

8. AFTER-SCHOOL SESSIONS: NOTES FOR NOTES

“The studio is the great equalizer,” says Philip Gilley, co-founder of **Notes for Notes**, a program that will equip and staff two fully operational recording studios inside Nashville Boys and Girls Clubs this fall.

The program — first launched in Santa Barbara, Calif., in 2007 and expanding to Music City thanks in part to a grant from the Hot Topic Foundation — gives kids an opportunity to sit at the controls and learn the recording process in a fully operational studio, with the guidance of staff mentors, visiting music pros and the occasional special guest. (Jack Johnson, for one, dropped in one of the Santa Barbara locations earlier this year.)

“It’s a vibe and a culture as much as a facility,” Gilley says, emphasizing the program’s open-ended and inclusive nature. So far, that vibe has attracted some big names in support: The Steve Miller Band recently helped raise \$50,000 at a benefit concert for the organization, and the Notes for Notes advisory board includes luminaries the likes of Jeff Bridges, David Crosby, Carol Burnett and Depeche Mode’s Martin Gore, to name but a few.

Where Music Row exists to churn out hits and hitmakers, Notes for Notes has a broader, less results-oriented set of goals. “A lot of these kids don’t have anywhere else to go, and where they want to go is the recording studio,” Gilley says. “What keeps them coming back is the relationships that form — not just between us and them, but with the other kids.”

Gilley says getting kids to believe in their own creative power can create reverberations far beyond the mixing board. And while performing may be the most identifiable aspect, the music industry as a whole encompasses many jobs — from sound engineers to promoters to lighting and stage crew — that kids might not know about. “If we give them that taste and that introduction,” Gilley says, it can open doors that weren’t just closed, but invisible.

Even so, Notes for Notes is not a vocational program, any more than it’s a star factory. “We just want to show kids that music is empowering,” Gilley says. “It’s not like we’re trying to create the next Taylor Swift. They may start off doing music and do a song, and even if it doesn’t turn into something they want to pursue, they might think, ‘I made this — what else can I do?’” **STEVE HARUCH**

