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YOUTUBE HIT

Ray's Midbell Music video an Internet sensation

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Buy this photo Mike Guntren, general manager of Ray's Midbell Music in Sioux City, shows his form on the saxophone. A humorous Internet commercial featuring the store and its employees is becoming a YouTube sensation.

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SIOUX CITY -- Bling-free other than the saxophone hanging around his neck, Ray's Midbell Music general manager Mike Guntren doesn't look like your typical rapper.

But that hasn't kept his store's "School Band Rap," a poetic ode to the misunderstood school band member, from getting more than 230,000 hits on YouTube since its debut Oct. 5.

According to Guntren, his store, which supplies musical instruments to several area schools, was selected to have a mock commercial produced for free by the North Carolina-based comedy Internet-video-making team Rhett McLaughlin and Link Neal, as part of an "I Love Local Commercials" contest sponsored by risk management information company MicroBilt.

The tongue-in-cheek video features Ray's Midbell Music employees making light of the stereotype that band people aren't cool.

"Athletes may get more attention," said Guntren, who learned how to play the saxophone in his school's band in the fifth grade, "but we wanted to make sure that band kids know they're pretty cool, too."

The video's concept was devised after McLaughlin and Neal met with Guntren and his parents, store owners Ray and Karen Guntren, in early August.

"We met with Rhett and Link one day," Guntren remembered, "and the very next day, they had the script."

Encouraging his employees to get jiggy with it like Eminem and Li'l Kim for the video wasn't as difficult as Guntren imagined it would be. "Everybody was a good sport about it," he said.

Guntren hasn't yet seen an increase in business as a result of the ad, but customers have told him the video is "hilarious."

"If the hits are any indication, the ad is definitely being seen," he said.

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