



Music Man St. Cloud

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By Sarah Onken, Intern Writer

Looking for a piano instructor in St. Cloud, but have no idea where to go? Head on over to Mr. Jeff's Music Academy, where you'll find one of the best musical instructors in town! There, he will teach you to play any number of instruments, ranging from guitars to violins.

Mr. Jeff Althouse, hailing originally from Youngstown, OH, lived in Poinciana for six years before coming to St. Cloud. Althouse has lived in St. Cloud for 10 years and worked in several establishments including Jammers and St. Cloud Presbyterian Church. The music man worked in many different capacities before bringing his dream of a music studio into fruition. He worked at an upholstery company, and his family even owned a ceramics shop.

"I worked a little bit of everything," said Althouse. "I did everything from McDonalds to Arbys!"

Most of Althouse's life is dedicated to working with and teaching music. He began his teaching career at The Fame Conservatory in Youngstown and The Warren Music Center in Warren, OH. After his relocation to Florida, Althouse taught at Mars Music in Orlando, The Music Shack in Casselberry, Florida and at Jammers Music Center here in St. Cloud. As an instructor at Jammers, Althouse had 35 students. Overcome with a desire to open his own shop and teach more students, he later founded his very own "Mr. Jeff's Music Academy." After opening the academy six years ago, Althouse has acquired over 40 students. He currently has multiple teachers assisting with instructions on all musical instruments.

In addition to this already impressive resume, Althouse played with many notable performers and bands. He served as a substitute on trombone for the Disney Magic Kingdom World Band and the Kids of the Kingdom Band. He has also performed with the Dr. Otto Jazz Combo, Orquesta Sensual, the Chosen Few, the Cotton Davis Band, Michael Barr and the Now and Then Band. He gives solo piano performances and plays with many local bands as well.

Althouse counts his major musical influences to be Slide Hampton, Joey DeFrancesco, James Moody, and B.B. King. In addition to these legends, Althouse's family played a major role in his love of music.

"My whole family was very musical," recalled Althouse. His mother, a talented singer, also doubled as his first piano teacher. He began playing at age six and took lessons into his teenage years. Throughout college, he focused on jazz as it quickly developed as his main interest.

"I was primarily a jazz pianist, so that's my major. I was a jazz performance major in college the first time, so when I went back for my master's, I was in jazz also," explained Althouse. "I play a good bit of classical, too, but jazz is still my main focus."

When the local churches needed a pianist, Althouse would gladly offer to play for them. Upon relocating to this area, the music teacher recognized a severe need for skilled pianists. As a result, he went for graduate degree in Master of Arts at the University of Central Florida, with a concentration in piano. Though the piano would ultimately become his favorite instrument, he grew up playing the trombone as well.

"... I started band as a trombone player, and I did that all through high school and college," Althouse stated. "If you don't have a job where you're playing trombone all the time, then it's kind of hard to keep a lip to play it."

Both the piano and trombone appear in almost every musical genre, especially in many of Althouse's favorite musical works. However, as most musicians will tell you, it is incredibly difficult to pick a favorite piece. Althouse is no different.

"I can give you the favorite for the day," laughed Althouse. "On the Sunny Side of the Street..." good-natured teacher offered to play the piece and I gladly accepted. As Althouse's fingers danced across the notes, a jaunty tune filled the air. On the Sunny Side of the Street is defined by its upbeat, rhythmic tempo that leaves the listener feeling refreshed and brimming with happiness – a perfect description of the music studio itself. Althouse's love of teaching is evident in his methods. Students and onlookers alike agree that his unique instruction truly translates his love of music to each individual student. "I have a sincere desire to help people, and so if I'm helping people, I feel satisfied," related Althouse.

Althouse also has some recommendations on anyone interested in picking up a musical instrument. Expecting a good outcome will only be the result of hard work and determination. "Work harder. Everybody wants to be zapped by the magic music person, and wants it now, instead of dedicating themselves to the work."

If you're ready to try your hand at singing lessons, guitar, piano, or any other instrument, head over to Mr. Jeff's Music Academy at 1102 Pennsylvania Ave, St Cloud. Althouse accepts all students and welcomes them to an open, friendly, and musically diverse environment. What better time to learn than now? Everyone has to start someplace! Why not at Mr. Jeff's Music Academy?

For more information, please call 407-928-5823 or visit www.mrjeffsmusicacademy.com.