



How students juggle school, music and life

By, Annalise Knudson on Sept. 28, 2015

His arms are growing weaker with every step he walks, as he dodges the broken sidewalks and students on his way to the building. He stops to catch his breath, and begins to rotate the arms that will carry his book bag, and the large, black box that contains his prized possession.

His friends walk towards him and laugh at him as he struggles to continue to carry the heavy instrument that he insisted on bringing to campus.

“I bring my guitar on campus and have jam sessions,” full-time junior Perry Brody said. “My friends and I sit on the lawn and jam out. My nickname was Pandora because I played so many different genres like the radio station does.”

Students pursuing music, who wish to make their name known across the nation, can relate to this young man who struggled carrying his guitar across campus at Kean University.

Whether college students pursue music as their major, or enjoy music as a side hobby, they can give insight on the struggles they face when trying to live a dream that may seem impossible, what it takes to make it in the industry, and juggle the responsibilities of attending class and receiving a degree.

Brody goes to Kean as a full-time student pursuing a degree in Special Education for grades Kindergarten through eighth grade, with a specialty in writing. He chose not to pursue music as a major in college because he said it stops being fun and enjoyable.

“I don’t want it to be work, it becomes tedious,” Brody said. “I save my weekends for all the fun.”

He started to perform at open-mic nights at local bars and clubs when he was 17 years old, surrounding himself with older, more experienced musicians. He performed at numerous open-mic’s and talent shows and was never paid until a

year ago.

Brody is currently a solo artist, but hopes to find a band that prefers the genres he sings to back him up when performing.

“I’ve done the band thing and everyone wants to crank it up to 11,” he said. “They all wanted me to get loud and do some screaming and that’s not me at all. I’m about the process and the writing and storytelling as opposed to how loud we can go.”

Brody has now performed in many small venues using his stage name, “PD Brody” and is going on a mini-tour over the summer performing in events such as Meadowlands State Fair, the Jersey Shore Festival, and the Black Potato Festival.

Brody said his biggest challenge is time management when he needs to travel far-away to performances in the tri-state area, mostly New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, while trying to stay on top of assignments for the 15 credits he takes each semester.

He travels up to a few hours for a gig, performs his sets, and then has to drive back home those couple of hours almost every weekend.

Brody says that although it is a lot of hard work and time consuming, he knows that this is an opportunity he needs to take now when he’s younger with fewer responsibilities.

He would consider traveling outside of the tri-state area where he usually performs for gigs. He hopes to expand when he builds more of a fan-base.

Brody played at the KUCEC’s (Kean University Council for Exceptional Children) social group event and was recently featured for Kean’s Cougar Radio, WKNJ 90.3. He was interviewed and performed songs off of his EP album that was released with four songs last summer named “Find A Way,” available on iTunes.

He hopes to make it big someday and perform at bigger venues, including Madison Square Garden, in Manhattan, New York. He knows that he needs to take any chance he gets in hopes to make his dreams come true.

With music changing almost all the time, and the small possibility of making it big, students and young adults pursuing music see this as a challenge.

According to a 2013 Billboard magazine article written by Reggie Ugwu, 20-year-old Chance the Rapper, has almost every record label chasing him to represent their company.

Starting out spreading the word about free performances and mixtapes to friends and students in his high school, he gained a team of people who helped him become involved in the music industry. He performed under headliners such as Kanye West, Donald Glover, and Eminem who are some of the biggest names in music.

All it took for Chance was charisma, charm, energy, and talent for him to gain attention from agents and record labels, especially after he won over superstar CAA (Creative Artists Agency) agent, Cara Lewis, who represents legendary names in music such as The Beastie Boys, Run DMC, and new artists such as Ludacris and Flo Rida.

This 20-year-old from Chicago who is on his way to become a bigger star was lucky with his endeavors, but everything can change within a day. He can become the most famous rapper in a few years, or no one will ever remember his name.

Chance the Rapper now has an album coming out this summer, and his album from 2013, "Acid Rap," (the year the article was written) was listed on a few 50 best albums of 2013. This past January, he was listed number seven on "Forbes 30 Under 20" 2015 music list.

This rapper proves that not many people can make it big in the industry, but with luck and passion, it can go far. He is just one of the many young stars who used the power of the Internet and publicity on social media to get his name out into the world.

In another Billboard article written in 2014 by Steve Rennie, he said that artist development has changed for both record labels and the artists themselves.

It is easier for anyone to create their own record and distribute in the media, especially when YouTube has replaced MTV, streaming radios such as Pandora and Spotify replace commercial radio stations, and blogs replace music magazines such as the Rolling Stone.

Record labels used to have the power to choose who would be in the music industry, and now it is easy to just upload music to YouTube or another website that streams music, for their name to become popular.

College students who are interested in making music have probably created their own EP's and have released it through different platforms to get their tracks available to the public.

For Chance the Rapper, all it took was handing out his mix-tape on CD's with links, websites, and iTunes albums to listen to for his music to become noticed. For Perry Brody, he was able to perform live at gigs with his name and EP album surfacing for his audience to download on iTunes.

In the modern music industry, everyone can become a musical artist.

According to Dr. Matthew Halper, a Professor of Music at Kean, full-time music students will work about 25 to 40 hours per week at non-music related jobs to work their way through paying for college. He said most students have to take on debt just to finance their education.

"Music students have to be very resourceful with their time and use whatever gaps they have in their class and work schedules to practice on their primary instrument or voice," Dr. Halper said. "This often involves early-morning or late-night hours." There are a large number of ensemble classes, including wind symphony and choir that involves hours of contact time with little academic credit. They will have more contact and classroom hours than a major that typically requires the 120 to 140 credit hours.

To pursue music, it is more than learning notes and playing instruments, but giving all the time and energy a musician has just to get even a fraction further to where they want to be in the future.

"It's a hit or miss with music," Brody said. "I'm going to do it until I feel like I can't anymore."