



ANDREW LAKER | THE REPUBLIC

Columbus East High School senior Edward Joyner, left, plays with his band, Ed Tom & Tuba, Dec. 11 during the Chocolate for a Cause event at Central Middle School's Gray Box Theater. Also pictured is drummer Clay Blackwell.

Indiana inspiration



State travels spark musical senior project

By ANDREA ZEEK
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EDWARD Joyner slid nimble fingers up and down the neck of the electric bass he cradled close, tapping his foot to the beat of "I Suggest It," a rockin', folksy tune his band played at Chocolate for a Cause last weekend.

"So I looked down to my roots, saw that they were weak," sang the 17-year-old, eyes shut and eyebrows scrunched together. "If I did not dig, I would soon fall down."

Edward, a student at Columbus East High School, wrote and recorded "I Suggest It" and nine other songs for his senior project: a reflective album inspired by traveling around the state.

After his project presentation, judges complimented Edward on a job well done; one even said it brought a tear to her eye.

Douglas Moore, East High School guidance director, said Edward's was one of the best project's he's seen in 10 years.

The journey

During summer break, Edward visited sites such as New Harmony, Vincennes and the Indiana Dunes, but encountered few people along the way.

"It was almost as if I was just discovering them myself," he said.

"Indiana is cool because it's very old and it has a lot of history. But none of it is very important on a national level, so there aren't

Edward Joyner

Age: 17.
Resides: Columbus.
Occupation: Graduating senior at Columbus East High School.
Senior project: Wrote and recorded a reflective album inspired by Indiana.
Plans to: Study music production at Indiana University Bloomington.

'Solace in the Grain'

To buy a copy of the 10-song album Edward Joyner produced for his senior project, contact him at tubatheband@gmail.com.

many touristy kinds of places."

Edward took two road trips through southern and northern Indiana. Although he forgot his camping gear — tent, sleeping bag, stove — both times, Edward remembered his music, the soulful sounds of Sam Cooke's greatest hits.

"I was basically just eating peanut butter, rice cakes and carrots," he said. "The idea going in was that I wouldn't really have any reservations, and I would just sort of do whatever without a strict itinerary."

Edward also had a budget of \$50, and one night, found himself sleeping in his car on the banks of the Wabash River near New Harmony.

"Illinois was on the other side, and I saw a

bald eagle fishing," he said. "That was super cool."

The discovery

Around the same time, Edward also was taking an online U.S. history class to help earn early graduation this month.

The class prompted students to explore manifest destiny, the 19th-century belief in the U.S.' inherent right to western territories.

"It really got me thinking about how these fundamental ideas that drove westward expansion still sort of affect all Americans," Edward said. "I guess it's just that we-must-have-more mentality."

He said his album's message tries to "halt the gears" of manifest destiny, which "would basically prevent a lot of people from being able to truly enjoy their surroundings."

Edward said his senior project helped him learn to appreciate Indiana more and recognize the beauty right in front of him.

"I was definitely one of those kids that was like, 'I wanna go to the big city. I wanna get out of here,'" he said. "The album was definitely about looking past those feelings and being able to find meaning around you."

Joshua Ratliff, Edward's senior project mentor and family friend, said he thinks listeners will be able to connect with the album, titled "Solace in the Grain."

"It's truly an amazing album," Ratliff said. "I really like the songs, and I'm really picky

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and weird about that. I really have been surprised by how good he is.”

The dream

Edward said his senior project also has reinforced his decision to pursue a music career.

“Music is really the only thing that makes sense to me,” he said. “It’s the only thing I really see myself being happy doing. I mean, I would be good at doing other things, but I wouldn’t necessarily feel fulfilled.”

On “Solace in the Grain,” Edward plays 10 instruments, including the glockenspiel. But he insists he’s “proficient” in only three: guitar, bass and drums.

Louis Joyner, Edward’s dad, said neither he nor Edward’s mom, Frederica, were musical at all, so his

son’s talent was somewhat of a surprise.

“(Edward) just wanted to take guitar lessons,” Louis said. “He’s just one of those people who can really hear and play music, and some of us can’t.”

“He’s someone who’s got a pretty laser focus on something he wants to get done.”

Edward said that ever since he started playing guitar, it just “clicked” with him.

“I sort of feel like it’s written in my being,” he said.

“Music has always been sort of a therapeutic thing for me; if I’m confused about something, I usually play music or try to write a song about it.”

After possibly doing some traveling, Edward said he plans to study music production at Indiana University Bloomington.