



Saturday, March 7, 2015

Dear Reader,

My name is Adam Beck and I am the drummer for the band Brownie Mountain.

Playing in the Bitter Jester Music Festival in Highland Park was an essential part of my growth as a musician. It gave me a reason to try and make my band better, inspiring me to practice my own instrument. It also forced me to work out ways to make my group and myself unique. There are a limited number of opportunities for high school kids to play music in the community and, largely speaking, it's always one band to a show. The Bitter Jester Music Fest was my first real exposure to playing with other groups, which taught me not only humility, but also how to communicate better with my peers. And because this is a summer-long event, I'm lucky to say I got to spend so many of my High School nights being able to play or listen to live music in Highland Park; I truly believe that is a special thing.

The bands I played in had very good luck at the Friday Night Concerts. To my recollection, we never lost a single one. Winning on a Friday always put the pressure on to make sure that our 4th of July set was as good as it could be. This was usually most difficult if you competed on the last June Friday because by then you had seen who else was going to be playing.

The game to me in preparing a set for the 4th was always trying to keep it 'high energy.' Generally, bands I was in didn't play a lot of covers, so you lose the crowd on familiarity, so you have to make that up by being engaging and really 'entertaining.' The stage on the 4th of July was really the biggest deal to me. Lots of sets I played in High school were in restaurants or in Port Clinton, where we brought our own dinky PA system, but to be able to play with a mic'd drum set on the 4th... now that was the dream! (even if they turned

Adam Beck  
Phone: (847) 287-4170 Mail: [adambeck@umail.iu.edu](mailto:adambeck@umail.iu.edu)

them off 2 minutes in, I'm a little loud sometimes) I did experience losing in the last round a number of times, which was obviously disappointing, but it never put my experience into a negative perspective. I still got to play drums, and any day that happens is certainly a good day.

We came back year-to-year because it was fun! It was a good gig, a guaranteed crowd, and big speaker stacks! What's not to love? I would highly recommend the festival to anyone who wants to hone their playing skills and their performing skills. The fest really taught me that the two are sometimes separate, and sometimes you just have to ham it up!

For four years I played with a band called The Railjacks (formerly Drive) and had a really wonderful time. But the best story to come out of this experience certainly came from the band I formed specifically for the competition, Brownie Mountain. I knew the two guitarists, Aaron and Logan, from a previous Bitter Jester summer and from shows we'd all gone to see in the city. At some point at one of these shows, we had discussed starting a band due to our mutual interest, but I didn't think much of it at the time. Cue Nic calling me one summer, asking if I had a band to submit, as there was an opening! I decided this was the time to try and play with Logan and Aaron, and Brownie Mountain was born. Our first show was 4 days after forming the band, and we played an hour long improvised set, but we made it to the 4th! Knowing we had to play to a large audience was motivation enough for us to put together 5 great songs in 3 weeks, and we managed to pull off what I thought was a great set on that night. We didn't win, but we knew we liked playing together, and have been since. The band has expanded to a 5-piece, we've released a full length album, an EP on vinyl and we'll be doing a quick Canadian tour this summer.

