a press campaign, nonprofits nationwide will be registering what we're doing. So we're really hoping that we can start getting some attention on a bigger scale.

Initially, I was just thinking from the standpoint of a musician with songs on my hard drive. This is even more of a win-win than I initially thought of — the bands are already getting good heartfelt promotion from an audience they might not have otherwise gotten.

**D.S.:** With a resume as long as yours, readers might like to know about your current music projects — whether that's in performance or in the recording studio.

**E.H.:** Right now I play full-time in a couple of bands. I have this band, The My Oh Mys, which is kind of my rock band where I'm one of the songwriters. We're getting ready to make a second record — hopefully in the next few months.

I'm also playing drums with Redray Frazier, who's an amazing sort of soul singer here in town. And we're also hoping to record in the next couple months.

Music's a lot of fun and it keeps me out of trouble for the most part.

I do some playing with other folks. I'm playing in Jeremy Wilson's band for his CD release, which is coming up in March.

As a drummer, your job is pretty much never to screw up, which I can't say I've ever actually accomplished, but I try.

Casey Neill & The Norway Rats have included a song to support Street Roots usemusic.org/charities/3496.

Thank you Street Roots readers for all your support.