

All Access: A *Backstage Pass* to a Collaborative, Undergraduate Music Journal

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMV1hd3Yaqo>

Abstract

The number of currently publishing, student-run music journals can be counted on one hand. And of those, only half are for undergraduates. At University of the Pacific, the Conservatory of Music started a music industry analysis and opinion journal that published its first issue in 2018. Edited and written by undergraduate students, *Backstage Pass* has published three volumes totaling 81 publications. The benefits of journal writing, editing, publishing and hosting are numerous from many different stakeholder points of view. The collaborative effort is shared between the University Libraries (hosts the institutional repository where the journal is published and offers technical support) and the Conservatory of Music's Department of Music Industry Studies where the Program Director serves as the Editor-in-Chief and the student editorial board consists of three undergraduates. *Backstage Pass* serves as a platform to share stellar work produced at University of the Pacific—potentially attracting new students and celebrating our current students. It allows the students to publish prior to graduating and joining their chosen profession—a profession which, overwhelmingly, requires excellent writing and communication skills. In this paper, the Editor-in-Chief, one of the student editors, and the Library's Head of Publishing and Scholarship Support, discuss the genesis of the journal, the process of publishing the first three volumes, and future plans.

Keywords: undergraduate research, music business, student journal, institutional repository, publishing, editorial workflows

Introduction

In 2018, the Conservatory of Music at University of the Pacific launched an online, undergraduate journal titled *Backstage Pass* (<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/>). The journal is a collaborative effort between the Conservatory's Department of Music Industry Studies (MIS) and the William Knox Holt Memorial Library. Between the two departments, the editorial board and the hosted journal platform are overseen by a total of five individuals—three undergraduate editors and the faculty member Editor-in-Chief from the Conservatory plus a Publication Manager from the Library.

The vision for the journal was to encourage and develop student authors and editors from MIS. Writing and communication skills are an essential element in the music business field, as well as all other fields. Developing high level writing skills in the undergraduates can assist them in their job hunt or further academic endeavors after graduation from a bachelor's program. While coursework, grades, and a completed education are one aspect of success, publication in a peer-reviewed journal as an undergraduate is a major coup. The editorial board's goal is to ensure the highest quality with each issue in order to showcase the authorial and editorial brilliance of Pacific students. Published pieces must reflect well on the journal, the Department, the Conservatory, the University, as well as the authors and editors. *Backstage Pass* is an exemplary publication of completed work for authors to share externally as well as a promotional example to engage and recruit incoming undergraduates.

The collaboration between Conservatory and Library has been very fruitful from the launch of the journal three years ago. An issue is published every spring. In 2020, due to the global pandemic, the issue was published a little late as a result of the editorial meetings going online. However, along with the normal issue, 2020 also saw the publication of a special issue drawn from MMGT 170: "Dreaming the Beatles," a three-credit survey of the group's musical, business, and cultural contributions. The students enrolled in the course ended up curating and creating a virtual gallery with

ten pieces of art and music published.¹

By recounting the beginnings and established workflows of the journal, the authors hope to inspire others of the benefits of such an undertaking. The collaborative development of such a successful initiative is also of relevance beyond the music industry field—writing and communication skills are desirable in most, if not all, fields. Endeavors such as this to discover and disseminate high-quality research and creative works from undergraduate students in a recognizable and established journal format can be hugely beneficial to both current and prospective students.

Undergraduate Music Industry Journal Landscape

A contributing factor to the launch of *Backstage Pass* was the limited undergraduate music business journal opportunities available. Investigating what other music industry journals exist in North America and the United Kingdom, we discovered five:

1. *Music Business Journal*, Berklee College of Music (U.S.): <http://www.thembj.org/>
2. *Nota Bene*, Western University (Canada): <https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/notabene>
3. *Musical Offerings*, Cedarville University (U.S.): <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/musicalofferings/>
4. *DURMS*, Durham University (U.K.): <https://music-science.net/durms/>
5. *B-Side*, University of California, Berkeley, (U.S.): <http://berkeleybside.com/>

Adding *Backstage Pass* into the mix brings the total to six in this niche field. We could not discover any outside the U.S./U.K./Canada sphere but there might be others in different languages which didn't come up in our searches. It would be interesting to see if a more comprehensive scan identified similar journals in other countries.

The *Music Business Journal* from Berklee College of Music is perhaps the most famous undergraduate journal currently publishing in the music industry field. *MBJ* has been publishing for a decade. It is a model of how to engage undergraduates in research, writing, editorial, and promotion of ideas and information pertaining to the fast paced and rapidly changing music business.

The *Backstage Pass* Origin Story

In 2017, the idea for *Backstage Pass* was percolating in Keith Hatschek's mind. Hatschek is a Professor of Music Management and Music Industry Studies at University of the Pacific as well as the Editor-in-Chief for the journal. An idea that had been rattling around in Hatschek's mind was the concept of student 'self-efficacy' relating to being

able to identify, internalize, and "own" meaningful projects and work.² Ownership of their output could translate to better preparing students for the ambiguities found in today's business environment.³ As he clearly states in the "Letter from the Editor" for the very first issue:

Cogent, persuasive writing is one of the most essential skills a music business professional employs in one's daily work. Whether it is a proposal for new business, a concert rider, an op-ed mapping out industry concerns or an advocacy letter sent to lawmakers, the written word of tomorrow's music industry leaders must convey articulate and insightful details and analysis to make a compelling case whatever the purpose.⁴

Such ideas are not novel in the music management literature as Rothschild and van Kluyve (2012) had reported about the effectiveness of an undergraduate course which integrated a student-written online music business publication into its curriculum at Missouri State University.⁵ Two-thirds of students who contributed to the online journal reported that writing for the journal improved their writing skills.⁶

As many industries transition to remote workforces, nearly every employee needs to think more entrepreneurially and be able to draw on internal resources and grit to get things done. A student written and edited scholarly journal could function to help build skills and resilience around self-efficacy for students at Pacific. Hatschek was also aware of multiple surveys done of music industry employers that identified professional writing and clear communication as essential traits sought in all new hires. In one such survey cited in *How to Get a Job in the Music Industry*, a standard text in the field, the authors cite "written, oral and presentation skills at a professional level, plus networking skills" as being highly prized by employers in new hires.⁷ To his mind, an undergraduate journal would provide documentation of a student's writing and critical thinking skills, making them more attractive hires in the industry.

Everything came together in the fall of 2017 when Hatschek teamed up with Michele Gibney in the Library to adopt the institutional repository, Scholarly Commons, as the hosting platform for the journal. Three students were invited from among the Music Industry Studies major to be the original editors: Jada Macias, Rachel Hawkes, and Nicole Wasnock. A call for papers for the first issue went out soon after. The accepted submissions would be published in the spring of 2018. The majority of the initial submissions came from curricular assignments in Pacific's Music Management and Music Industry Studies program and courses. These included position papers (take a side on a conten-

tious issue); album, book, and film reviews; and so called “curiosity projects” which have grown into one of the students’ preferred types of scholarship including infographics, vlogs, and more.⁸

The Online Journal Platform and Library Collaboration

Scholarly Commons is the online, institutional repository for University of the Pacific, launched in 2017. Online access is provided to both published and unpublished works by the University of the Pacific community including journal articles, books, book chapters, theses, dissertations, reports, conference proceedings, teaching materials, data sets, university publications, digital, and multimedia collections. In addition to deposited works, Scholarly Commons is publishing original knowledge in the form of several journals, conferences, and open educational resources. Contributions to the repository showcase the intellectual and creative output of University of the Pacific faculty, students, alumni, and staff, ensuring long-term preservation and worldwide electronic accessibility.⁹

As a hosted instance of the bepress Digital Commons software, Scholarly Commons has a built-in suite of editorial tools. These are customizable for each structure in the repository and *Backstage Pass* received the full treatment. When Keith Hatschek approached the Library in 2017 about the project, Scholarly Commons was already live and staff were excited about assisting with journal publication. Michele Gibney’s role in the library is to manage the repository and her full title is Head of Publishing and Scholarship Support. In that capacity, she assisted with the digital journal design, applying for an ISSN from the Library of Congress, and customization of article cover pages as well as ongoing publication support for each issue over the last three years.

The journal design went through several iterations to choose the banner design, the colors, fonts, and layout of templated elements. The editorial staff had several early discussions on the “look and feel” of the design to capture the main stakeholders’—undergraduate students—expectations. The design needed to conform to University style guidelines but editorial desire was to keep an individualized, gritty, rocker feel to appeal to the primary consumers. In addition to the journal design, Gibney also assisted with the logo creation—stylized headphones made up of musical notes with the journal’s title in the middle. This has come in handy as cover art for each issue as well as publicity and marketing supplies—stickers, t-shirts, etc.

Each article is published as a PDF with a customized, automatically applied cover page. Along with the typical cover page elements (title, author, volume, issue, citation, hyperlinks back to the article and journal), each cover page

for *Backstage Pass* has been adjusted to include the following text:

This article was written as part of the curriculum for the Bachelor of Music in Music Management and the Bachelor of Science in Music Industry Studies at University of the Pacific. Each student conducted research based on his or her own areas of interest and study. To learn more about the program, visit: go.pacific.edu/musicindustry.

The purpose of this section is student recruitment to the University and the programs. It is expected that interested high schoolers may be discovering the journal. The editors wanted to take advantage of that audience and promote to the prospectives. The main goal of the journal is, of course, to highlight current students’ research and creative work, however, a secondary goal is to attract motivated students who want to excel in the same profession. Considering which college to attend may lead to a survey of the music business higher education landscape with many factors convincing young adults and their families to select preferred institutions. Location, cost, social life, etc., are all important, but academics and a program’s offerings are paramount. Many colleges can boast a music industry studies major, but not all of them can offer potential publication as an undergraduate in a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal.

Every published author in *Backstage Pass* has access to a variety of usage statistics. The first one they receive is a monthly Author Readership Report (ARR)—an email that is delivered to the address they used when submitting their paper. The ARR contains statistics on how many downloads their paper(s) received in the previous thirty days. It also includes a hyperlink to an Author Dashboard (AD) where they can see an extensive amount of additional information. This includes where in the world the paper is being downloaded—down to the granular level of institution/organization. There are various data visualizations with maps, institutions, countries, referrers, downloads over time, etc. (see Figure 1).

Authors can use these kinds of statistics as proof of their scholarly reach and impact. The editors have heard of authors using their *Backstage Pass* article statistics when applying to jobs and graduate school.

An additional, and recently added feature in Scholarly Commons, is an embedded PlumX Snapshot. The editors have access to a journal-wide version, but all authors also have individual ones for their published works. PlumX metrics are altmetrics—data captured about a publication beyond the typical metrics of download/usage counts and citations. These include things such as social media posts, mentions (blogs, news media, references), and captures



Figure 1. Readership Distribution example (Michele Gibney's Author Dashboard on October 16, 2020).

(bookmarked, favorites, exports). Again, details like this can assist authors in demonstrating the interest level in their work. Alongside the downloads and citations, it also is very useful for the editorial staff to gauge what topics are trending in the journal and what might be additional avenues to pursue in future issues.

The partnership between the Library and the Conservatory at Pacific to produce *Backstage Pass* has been very fruitful and has led to additional journals joining Scholarly Commons from other departments as well as multiple collaborations between Conservatory faculty and students with Library staff on other projects.

The *Backstage Pass* Student Experience – Author and Editor

Nicole Wasnock was an Editor on *Backstage Pass* from the very beginning. She ended her three-year tenure as Senior Editor when she graduated from Pacific in May 2020. Over her time spent managing submissions, Wasnock learned some of the very valuable skills to which Hatschek

referenced as vital to music industry employers. These include giving feedback to peers, broadening her understanding of music industry topics, editing grammar, writing for the industry in a concise and professional way, fact checking, and formatting. All the skills learned as an editor are highly transferable to any job and she professes confidence in her ability to talk about how the experience as an editor prepared her for the professional world. In addition to the editorial experience, Wasnock is also a published author in *Backstage Pass*. She can show her publications to potential employers as evidence of writing and research skills.

Serving as an editor on the journal came with a myriad of duties. Submissions were divided by editorial area—reviews, industry news and analysis, industry profiles, curiosity projects, and media to the respective editor in charge. An online tracking sheet was used during the process of building each issue (see Figure 2).

The tracking sheet is color coded and assists as a visual reminder to the editors as they guide all submissions through the review process. The process followed for each submission is assignment to editor in charge, assess submission, let author know decision to publish or not, initial edit, second review, and resubmit final version with consistent, established formatting.

As the submissions flow through the process, a scoring rubric and numbering system is used to rank them and make publication decisions (see Figure 3). All three of the student editors share the review process and reach unanimous decisions on every submission. The editor assigned to each submission will make the necessary grammatical and formatting corrections in order to prepare for publication. In some cases the editor will work with the author if the submission has potential but requires foundational edits.

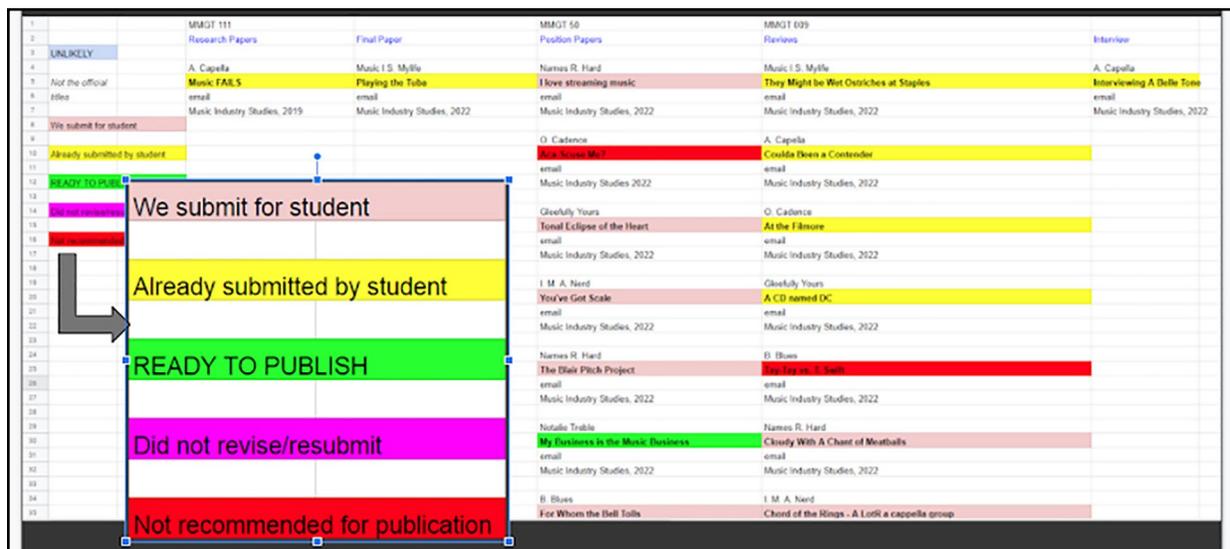


Figure 2. Online tracking sheet in Google Sheets (anonymized for distribution).

SCORE SHEET						
	Editor	Fit Category?	Clarity of Expression (1-5)	Ideas Originality (1-5)	Writing Mechanics (1-5)	Comments
REJECT						
Title	NW	Y	4	4		3 Vivid report, informal, some spelling errors and opportunities for rewording
Title	NW	Y	4	4		3 Very clear writing style, some areas could be reworded & some spelling errors
Title	AT	Y	4	3		2 Very simple use of language and overall style (chronological order), Lack of vivid im
Title	AT	Y	4	3		3 Writing style was simple, but added vivid imagery, could go in depth more about his
Title	AT	Y	3	3		2 Do Not use - Simple style, lots of typos, lack of vivid imagery and clarity
Title	AT	Y	4	5		4 Great writing style, imagery, and expression of ideas
Title	NW	Y	5	5		5 Needs a proper title, KH asked author to send one. Great writing style
Title	AT/KH	Y	5	5		5 Great writing style, very descriptive and clear in explanations, opinions expressed cl
Title	KH (NW format)	Y	2.5	4		2.5 The ideas are there, but the grammar and sentence structure needs revisions
Title	AT	Y	4	3		4 Ideas were expressed clearly and language was well-written, she wrote about more
Title	NW	Y	4	4		3 Some grammatical errors/sentence restructuring needed
Title	NW	Y	5	5		4.5 Good writing style, detailed and personal. The intro is a little choppy

Figure 3. Scoring sheet on Google Sheets (anonymized for distribution).

In addition to Wasnock’s extensive experience, another of the original editors, Rachel Hawkes, who served as the Industry Profiles Editor and was also a published author in the journal, had this to say about the experience, “It was incredibly rewarding to be an editor and a contributor. Vetting, managing, and polishing so much content helped me view my own writing through a different lens. Seeing my piece published in an academic journal gave me a sense of pride in my work I had not previously felt.”¹⁰ Hawkes is now Project Manager of Business Analytics at Oakland Arena and RingCentral Coliseum.

Impact of *Backstage Pass* on Stakeholders

As the journal closed out publication of Volume 3 in the summer of 2020, the worldwide impact had been steadily ramping up. The 81 papers reached 16,000+ downloads over the summer. In October of 2020, *Backstage Pass* surpassed 20,000 downloads. Almost 1,500 institutions and 152 countries have accessed the journal worldwide. While the United States accounts for half the use (~10,000), additional downloads of note, from highest to lowest are: the United Kingdom (2,400), Australia (900), Canada (800), Germany (425), India (400), Netherlands (350), France (350), Philippines (250), and Singapore (250). Most downloads come from individuals searching on Google and Google Scholar (over 50%).

The most downloaded item is “[LGBTQ+ Representation and Activism in the Music Industry](#)” by Joey Tan with over 4,500 downloads. One of the reasons this article gained such online traction is the exposure it got on social media, specifically through [a tweet by user @nostr8answer](#).¹¹ When asked about their article, Tan replied “Writing for *Backstage Pass* has given me the chance to refine and share my ideas about inequalities in the music industry, as well as exploring the role that music can play in speaking out about social injustice. It’s helped me find my voice and better understand what kind of career I want to pursue.”¹² Tan is now a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University studying

LGBTQ+ representation in the media and society.

High level support for the journal on campus has come from the Dean of the Conservatory of Music, Peter Witte, and the University Librarian, Mary Somerville.¹³ Individually, they pointed to the relevance and timeliness of such an undertaking, with writing and communication proficiency being central to many music-related careers, as well as possibly starting students on a path toward research or academic careers through their first peer-reviewed published works.

Conclusions and Future Plans

Backstage Pass has exceeded the original goals identified at the time of its inception. While the majority of submissions still qualify as written works of commentary and analysis, there has been a slow but steady increase in other media formats. It is the hope of the current editors that this trend will continue and afford Pacific students the opportunity to broaden the range of communication media they become facile with in the future.

Similarly, there have been preliminary discussions about possible single-topic issues, perhaps one dedicated to the impacts of COVID-19 on the music industries, or another on California or West Coast music festivals. It will be up to the faculty and student editors of the journal to chart the course for these possible developments.

At a presentation on *Backstage Pass* in 2019 given to the Music Library Association California Chapter’s annual conference, an audience member asked if the editors might consider a future issue to which undergraduates from other music or music business programs, either statewide, or perhaps even nationally, might be invited to submit their works. This would be an interesting proposition and one that could substantially increase the reach and impact of the journal. One concern might be that currently the volunteer student editors dedicate significant time as unpaid staff members. If there were a dramatic increase in the number of submissions, the editorial capacity for such an undertaking would

need to be expanded to maintain standards and efficiency with a streamlined submission-to-publication timeline.

Three years into the project, the collaboration between the Conservatory of Music and the Library has proven to be a successful endeavor thus far. The journal has expanded the number of articles and authors published every year. It has received regional and national attention from colleagues in the field. As an established journal, the future looks promising for *Backstage Pass* and the editorial team looks forward to continued growth and positive recognition.

Endnotes

1. View the Beatles' Special Issue here: <https://scholarly-commons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/vol3/iss2/>.
2. For a succinct explanation of this phenomenon and its impact see, Beeching, Angela Myles. "Viewpoint: Curriculum Reform—A Perspective." *Journal of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association* 5, no. 1 (2005): 139-146.
3. David Chase, and Keith Hatschek, "Learning That is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts: Efforts to Build and Sustain an Integrative Learning Model in Music Management," *Journal of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association* 10, no. 1 (2010): 125-147, <https://doi.org/10.25101/10.7>. In this article, the authors argue that so-called "integrative learning" which affords collaborative, experiential learning opportunities creates an effective framework for student growth and self-efficacy.
4. Keith Hatschek, "Welcome to Backstage Pass!," *Backstage Pass* 1, no. 1, Article 1 (2018), <https://scholarly-commons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/vol1/iss1/1>.
5. Philip C. Rothschild, and Melissa van Kluyve, "EntertainmentManagementOnline.com: Integrating an Online Publication into the Entertainment Management Curriculum," *Journal of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association* 12, no. 1 (2012): 179-194, <https://doi.org/10.25101/12.7>.
6. Ibid, 190.
7. Keith Hatschek, and Breanne Beseda, *How to Get a Job in the Music Industry* (Boston: Berklee Press, 2015), 11.
8. 2018 *Backstage Pass* student editors included Nicole Wasnock, Axel Tanner, and June Benoit; 2019 student editors included Wasnock, Benoit, and Jennifer Morrow. Prospective editors were invited to apply based on faculty recommendations and student demonstration of responsible behaviors, emotional intelligence, and interest.
9. Paraphrased from Scholarly Commons introduction text, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/>.
10. Rachel Hawkes, interview by Keith Hatschek, June 16, 2019.
11. nostraightanswer [nostr8answer]. (2019, February 28). "cliffs notes ... LGBTQ+ individuals reportedly spend 48% more than others on music, but are heavily under-marketed and the music industry's "pop" diversity has refused to shift to contribute to that demographic despite it" "this data from this source /billboard.com/articles/busin ...here's another short report that's less statistical and more "research essay" ... scholarly-commons.pacific.edu/cgi/viewcontent" [Tweet thread]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/nostr8answer/status/1097605663000285189>.
12. Joey Tan, interview by Nicole Wasnock, June 25, 2019.
13. Peter Witte, email correspondence with Keith Hatschek, June 19, 2019. Mary Somerville, email correspondence with Michele Gibney, June 17, 2019.



Michele Gibney is the Head of Publishing and Scholarship Support at University of the Pacific in California, U.S.A., where she manages the institutional repository, Scholarly Commons; a faculty driven open educational resources (OER) program; and three open access journals. She is also a doctoral candidate in Informatics at Linnaeus University in Sweden. In 2018-2019, she spent three months in Kosovo at the University for Business and Technology supporting the UBT Knowledge Center repository launch with partial funding from a Fulbright Specialist grant.



During his thirty-plus years in the music industry, **Keith Hatschek** has been a professional musician, producer, recording studio owner/engineer, music industry sales VP, and founded his own music technology marketing and public relations agency. Since 2001 he has been a full-time educator and author directing the Music Management program at University of the Pacific from 2001-2020. He is author of the three music industry books: *How to Get a Job in the Music Industry* (3rd ed.), *The Historical Dictionary of the American Music Industry*, and *The Golden Moment: Recording Secrets from the Pros*. Hatschek compiled a collection of seventy of his articles providing tips and career advice for emerging artists, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the New Music Industry*, available via Amazon Kindle. His newest book detailing Dave Brubeck and Louis Armstrong's col-

laboration in the 1950s to create a jazz musical challenging segregation is forthcoming in 2021. He is also researching the history of Motown's recording engineers and their role in shaping the label's iconic sound. He will retire from full-time teaching in May of 2021 to dedicate more time to research, writing, and wine-tasting.



Nicole Wasnock is a senior Music Industry Studies major with a Business Management minor at the University of the Pacific, graduating in May 2020. Her primary interest is in the field of concert production/management with three years of experience on the university's stage crew and internships at the ASM-managed Stockton Arena and AMMO Artist Management in Los Angeles. Wasnock has served as an editor for *Backstage Pass* for three years and spoke on behalf of the student editors in a joint faculty-student paper given at the 2019 Music Library Association - California Conference at Stanford University last year. For her senior project, Wasnock channeled her writing abilities into a book on the history, amenities, features, and rental price points of the major venues in Northern California. Excerpts from Wasnock's senior project were published in *Backstage Pass*, Volume 3 in 2020. Available here: <https://scholarly-commons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/vol3/iss1/5/>.



**MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION**

**PROCEEDINGS
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2020 INTERNATIONAL
SUMMIT**

**OF THE
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