

Shredhed Takes Different Approach to Print

"After 86 years in music educational publishing, you would have thought there were no more ways to print music, but what the Shredhed guys have done is unique and revolutionary," says Alfred's Ron Manus. "They have found a way to improve on the way music is delivered. For certain types of music, their system truly makes learning and understanding music easier and more fun."

Alfred is distributing Shredhed, the newest name in print music. As Manus has seen it all in terms of people pitching new ideas, claiming theirs deserves publication, his praise is noteworthy. Meeting Shredhed's John Keefe and seeing his approach to teaching certainly makes the case that this is an unusual product.

What is it? On the one hand it's a music book that just teaches one song, retailing for \$12.95. On the other hand, the



Eric Braun and John Keefe

creators insist it teaches that one song really well. Oh, and it's also a three pocket folder, a giant dry erase TAB poster, and self-supporting music stand.

"The new twist is this: It allows the guitarist to view an entire song in an easy-to-view display, allowing multiple users to learn together," explains Manus. "It eliminates the need for music stands, and the time it takes to stop, take your fingers off the fret board, and flip pages. It's especially well-suited for guitar lessons."

A Lineage of Brothers

Shredhed cofounder John Keefe took an interesting path to get into the MI business. He moved to Charlotte, N.C.

for graduate school, during which time he went to work for Coran Capshaw, manager of the Dave Matthews band, doing business development for Capshaw's side company, Music Today. It gave Keefe some important experience and connections, which allowed him to bring to life an idea he and his brother, Peter, cooked up years early.

The two brothers grew up playing guitar, and liked playing and learning together. "We didn't like being hunched over sharing a music stand, or having to stop and turn a page," John Keefe explains. "It just didn't make sense, so at one point we came up with the idea of transcribing it on a big piece of paper and putting it on



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the wall." One of the first tunes they experimented doing this with was the Black Crowes' "She Talks to Angels."

Further experimentation was done leading the team to incorporate the idea of a dry erase component and a backing that created an over-sized music stand, both components they felt would be attractive to teachers and students. Tragically, Peter Keefe died suddenly in 2006 before it all came to fruition. John Keefe carried on, bringing in childhood friend and fellow entrepreneur Eric Braun, forming InkTree Inc., the parent company of Shredhed. (InkTree is applying these ideas developed for music making to other markets.)

An attorney they were working with knew Alfred brothers Ron and Steve Manus, and helped set up a meeting. They connected right away, Keefe says. It was also helpful that Alfred holds the rights to many pop acts, including the Black



Crowes. A deal was signed, and Keefe went to a special printer in Tulsa to see the first "She Talks to Angels" roll off the press.

Coincidences and good signs abounded. "I was standing in the print shop when one of the workers came up to me and asked if I was going to the show that night," Keefe recalls. He asked what show

and was told the Black Crowes were performing in town. It was too good to pass up, so he took the very first copy that came off the line and went to the show where he had the band sign it, including Black Crowes' brothers and songwriters, Chris and Rich Robinson.

The unusual product comes with an equally unusual price tag, but Keefe doesn't apologize for the relatively heavy price for a single song. "The one thing all our music books had in common was that none of the bindings were broken," because he says by design they led to a lot of frustration which kept them from really being used. "The question becomes, why buy a book for \$28 that has ten songs that you're ultimately not going to learn when you can spend \$12 for one song you'll learn really well?"

Prior to inking the distribution deal, he says he spent time visiting MI stores doing market research and that whenever he explains the product to the retailer, he hears, "where do I get one?" Still, there is a lot of competition out there from larger companies who have been in the market longer than he.

"Sure, I was a little nervous in the beginning," he confesses. "But at the end of

the day, Peter had and Eric has such confidence in the idea, that I knew we had the makings of a viable product." Keefe stress that Shredhed is especially good for retailers who offer guitar lessons as it can be purchased at the store by the student, then used during their lesson where the teacher can make notes directly on it with a dry-erase marker. "Then the student can fold it up, put it in his or her back pack, take it home and put it on their wall...and it makes for a more effective learning experience."

The product was launched at the 2008 NAMM show. Artists like Green Day, Radiohead, Pantera, Eric Clapton, The Eagles, Grateful Dead, The Black Crowes, R.E.M. and more are showcased on Shredhed products. Other Shredhed titles include *The Chord Board*, *Licks & Riffs* (acoustic and electric), *Scales & Modes*, with others in the planning stages.

"Shredhed is awesome," Manus says. "We are thrilled to be working with John and his crew. Not only do they have a quality product, they are also a blast to work with. We're honored to work with the Shredhed team to help even more people learn, teach, and play music."