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Feature

# **BASED ON EXPERIENCE**

Written by Eric Butterman



# MUSIC TO THEIR EARS

**Frank Wartinger '07** (Studio Production) grew up surrounded by music. Beginning with piano lessons at age four, he moved on to recording before he was a teenager. Then, playing Nirvana and other grunge bands, the music grew louder. "I was around 13 or 14 when the tinnitus started, at the Battle of the Bands, of all places," says Wartinger, founder of Earmark Hearing Conservation.

What began as a journey into healing himself sparked a career path. "I already hurt my ears, and I was working almost full time at music producing while at school," he says. "I realized I wasn't making the situation better. I couldn't even find audiologists for musicians. I ended up buying used textbooks on audiology in 2005—and got hooked." He decided to pursue a career in audiology.

After Purchase, Wartinger received an AuD from Salus University in 2011. He began practicing pediatric audiology, first at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital from 2011 to 2013, then at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia from 2014 to 2022. But in 2015, he opened a practice that merged his audiology skills with his passion for music. Earmark Hearing Conservation improves the hearing health of musicians and music lovers with an empathy few others could deliver.

Wartinger chose to focus solely on his own practice last year, in part because of the rarity of his specialty. "There are many audiologists," he says, "but I only know of 12 who specialize in music. There was such a demand, and it gave me a chance to connect with people in the music world who felt isolated and really needed someone who understood tinnitus."

While the most commonly known tinnitus symptom is a constant ringing in the ears, the condition is complex, involving not just hearing, but also mental health and outlook. Wartinger offers customized strategies, from hearing-related tools—earplugs, in-ear monitors, and hearing aids—to adjusting music environments.

"A common concern from performers is that earplugs, for example, make it harder to perform due to a lack of perceived connection," he says. "I work with my patients on understanding how earplugs can enhance their work. The loudness of loud settings can actually hinder your listening and creativity. Even in the studio, you can get a great recording while avoiding potential hearing risks."

Wartinger should know. Between production, engineering, and composing, he's had hundreds of music credits. His music has been featured on NPR's *All Songs Considered*, and

his film score credits include PBS and the American Film Institute. And he is cofounder of a full-service music production company, Audiodowsing, with songwriter and producer Scott Hallam.

At first, Earmark Hearing Conservation served those in the Philadelphia area. But that changed with telehealth. "I can go beyond the Philadelphia area now to help people all over the world," says Wartinger. Today he offers his services nationally and internationally through the MusiCares program ([www.tunedcare.com](http://www.tunedcare.com)).

Wartinger relishes his chance to contribute to the music industry in multiple ways.

***"I'm still working on music and I'm also able to have the joy of a career in audiology. My patients don't have to explain their passion to me. I share it and I want to be a part of their team. Let's keep the music going."***

Contact Frank Wartinger through his practice  
[www.earmarkhc.com/contact](http://www.earmarkhc.com/contact).



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