

3rd Annual Battle of The Bands an Outstanding Success

June 14, 2011

The 3rd Annual Battle of the Bands Music Festival was held in Loon Lake this past Friday. The festival featured a morning of workshop sessions for students and an afternoon of live music as bands from across the Northwest School Division performed in the sunshine at a nearby beach.

Organized by band teacher Terry Paley the day was a marvelous success – a celebration of contemporary music and performance, and an opportunity for non-musical students to gain an insight into both the craft and art of the music business.

The workshop sessions were wide-ranging and very informative, covering important aspects of the contemporary music scene with a strong emphasis on performance. Students learned how to fit a drum kit to match their physique, received valuable warm-up exercises, and an overview of the essential styles that every drummer should know from James McDonnell.

In his session Elias Edlund discussed the methods and structures of song composition and song forms with the students, while in another Neil Rolston treated the listeners to a superb electric guitar performance as he played, discussed his influences and showed the students some of the technical aspects to playing.

Kyle Peters from local radio station The Goat walked them through the steps involved in a career in radio, spoke about the training required and the business in general, and discussed how technology has changed the broadcasting industry lately: who'd have guessed that disk jockeys can no longer manually spin their turntables faster as the hourly news approaches?

Lee Bell explained the in and outs of recording with a real-time demonstration that made use of Logic software, a computer and a guitar and bass. He carefully walked the students through the steps involved in creating tracks using sampled sounds, recording live music and then modifying the tracks to improve the sound.

Brynn Besse gave students an overview of the guitar as an instrument and Connor Walsh demonstrated a variety of styles on the bass guitar, gave tips on practising, and discussed websites and resources for new players.

Following the workshops students, staff and parents travelled to the beach on Jumbo Lake for the afternoon concert. The Escorts (featuring Grant MacEwan University music school graduates Edlund, Besse, McDonnell and Walsh) kicked things off with a blistering set that featured both original and cover tunes. Following their set these musicians listened carefully to each of the school bands and adjudicated the performances. They then provided careful, positive and quality feedback to the musicians.

The Ernie Studer School junior band (directed by Terry Paley) were first up on stage with two tunes. The rock and roll classic *Runaway* featured a clean performance on the drum kit by Tanner Freyman and quality solos by Harlan Kytwayhat (guitar) and Anika Albers on keys.

They were followed by Paradise Hill school (directed by Rob Stewart) who, anchored by the Ecker sisters, Rebecca on guitar, bass and vocals and Angela on drums delivered an eclectic set that blended country (*Ring of Fire* and *Folsom Prison Blues*), acoustic folk (*Realize*) and rock (*Rockin' in the USA* and *Dancin' with Myself*).

The next band up, the Loon Lake senior band, had a surprise in store. Before beginning their set they all donned purple 'Team Paley' shirts in honour of their band teacher Terry Paley who is retiring this year. The school then delivered a knock-out set with great musicianship displayed by all members. Beginning with Aerosmith's *Walk this Way* and finishing with *I Just Wanna Run* (The Downtown Fiction) great vocal performances by Lisa Levesque-Osiowy and Jaida Freyman were complemented by solid rhythm section work from Wyatt Kosmyuke (drums), Chennoa Tracey (guitar), Harlan Kytwayhat (bass) and Natasha Hirschfeld and Brooke Brinsky (keyboards). An especial highlight was the added horn section (Jarrett Adamson trombone, Brooke Brinsky alto sax and Tayler Meagher on trumpet) as the band pounded through a Downchild Blues Band cover of *Flip Flop and Fly*.

Maidstone High School (dir. Ray Bodnarek) were next to hit the stage and they offered the crowd an entertaining blend of showmanship and musicianship as guitarist Cole Sutherland left the stage to play and sing on the beach during their rendition of *You Look Good in My Shirt*. They finished their set off with spirited and driving versions of Neil Young's classic *Rockin' In the Free World*, and The Arcade Fire's *Rebellion*.

The afternoon of music finished with Neilburg Composite School. Under the direction of Allison Winsor, the group, fronted by the vocal talents of Chantal Ryan and Kelly Muskego, provided listeners with a tight, thick and consistent sound as they punched their way through tunes by Sweet (*Little Willy*), Creed (*One Last Breath*), Every Avenue (*Tell Me I'm a Wreck*) and Hoobastank (*The Reason*) among others.

The afternoon ended perfectly, with the students learning all about another aspect of the music business: as the crowds (sunburnt and happy) slowly drifted away from the lake, they began the hard work of dismantling the stage, and packing up the instruments, generators, tents and PA gear.

(Photos which follow by Murray McDonnell)



Junior Band from Ernie Studer School



Maidstone Band



Neilburg Band



Paradise Hill Band



Senior Band from Ernie Studer School