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Resident musician: John Driskell Hopkins, bassist and songwriter for Zac Brown Band, is the first Artist in Residence at Kennesaw State University's Joel A. Katz Music and Entertainment Business Program. Hopkins recently lectured and met with students, all of whom are interested in getting into the business side of the music and entertainment industries. Georgia's music business supported nearly 20,000 jobs in fiscal year 2012.

Take note

KSU program helps grow Georgia's music business

By **Martin Sinderman**
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Students of all majors who want to pursue careers in entertainment — particularly the music end of the business — can take advantage of a unique program at Kennesaw State University that preps them for the wide variety of jobs in this fast-growing Georgia industry.



Perissi
Kennesaw State
University

A joint venture between KSU's College of the Arts and its Coles College of Business that began in January 2011, KSU's Joel A. Katz Music and Entertainment Business Program (MEBUS) provides students with practical experiences, on-the-job training, and exploration of career opportunities in music and entertainment.

Based on the notion that success in this industry

Music makers

The list of musical artists with close ties to Georgia is long and diverse. It includes (in no particular order):

- OutKast
- Zac Brown Band
- Usher
- Sugarland
- Ludacris
- Justin Bieber
- Lil Jon
- The B-52s
- The Black Crowes
- Akon
- Collective Soul
- Indigo Girls
- Trisha Yearwood
- Ne Yo
- Lady Antebellum
- Alan Jackson
- The Allman Brothers
- Elton John
- James Brown
- R.E.M.

requires a broad range of skills from diverse fields, the program offers a 24 credit-hour certificate, essentially a minor that accompanies a student's major field of study.

Open to all majors, it is designed to meet the entertainment industry's demand for talent in a wide variety of fields, according to Keith Perissi, interim director of the program.

"We are responding to the needs from the full spectrum of the entertainment industry, which includes music but also film, television, video games and social media," Perissi said.

Those needs go way beyond musicians, actors and actresses, and other performers, and extends to encompass individuals involved in the marketing, management, production and other aspects of entertainment.

"Eighty-five percent of the jobs [in the entertainment industry] are non-performing," Perissi said. "For example, there is a huge need in film and TV for on-set accounting personnel."

MEBUS started with about 50 students, a number that has since grown to 150, Perissi said.

"We could be up to 250, but I don't want to grow the program too fast," he said. "I know each and every student. That is why I am able to place them in internships. I know what they are doing, what they have done, what they are good at."

The emphasis here is on providing students with real-world experience in the industry through externship and internship programs that enable them to learn from professionals in the entertainment business.

For example, John Driskell Hopkins, bassist and songwriter for Zac

Brown Band, whose album *Uncaged* is the 2013 Grammy winner for Best Country Album, recently agreed to be the first Artist in Residence for the program.

Hopkins will lecture to MEBUS classes on songwriting, publishing, copyright and recording. In addition, students in spring 2013 classes will work with Hopkins to promote his new solo record, *Daylight*, featuring Zac Brown and Jerry Douglas.

The program has also served as an incubator for new, entertainment-related businesses.

These include PlayPro Media, a music marketing and distribution firm, active in Georgia and Florida, that promotes emerging talent in college communities through an arrangement with Education Realty Trust, a developer and manager of collegiate housing.

MEBUS students have worked with PlayPro as promoters, agents and managers; and, according to Perissi, the company has hired six MEBUS graduates to date.

Georgia's music business supported 19,955 jobs in the state during fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012), according to recent Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) figures.

The business benefits from state-level production incentives that provide up to 30 percent of Georgia production expenditures in transferable tax credits for feature films, television series, commercials, music videos, animation game development and other qualified projects, part of a mix that makes the state attractive to the entertainment industry.

"We are in the midst of another

record-breaking year due to Georgia's competitive incentive package, an increase in production infrastructure, a deep base of qualified labor for production crews, and the ease of access provided by the world's busiest airport," said Lee Thomas, director of the Georgia Film, Music and Digital Entertainment office, a division of the GDEcD.

"More than 30,000 Georgians are now employed by the entertainment industry," she said, "and a countless number of ancillary businesses have benefited from all of the activity it generates."

GDEcD reports Georgia was home to 333 feature films, television movies and series, commercials and music videos shot across the state during FY 2012. Direct spending by the entertainment industry during this period totaled more than \$879.8 million, the highest amount ever, according to GDEcD.

On the non-quantitative side, musical entertainment is an integral part of Georgia's identity, said Simon Horrocks, co-president of Georgia Music Partners, an Atlanta-based nonprofit that promotes the business of music and related music technology in the state as well as co-founder of Affix Music LLC, an Atlanta-based music licensing company. "Georgia has a long, rich history of music that is linked indelibly to the image of the state," he said. "And I think it is great for the state to make it known to visitors that Georgia is home to the Allman Brothers, Usher, Ray Charles, Johnny Mercer and a host of other major names in the music industry — names that have stood the test of time."