

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jonah Brooks and I've played in the Bitter Jester Music Festivals three times and had attended it a few times prior. The idea of playing in front of enough people to fill an entire field is pretty incredible, and I'm fortunate enough to have experienced the Semi-Finals on the 4th of July every year I've been involved.

Whether you win the prize money or not, you get to play on a massive professional stage with lights and a sound crew before you're even old enough to go to college! That's enough for me, and it really proves to me that Bitter Jester Studios is very invested in giving young musicians the experience of getting out of the rehearsal basement to play a very legitimate show. And for some of these high schoolers, it is the biggest gig of their lives to date.

I had played in quite a few bands in high school and transcended many friend groups. Going into the summer of junior year, I finally found some people who seemed as serious as I was about making music. After rehearsing a few times and realizing that this was going to work, my band, *Midnight in Montana*, was looking around for its first gig. So I suggested that we give this contest a shot; I had already participated in it the previous year with another group and it was a very positive experience.

So we signed up, played our Friday Night preliminary round, and were chosen as that year's Wild Card Band, slated to play on the 4th with the winners from the Friday Night rounds. *Midnight in Montana* won 1st Place that year, and acquiring \$400 after only a few weeks of rehearsals was a pretty huge deal to a few 17-year olds who just thought it would be cool to start a little band.

The whole experience was very professional, too. A very efficient crew of people working the sound equipment helped all the bands every step of the way. The people in my band ended up being my closest friends, and we're doing everything we can now to take our music to the next level. **And it all started with this unique contest.**

If you're reading this and you're in a high school band in Chicago area, then do yourself a favor – sign up! It's easy, performing in the preliminary rounds is easy, and the worst-case scenario is that some new people hear your music live. I've made some professional contacts from playing these shows that have led to other opportunities and gigs, and it's all been worthwhile. You never know what this contest will inspire you to do or what it will lead you to.

I'm currently majoring in jazz-guitar studies at the University of Illinois in hopes of taking the same band that won on the 4th of July as far as I can. We plan on competing again this summer under the new name, *Avocado Baptism*, and we've never been happier to have a good relationship with Bitter Jester Studios.

I wish the company and the City of Highland Park good fortune and I hope the Bitter Jester Music Festival becomes bigger and better every year!

Sincerely,

