

# MUSIC: Vibroacoustic Therapy Is A Hands-Off Procedure, And Patients Do Not Have To Disrobe

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He was a part of groups such as Freshwater Witches and Liquid Blue, the latter of which he thought was destined for success. When a member moved to the West Coast, however, it put a halt to his rock 'n' roll dreams. But his time in bands taught him some valuable lessons.

"It worked for me. I knew music had that potential," he said.

That potential was for change, and it was through lyrics that he pushed for social transformation.

"It can become a very emotional thing," he said.

While he was in college, Laningham also received a minor in music, and he plays saxophone, piano, drums and guitar. In addition to his work as a therapist, he also is a private tutor of piano and saxophone and, additionally, mathematics.

He also has a background as a therapist, and he worked for several years as a counselor and music therapist for Charter Vista — now Vista Health — in Fayetteville.

For the past several years, he's been working at salons, such as the now-defunct Gemini Styling Salon in Fayetteville he operated with his longtime partner, Lee Green. After that shop closed, they moved to the White Lotus Salon, where they have been for nearly four years.

It was in November 2006, shortly after the salon opened, that Laningham decided to take a leap of faith and start a career as a vibroacoustic therapist, the job

that his combined life's work in music and teaching had always seemed to be leading him toward.

He took several intensive courses on vibroacoustic therapy during a 10-day session in Santa Fe, N.M. Covered were topics such as advanced psychoacoustics for therapeutic professionals. The courses were taught by Joshua Lead, Jonathan Goldman and Dr. Jeffrey Thompson, considered to be one of the field's leading neuro-acoustic researchers.

## The Tingling Tabletop

The process of vibroacoustic therapy is not terribly complex. Those receiving the treatment simply lie on the treatment bed, which is fitted with a series of speakers. While the patient relaxes to music, usually a series of low-tempo, wordless songs of the world music variety, waves of vibration are sent through the table.

"You feel it as well as hear it," Laningham said.

The table was built in Arkansas by one of the country's leading manufacturers of such technology. It may look like a regular massage table, Laningham acknowledges, but it's more like a piano. It has been built with aged red oak wood, just like a piano's stock is aged.

The idea, at least for a vibroacoustic table, is to provide an even distribution of sound and sound waves.

It's used as both a relaxation device and a method of physical therapy and healing. A study at the National Institute of Health found that

patients treated with vibroacoustic therapy reported a 54 percent decrease in symptoms of pain, tension, fatigue and depression.

It is also useful as a physical therapy tool. Laningham routinely treats patients with a wide variety of maladies such as back pain, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy and more.

Matt Courtney, a Fayetteville resident who showed up for a recent session with Laningham, was skeptical the first time he was treated. As an asthma sufferer, he asked Laningham to target his lungs and help with mucus drainage.

He's been coming back once per month since, and in addition to benefits he reports in his breathing, he also finds it relaxing to the point he usually falls asleep.

"It's transcending. It lulled me right away," Courtney said.

## Increasing The Reception

Because vibroacoustic therapy is a hands-off procedure, Laningham is mostly a facilitator for the treatment. After consulting with a patient, he determines the type of music and the frequency of the sound waves that will be fed to the table and ultimately, the body of the person receiving treatment.

Laningham says that he "bio-tunes" someone, meaning that he can select waves specific to the problem presented by the patient. Back and shoulder tension caused by bad posture will be treated

with a different wave than a headache would receive.

The science behind the process is built on the idea that the body is already operating on many frequencies.

"The body has this great need to be in balance with all the rhythms," he says.

His previous work as a therapist comes into play in that role, Laningham says. It's his job to blend together the series of waves and tones to provide a relaxing, therapeutic experience.

"He's just very conscientious," says Susan Blackburn, a Fayetteville resident who has been receiving vibroacoustic therapy treatments for more than two years. "He takes what he does very seriously and he has a real desire to help people."

Blackburn initially sought treatment for spasms in her upper back. She used to be treated every week, but she's responded well enough that she only visits Laningham's table once every five weeks for a session of back work and relaxation.

"It's the nicest therapy I've ever tried," Blackburn said.

She was a skeptic at first because she'd tried so many methods that gave her moderate but fleeting results. She's no longer a skeptic.

Laningham says that Fayetteville has been receptive to vibroacoustic therapy, perhaps because it's a college town.

He believes that a lot of his patients are looking for alternative treatments, and the type of person who visits the White Lotus Salon for massage or day spa treatments is the same type of person who would be open to vibroacoustic treatments.

The treatments met the philosophy of the salon nicely, he said. The products used there are organic, and like those remedies, using noise is quite natural, Laningham argues.

Importantly, he says, it's a drug-free pain management tool.

"We can reduce pain without pharmaceuticals," he said.

## Listening For Changes

Laningham is proud that it's a drug-free treatment option. It's also noninvasive. Unlike some message therapies, patients do not have to disrobe to be treated.

Laningham has been treating himself recently, specifically to remedy a kidney disorder that hospitalized him in April. He says the condition began as an allergic reaction to medication.

He does believe there is room for pharmaceuticals but sees his preferred treatment as a safe alternative in many situations, especially when it is coupled with massage therapy.

Vibroacoustic therapy does

have its limitations, however. He says the vast majority of his patients are happy with their treatment, but it can't be used for all maladies.

"No amount of vibroacoustic therapy or yoga is going to kill a virus," he said.

As a relatively new field, it is not regulated by any governing agency. His colleagues at the salon who are massage therapists all must be licensed to perform their trade. But not Laningham, who carries with him nothing but the knowledge that he passed his training courses in New Mexico.

As someone with years of practice, he'd like to see some sort of governing body or licensure procedure for vibroacoustic therapists.

The therapy is better recognized in some places, Laningham said, particularly on the West Coast. Some insurance companies are including it as a covered practice.

He might be more successful practicing elsewhere, but this is the part of the country where both he and his partner were raised. Laningham argues that Fayetteville deserves this kind of treatment, and he's proud to bring it to the area.

Besides, he doesn't need to travel often. He knows what music can do.

"Music is so powerful. It takes people to a place."

It's Laningham's hope it's always a better one.