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Reality ROCKS!

BY JESSICA LAWLESS • PHOTOS BY ROB NAPLES

*Gilbert teen
Josh Metzler's YouTube
video attracts reality
TV show producers*

"WHAT DID YOU do on your summer vacation?" It's a question that all kids hope to have an exciting answer for once school is back in session. Fortunately, for one talented Gilbert teen, what he did this past summer was more than just an exciting vacation—it was a chance to explore a professional music career and his own limits at the same time.

Being a rock star is a pretty cool dream, but for most of us, it remains just a dream. A lot of high school kids have aspirations for careers in the music business. Josh Metzler's dream, though, became reality—reality TV, that is.

Fifteen-year-old Metzler will be appearing on *Majors and Minors*, a reality television show premiering this fall on The Hub network. The show, which filmed this summer, pairs aspiring young musicians, known as "minors," with the "majors," established music industry names like Brandy, Sean Kingston, Leona Lewis, Jordin Sparks and others. The kids receive mentoring from these stars—and a shot at a recording contract and a feature role on a national concert tour.

Metzler, a Gilbert native, is a sophomore at Gilbert Classical Academy (GCA). After one of the show's producers saw Metzler on YouTube—he has more than 10,000 followers—he was invited to audition for the show via an online video.

The rest is history. Forty thousand applicants were narrowed down to just 12. Metzler and 11 other musicians, ages 10 to 16, were chosen to participate. They honed their craft,

learning from the best, improving their own work, and competing against each other all at the same time.

Despite his legion of YouTube followers, Metzler was far from certain he would be chosen.

"It was actually a huge shock," he remembers.

Camera crews followed him and his family around, simply filming background scenes at his home. Metzler and his family had been told no casting decisions had been made yet.

Then, via a laptop computer, one of the *Majors and Minors* executive producers told him he had made the cut. He and his family were surprised by the news. "We didn't see it coming at all," Metzler says. "It was crazy."

What followed was a whirlwind of activity and stress many adults would have a hard time handling, much less teenagers. Metzler says the experience only made him stronger, in music and in life.

"We got thrown right into the deep end," he explains. "It helped me to grow not only musically, but as a person."

The show's mentors helped him improve his musical ability with his vocal and instrumental talents, including the keyboard. He credits the challenges he received from the show's "majors" for making him less shy and more eager to participate.

"Right away all the mentors started throwing curveballs," Metzler recalls. "It really helped me break out of my shell."

This shot at stardom didn't just come out of the blue. Metzler, who counts Jason Mraz, Adele and Jack Johnson among his





LEFT: The cast of *Majors and Minors* included aspiring young musicians from across the U.S. Metzler says that the show helped to give him insight into the music industry.

BELOW: The show's participants practice music with recording artist Brandy. On the show, professional recording artists, known as "majors", mentored and challenged the kids, known as the "minors."

influences, has been leading a musical life since elementary school. "In fourth or fifth grade, I joined the school choir," he remembers. In addition, he took piano lessons at his church around the same time frame.

Then, as a teenager, he added even more skills to his repertoire—and he isn't done yet, either. "I taught myself the guitar when I was 13," he explains. "And my passion is growing."

As his love for music grows, so does his commitment. He estimates that, between arranging songs on his guitar and sharpening his skills on the violin, he practices some form of music five to six hours a week—no small feat for someone who also participates in tennis, cross-country and swimming.

Metzler chalks up a lot of his success—with music and managing a busy schedule—to the help he's received from the staff and faculty at his school.

"I have really great support," Metzler says. "It's just been a really great experience at GCA." He says their support has included not only help with schoolwork, but moral support, too.

The pride his GCA teachers take in him is something he remembers clearly. For example, he had a performance in a school play; after the play had ended, the principal of his

"I've been taught that sometimes staying inside your comfort zone isn't always the safest move and that determination is the difference between wanting to be successful and being successful."

school came up to him and told him she was proud of him.

Participating in the *Majors and Minors* show was a once-in-a-lifetime glimpse into to the music industry for him. It also gave Metzler a chance to test himself and discover his own identity.

"I got to see all different aspects of the business," he explains. "The show helped me to define myself."

As for future career plans, Metzler says that he's keeping his options open. After all, his interests are varied. And, he doesn't



want to commit to a path without considering the long-term view. He says his plans are fluid out of necessity and he doesn't want to limit himself so early in his life. "A career is something that's constantly developing," he explains.

Ultimately, doing something as challenging as a reality TV show is about much more than just being famous for Metzler. What he takes away from his experience with the music business and reality TV is that taking a chance is vital to moving forward. He also learned that staying focused and plowing ahead despite obstacles are two lessons he can use to make his way in the world for the rest of his life.

"I've been taught that sometimes staying inside your comfort zone isn't always the safest move and that determination is the difference between wanting to be successful and being successful," Metzler says.

Majors and Minors premiered on The Hub network on Fri., Sept. 23 and is currently still airing. More information about the show, including videos and biographies of the kids and their celebrity mentors, is available at hubworld.com. To see Metzler's self-made music videos, visit youtube.com/user/AZsinger62. ■