



Raising 'Cane

Barnes used Ticketmaster's relationships to unite competing promoters in a common cause

BY LINDA DECKARD

Music Rising, an instrument replacement fund for musicians of the Gulf Coast who lost everything to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, brought out the charitable best in a lot of entertainers, promoters and fans. But it took some major players with lots of clout, not the least of them Terry Barnes, chairman of Ticketmaster, to coordinate the outreach.

Barnes vividly recalls the circumstances: "I got a call from Arthur Fogel of TNA who said, 'Hey a good friend of mine, Bob Ezrin, has put together a project with The Edge to help all the people in New Orleans who lost all their instruments.' He said, 'Would you mind hopping on the phone with us and having him explain?'"

"So Bob and Arthur called me and walked me through it and asked if we could help. And I said, 'Absolutely,' and one of the best ways we could help, we thought, was with the new auction technology we have."

Barnes and Ticketmaster brought more than new technology to the table, however. They brought relationships with all the major promoters. Barnes was able to gather Live Nation, AEG, House of Blues and Nederlander Concerts, major competitors in the concert world, around one cause, Music Rising. Barnes encouraged everyone to put as many shows as possible in the auction, offering two to four tickets and sometimes a guitar donated by Gibson and signed by the artist, at auction. "We got all the promoters together and all of them were terrific about it," Barnes understates. "This was a call."

Artists who participated were from all genres and concerts were held throughout the country. Included were Brad Paisley, Chicago, Def Leppard, and Elton John, for example. Concerts took place June-August 2006 from Charlotte, N.C., to Clarkston, Mich., to Las Vegas and Los Angeles.

Ezrin, a legendary and well-respected music producer who ignited Music Rising along with U2's The Edge, said, "Immediately after we launched Music Rising, Terry and his organization got involved. It was their recommendation we create the ticket- and sometimes-guitar auctions. They helped



U2 plays a Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans performance for Music Rising on Sept. 25 (Photo Credit: Shahar Azran); Terry Barnes; Gibson Guitar given out through Music Rising Program.

us convene all the major promoters. They gave us the infrastructure and organized and operated the entire thing. It was an amazing gesture on their part, very labor intensive."

Ezrin acknowledged Barnes as "a solid, steady, great convener of some pretty disparate personalities and companies that are not noted for working together under most circumstances. They all very graciously — and in a very giving fashion — came together to work with us through Ticketmaster. We could not have done this without Ticketmaster."

Music Rising also sold \$1 million worth of a special edition guitars Gibson created and will benefit from revenues from a new U2 single, "The Saints Are Coming."

Ezrin said that, as of November 2006, Music Rising had poured nearly \$3 million into instruments for individual musicians and "now we're expanding into churches." The second phase is to buy instruments for churches in the Central Gulf Region. Those pillars of the community are key to rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, Ezrin said.

This cause, which was far and away the winner of the *Venues Today* 2006 Hall of Headlines Award for Marketing, tugged at the hearts of the entire entertainment industry. "I thought this was special because it hit the foundation of our industry, a city known for music and the birth of music. New Orleans has a unique heart and soul to it that everyone in the music business immediately connected with. When Bob and Edge put this together, everyone said 'you bet,'" Barnes said.

There may be more to this story. "We're wrestling with whether we have an ending here or if Music Rising becomes a foundation for replacing instruments wherever disaster strikes," Ezrin said. "That is a possibility, something we're discussing."

The lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which caused the worst devastation to date in the U.S.A., are not fleeting and new needs will arise. And to Ezrin, "Ticketmaster is part of the family. I intend to call on my good friend Mr. Barnes in the New Year to see what he and the team can cook up. We only call the very best of people and the people at Ticketmaster are the very best."



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