

FULL HOUSE

Phil Houseal

Over the years, most Hill Country music stores have gone the way of the Theredmin.

The reasons have varied, not least of which is the competition from the Internet. But musicians prefer to pluck and pick, not hunt and click.

That is the rationale for Mindy Brown to open Mindy's Music in Fredericksburg this February.

When Brown arrived in the Hill Country along with the Memorial Day floods of 2015, she saw the need for a full-service music shop.

"Mainly I noticed a need for good, quality instruments," said Brown, a professional musician who performs on and teaches guitar, piano, ukulele, and bass guitar. "A lot of people buy an instrument at a discount store and it ends up just sitting there."

As a teacher, she took it upon herself to drive to San Antonio or Austin to buy a quality instrument for her students, then resell them at cost. On one of those long trips she had an epiphany.

"Wait a minute, what am I doing?" she asked herself. "I'm selling them at cost and not making any money. Why not open a music store?"

So she did. She found a place in Fredericksburg next to Church's Chicken. It is off the Main Street, but still visible from it.



After only a few weeks open for business, Brown is encouraged by the response. One benefit is that Brown already knows the local professional music community from her playing gigs.

"They bring in equipment on consignment they want to sell, and they buy, too."

What about the online competition?

"I personally hate to buy instruments on line," she said. "You can take two instruments that are the exact same make and model, and they play differently."

Online buying means waiting and paying shipping. Plus there is no follow-up service. When you buy a guitar at Mindy's Music for example, she makes sure it is set up and ready to play.

Another benefit of having a local music store is immediacy. On the day of a gig you realize you need an E string or a drum stick—a situation every musician has experienced—it's too late to find one online.



Her music inventory includes all the popular instruments and amps. She carries accessories such as strings, capos, tuners, cords, straps, and picks. Stands, PA equipment, and music books. She also is expanding into band instruments, selling reeds and providing repair work.

As Brown gives lessons on several instruments, she also stocks music stands and music methods books for piano, guitar, bass, and violin.

Brown's vision is about more than picks and metronomes. She sees her store as a connecting point for musicians. She plans to implement regular pickers circles, jams, and workshops. Brown also believes it's important that the space be inviting.

So she is adding artwork to make it "a beautiful store." Like a true musician, she noted the store has "natural reverb."



She welcomes the curious to stop in to visit and experience that ambiance.

"If you need something right away, come here," she said. "Come in and try things. You can sit and play them for awhile."

In addition to selling instruments, equipment, music books, and accessories, Mindy Brown hopes her new store becomes a gathering place for area musicians.

Which is also how long she hopes to be around.

"I want this store to have staying power and to be here for the community. We need it. All of us musicians are in this together."

Mindy's Music is located at 605 East Austin Street in Fredericksburg.
Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10-6,
Saturday, 10-4
830-307-9748
mindy@mindysmusic.com

(Note: Another local music store to check out is Melody Corner, located at 604-B, Junction Highway, Kerrville. Still going after 60 years.)

Photos by Phil Houseal

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