

4,000 CDs head to VGH burn unit for music therapy

Collection from 23 years in the music business goes bedside

BY ERIN ELLIS, VANCOUVER SUN AUGUST 14, 2013



Vancouver's Brian Thompson, a former national music buyer for the now-defunct retailer A&B Sound, on Tuesday packed up his massive collection spanning 23 years of music from 1990 and sent it to Vancouver General Hospital where it will be used for music therapy.

Photograph by: NICK PROCAYLO, PNG

What can a guy do with 4,000 CDs? Help someone heal, says music therapist [Gemma Isaac](#).

That's what happened Tuesday when a former national music buyer for the now-defunct retailer [A&B Sound](#), Vancouver's [Brian Thompson](#), packed up his massive collection spanning 23 years of music from 1990 and sent it to Vancouver General Hospital where Isaac will use them in her work.

"We know from evidence-based research that patients who listen to preferred music have reduced anxiety and distraction from pain," said Isaac from her office on [BC Professional Firefighters' Burn, Plastic and Trauma Unit](#).

"Music really helps not just the physical healing, but it also supports the emotional and spiritual healing of someone suffering from trauma. It's simple. It's effective and there are no side-effects that drugs can have."

The music therapy program — like the unit — receives funding from the [B.C. Professional Firefighters Burn Fund](#) and other community donations. Isaac says she doesn't have a lot of extra money floating around to buy music, even though it's easily assessable online.

Compact discs are now considered old-school technology — and it's hard to even give them away, as Thompson found out in his two-year quest to find a new home for his collection — but burn-unit patients can play them at their bedsides thanks to a previous donation of 24 music-playing stations which have CD players, radios, MP3 and iPhone connections.

Music can help distract burn patients from the pain of debridement, an excruciating procedure in which dressings are regularly removed in order to clean the wounds and remove dead tissue, says Isaac.

Music therapy can also simulate the brain after severe trauma and help [build new neural pathways](#) to aid recovery.

As for Thompson, who is now a music consultant, blogger, podcaster and instructor on the business of music at Langara College, giving the CDs to a hospital is symbolic of his personal reinvention in the new digital world of music.

“Why be defined by my possessions? Rather I'd prefer to be defined by my actions.”

eellis@vancouver.sun.com

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