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Festival fever

Carrie Dunn follows a group of teenagers living the dream

When teenagers think about the summer, they think about freedom from schoolwork, long lie-ins, and possibly getting a job for a few months. Frequently they also nag their parents to let them go to a music festival or two.

Lizzie Massey, Tom Ralphs, Luke Ryan, Max Langley and Thuluxton Janenthirajah will be at Glastonbury at the end of June – but they won't be in the mosh pit, they'll be on stage.

It's all part of Youth Music's initiative Build a Band – and these five youngsters have been recruited especially for the occasion through Soundstation, Youth Music's online resource for under 18s. From more than 300 applicants, 13 auditionees were chosen to come together at the London studios famed

for being the birthplace of Pete Doherty's Babyshambles, before being narrowed down to the final five.

Sounds simple? Not quite. The band members will meet for the first time on the Thursday of the festival, and then they'll have until Sunday to write a protest song before taking to the Leftfield Stage at 8pm.

It'll be a challenge, so it's just as well that they'll be receiving tuition from artists such as Billy Bragg during the three days.

Bragg is interested in seeing how the young people will fit in on Leftfield, the stage traditionally associated with music that makes a difference, but he is adamant that he won't be guiding them in terms of choosing something to write about.

The band members will meet for the first time on the Thursday of the festival

'We want them to choose the topics, come up with imagery. Then we'll step in, because it's a big leap getting up on a stage and saying, "This is what I believe in", whether you're in a comprehensive in a Bedminster or a prison, or at Glastonbury festival,' he explains.

Finding something to sing about shouldn't be too tricky. Each band member was chosen not



Lizzie Massey

just on their musical aptitude but also their ability to articulate a clear interest in protest.

14-year-old singer Massey is passionate about the concept of the protest song. 'When I applied, I told them about my three main interests for protest. First of all, pollution and global warming, for which I feel we are all responsible so everyone must do a bit to help. Then the number of wars that rage across the world – I can't help thinking that we have learnt nothing from previous generations. Finally, I want to tell everyone not to write off the young! So often, we are portrayed as lazy, violent and overweight, but there are many more of us working hard for qualifications not to mention part-time jobs.'

'I want to tell everyone not to write off the young'

Massey herself is industrious and focused on her study and her music, even though she only began performing properly three years ago. She explains: 'When I was 11, a guy from Yamaha Music came into our school and he heard me play a couple of my songs on my



Luke Ryan

guitar. He suggested I started recording them in a studio and it took off from there.'

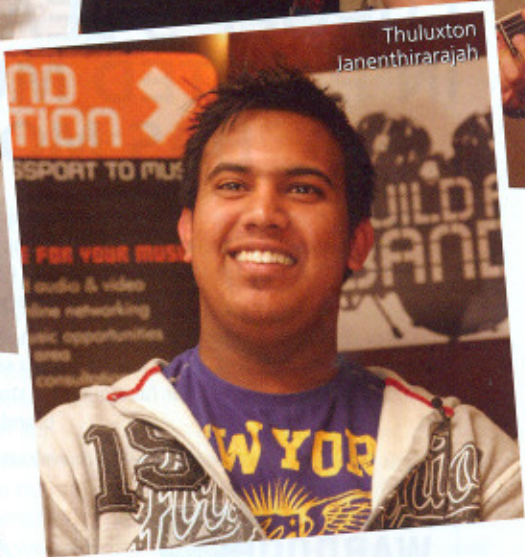
Since then, she has performed in front of live audiences and even on national television. 'I've been lucky enough to appear on TV a couple of times – Junior Eurovision Finals in 2005, and Let Me Entertain You on BBC2 last autumn, when about two million people were watching!'

That doesn't mean she's not a touch apprehensive about such a high-profile gig. She confesses: 'I'm more excited than nervous at the moment but I don't know what to expect as I've never been to a big festival before.'

Though she won't be camping on site due to her parents' entirely understandable fear of inclement weather, Lizzie and her bandmates will get the opportunity to sample the unique Glastonbury atmosphere when they've finished their morning rehearsals. She says: 'I can't wait to see some of the amazing bands who will be performing!' Apart from Billy Bragg, the band will also be able to see groups such as Get Cape Wear Cape Fly and Jerry Dammers, who are sharing the Leftfield stage with them.



Tom Ralphs



Thuluxton Janenthirarajah

It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance for Massey and her bandmates, who will have their experiences chronicled on the *Daily Telegraph* website during the build-up and throughout the festival itself.

Massey admits she's still in a state of shock and coming to terms with the fact that she will be playing at the UK's most famous music festival in a matter of weeks.

'I'm going to just enjoy it and can't wait to perform with the rest of the band. If anything comes of it, that would be great, but just appearing at Glastonbury is the best thing that has ever happened to me.' ■

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