

PNF Musician Survey Results

The rehearsal space crisis facing San Francisco's music community is a well-known problem. After the closure of numerous spaces in and around San Francisco during the economic growth of the last several years, the problem reached a head last fall with the closure of Downtown Rehearsal Studios, second home to a large portion of the Bay Area's music community. Almost a year later, and despite the recent economic downturn that is once again changing the face of the City, San Francisco's rehearsal space crisis is not over. The problem has not been "solved" as a result of the dot-bomb. Waiting lists for spaces in and around San Francisco continue to be full, and those spaces still face challenges and constantly struggle to remain open.

14% of respondents are on a waiting list for rehearsal space. They've been waiting:

6+ months 33.3%
2-6 months 38.8%
0-2 months 27.7%

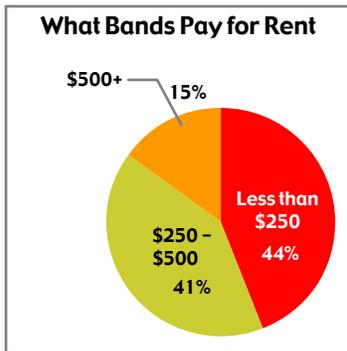
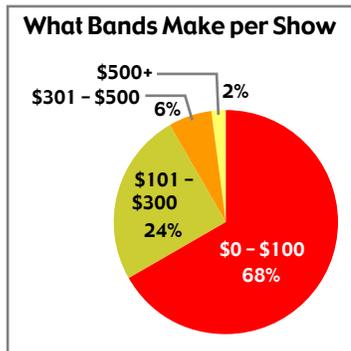
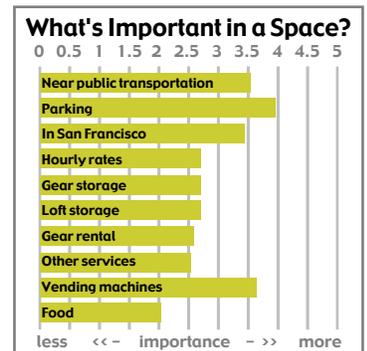
The downturn has brought some commercial rent rates down, and the resulting wave of publicity indicated that this meant relief for nonprofits and the arts. This was true in many cases, and cheaper rents will certainly help keep more musicians and artists in the City, but it hasn't translated into relief for the lack of rehearsal space. This is generally because the music community has unique needs and space requirements that are not common to other arts communities. These needs include equipment storage, loading accessibility, 24-hour access, and most importantly soundproofing. Spaces to accommodate these needs must be created specifically for the purpose of hosting musicians, and they are increasingly rare.

There has been much hope for and discussion about potential solutions to the rehearsal space crisis. When new spaces are created, we believe that the musician's community should have a voice in how those new spaces are developed and managed. To that end, during winter 2000-2001, PNF undertook a survey to gather data about local musicians and their needs in order to help inform future decisions regarding the creation of space. The following is some initial analysis of and observations from that data.

The Survey – Preliminary Findings

This data represents the responses of over two hundred bands from throughout the Bay Area. The average respondent is in 1.6 bands or projects, and is in a space shared by 2.1 bands. 14% of respondents were currently on a waiting list for rehearsal space. Most of the bands (67%) play once a month or less, and 68% of them make less than \$100 per show. Yet 56% of bands pay over \$250 a month for practice space--space that in 81% of the cases is shared by other bands. Overall, 49% of the respondents practice less than once a week, but for lockout space tenants, that number drops to only 12%. A large majority (78%) of bands practice in the evenings: 53% between 8pm and 2am and 26% between 5pm and 8pm. Spaces are generally small, with 48% of them less than 100 square feet, and 37% between one and two hundred square feet.

Most respondents felt that new spaces of any size would be valuable for the community, and there's a strong desire to have a space in San Francisco, but 60% of respondents would drive up to 30 miles to a practice space. Most had cars, but both parking and public transportation access were given high importance ratings. The importance of around the clock access to space was highlighted by many respondents and made clear by usage patterns, and this was often accompanied by comments on the importance of security and full-time staffing of the facility. Common space for community purposes, socializing, and bill posting was also often mentioned in suggestions.



Soundproofing is inherently a very important need and the most basic thing that sets a music rehearsal space apart, and this came up again and again as being paramount. Vending machines were also very popular, and equipment storage and hourly rentals were considered above average importance, while other services such as equipment rental and sales and food services were slightly less important. Cleanliness, however, with particular regard to bathrooms, was often mentioned in the comments.

