



## **KNOW THE SCORE**

### **MUSICIANS INSTITUTE TRANSLATES TALENT INTO CAREERS**

Since 1977, Musicians Institute (M.I.) has been a mecca for musicians who're serious about making a living in their craft. Now a substantial facility on North McCadden Place, just off Hollywood Boulevard, M.I. offers comprehensive, hands-on education in contemporary music performance, recording, guitar making, music business and film. Options for students include degree and certificate programs in guitar, bass, percussion, keyboards and vocals, and certificate programs in recording, music business, guitar craft and music for film, as well as a variety of non-certificate programs and seasonal classes.

PJ Labinski, 36, a Minnesota native now living in Hollywood, is yet another M.I. success story. Labinski moved to Phoenix, AZ at age 21, married, and played guitar in various area bands. "While living there I got more serious about playing in bands. I was dissatisfied with working dead-end jobs and finally decided I wanted to make a career by playing music," Labinski explains. "I realized that if I was going to do that I should get some formal training. My wife and I took a trip to L.A. so I could tour M.I. and I was immediately convinced that going to school there was what I was going to do."

PJ signed-up for M.I.'s 1-year Guitar Certificate Program and, in 1998, The Labinskis moved to Hollywood. "The guitar program covered guitar techniques, music theory, ear training, reading music, and general musicianship," he recalls. "In addition to the classes there were live playing workshops that allowed you to play with other musicians, opening counseling sessions with the instructors, and I was in bands with other students. I was usually at the school for 6 to 8 hours a day. I would spend about 3 or 4 hours a day practicing class material at home.

"M.I. had a very supportive and motivational vibe ... all of the students and instructors were very encouraging and helpful. Being around so many excellent musicians was a huge inspiration – it was daunting at first, but I soon realized how much I was learning in a relatively short period of time."

The Labinskis certainly made sacrifices so that PJ could attend M.I. "I had a small amount of savings and some help from my parents, but for the majority of the cost of school I got student loans. My wife had a job, but money was really tight for the year I was at school since she was supporting both of us. Our first apartment didn't come with a refrigerator so we lived without one for quite a while. We put a cooler out on the patio and would buy our cold groceries every couple of days. Luckily that winter was cold and rainy so the food didn't spoil right away!"

The sacrifice was worthwhile, as PJ's been increasingly busy as a working musician since graduating from M.I.: "I've done a lot of work as a session guitarist, playing live and studio gigs. A couple of years ago I started a business called BackingBand [[www.BackingBand.com](http://www.BackingBand.com)] with some musician friends. We are a complete group of musicians for hire. We primarily work with singer/songwriters who need a band to do showcases or to record their songs in the studio.

"I recently started my second company, Under The Groove [[www.UnderTheGroove.com](http://www.UnderTheGroove.com)], so sell guitar instructional and practice products called Jam Tracks. These products were first developed for use when I was teaching guitar lessons. My students liked them so much I decided to start marketing them.

"I also have my own studio where I produce music. I've done everything from a theme song for an upcoming animation website to full albums for artists. I also do a lot of song demos for singer/songwriters.

"M.I. gave me a solid music education that has really enabled me to succeed at all aspects of my music career. Everything I have done ... has been based on my guitar playing ability and knowledge of music."

Predictably, Labinski doesn't hesitate to recommend Musician's Institute to other, similarly serious musicians: "If someone goes there and is open minded and willing to work hard they will get a lot of information and skill in a relatively short time span. It would take countless years of lessons to achieve the same results."