

Musician's Memento

A PARTIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BRADLEY THOMPSON

[HUMBLE BEGINNINGS](#)[BDT STUDIOS](#)[PLEXIS](#)[WHERE IS HE NOW?](#)

Music is a universal language, like math. It can express ideas and emotions in a way that words alone cannot. I am, among other things, a musician. In my life music is a great escape, a way for me to put into sounds my feelings and state of mind. Even though I began playing instruments early on in life, I didn't consider myself a musician until several years later, when I rediscovered making music. Here, you will find my story, from learning my first instrument to living like a rock star, and what the future may hold.



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HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

I didn't find music, music found me. It all started in third grade. Yeah, I listened to music sometimes, but it was nothing more than that. Third grade is where the spark happened. I was in the talented and gifted program at College Station Elementary in Little Rock, AR. As part of the program, we had to take orchestra class. We were given the choice of learning one of four instruments; violin, viola, cello, or bass. All string instruments. I chose violin, although looking back I think I would have more enjoyed cello. In any case, violin was my instrument. My first violin came from an antique shop down the street from my house.

In orchestra class, we learned how to read sheet music and played various concerts around the Little Rock area, including at other schools and even one in University Mall. That mall has been torn down since then. We were assigned chairs, a kind of ranking system within each instrument. I was always either first or second chair, depending on the week. I was not all particularly enthused about playing however, it was just something I had to do for school.

Enter Middle School. Orchestra class at this point was an elective, that of which I elected out of I just wasn't all that interested in that aspect of music. I had a good friend with whom I stayed over at his house a lot. This is where I first came across a guitar. Neither of us knew how to play it, let alone tune it. But we both agreed that it didn't sound like a guitar unless the distortion was turned all the way up. It was at this point the flame was rekindled.



These go to 11.

I talked my parents into buying me an electric guitar and amp. I discovered guitar tabs on the internet, a form of written music designed especially for guitar. It tells you which string and fret to play in order. It was this way I learned to play some of my favorite songs. I eventually discovered Metallica, and quickly became a fan. I attribute most of my guitar ability to learning to play Metallica songs via tablature. Then one Christmas...



College Station commons area.



A Dean Flying Z guitar. Mine was straight black.



My dad, being the one who introduced me to Metallica, bought me a Dean guitar with a flying Z body style, just like James Hetfield from Metallica. He also bought me a Marshall amp, so I could not only look like, but sound just like them too. I remember taking pictures of the guitar and amp that day. I was ecstatic. From then on, I knew I loved guitar.



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BDT STUDIOS

As my ability grew, so did my curiosity about other rock and roll instruments, particularly drums. I got my parents bought me a cheap drum set. I sat myself down and taught myself as best I could without any help, aside from just listening to different rock bands. My dad took up bass guitar, and we both played together often. I eventually convinced him to purchase a 4-track recorder.

For those that don't know what a 4-track is, I will explain. It uses cassette tapes to record up to four tracks independently of each other. A normal cassette tape has two sides, and for each side there is a stereo track, a left and right. What a 4-track recorder does is records one input onto one of these four tracks on the tape, making it one sided, and only playable with the four track itself. The quality is only as good as you can imagine, being an analog signal.

This brought me into a new age of music, recording. I recorded a few tracks of rock music; drums, bass, guitar, and vocals. The flowing of creative juices put me into a euphoria. Listening to something that I had written myself was so exciting, I fell in love again. I knew this was what I wanted to do. I eventually came across a piece of software for producing music on the computer, with as many tracks as you could want. I downloaded drum samples and I would arrange them however I saw fit. I would record my guitar directly onto the computer. The quality was far superior to the 4-track. Anytime we would have a free project in school, I would write a song about it. I even did this in one of my college classes.

In tenth grade, my school had its annual talent show. I got with a few of my friends and formed the group "Serving Children", lovingly adapted from the warning on a cup of ramen. My friend that played drums suggested we cover one of his favorite songs and perform in the talent show. This was my first taste of the limelight, and it tasted delicious. I knew that being in a band was in my blood.



Once I went off to college, I discovered a website, [SoundClick](#). This was a free music hosting site with charts for different genres of music. People even sold music and beats on this site. I created an account, and things took off from there. I would record new rock and techno tracks and post them on the site. Several of my pieces placed in the top ten of their respective genres at least at some point in their existence. It's on this site that I've collected a partial portfolio of my music. Some is on old computers, and some on CD's that have been lost in the voids of Earth.



A Tascam 414MKII, my first piece of studio equipment.



Visit [www.SoundClick.com/Folo](#) to listen to some of my tunes!



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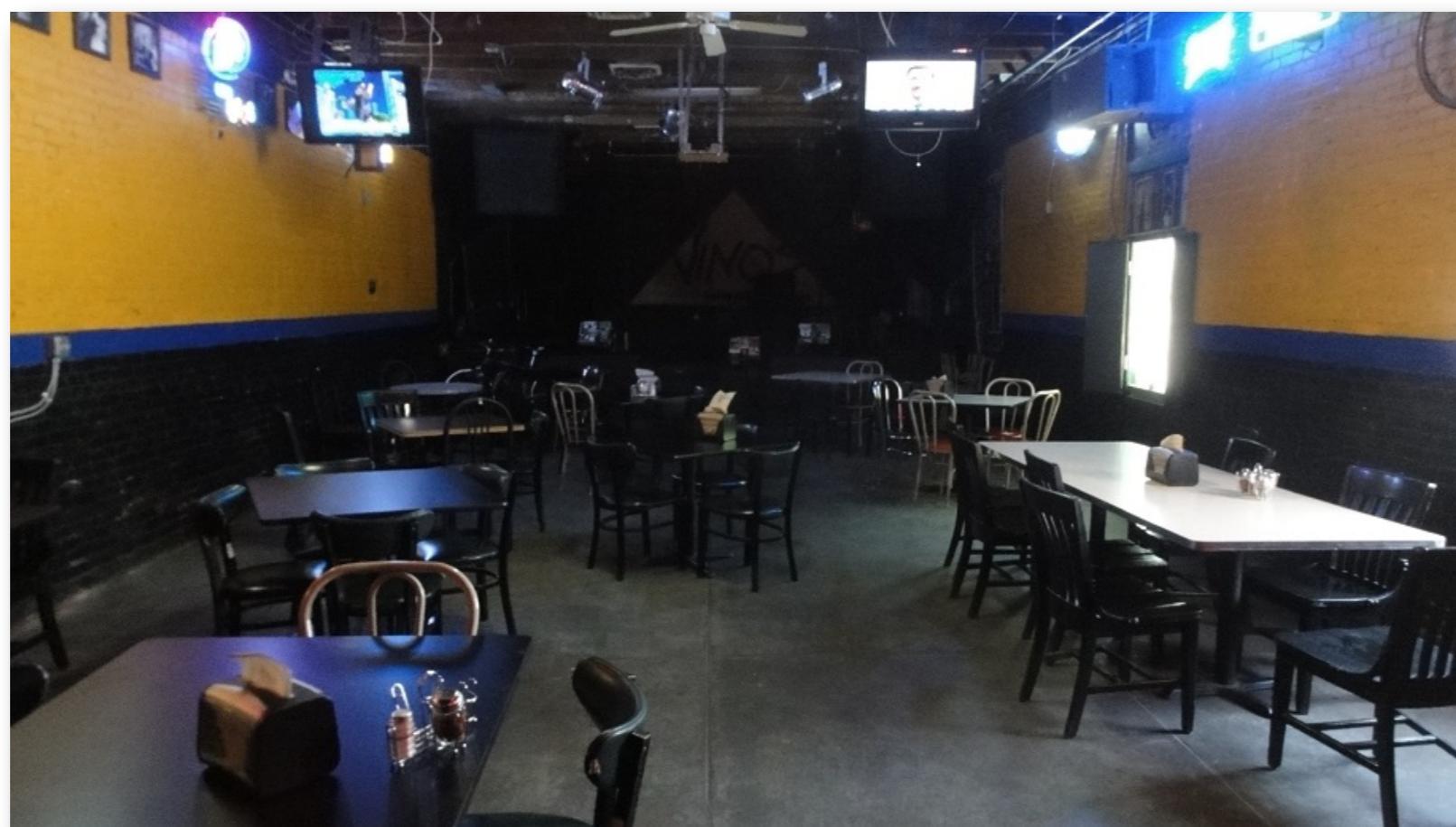
After taking a break from college, I find myself in my town's local music shop. The guy working there notices me fiddling around with one of the guitars. He promptly locks the store and picks up a guitar to play along with me. He shows me a riff to play, and we jam for who knows how long in the "locked during regular business hours" shop. He tells me he's in a band and asks if I'd like to come to one of their practices. My brain almost exploded right there. This is a dream come true.

As it turns out, the bass player in the band is none other than my friend from high school that played bass with us at the talent show! Small world, right? We meet up in this abandoned garage outside of town in the freezing cold as we share licks and riffs. He wants me to be in his band, Plexis. Jeff, the singer songwriter, had been playing around the Little Rock area for years searching for the right people to make his dream a reality. We quickly become good friends, and at one point eventually we had rented a trailer together, a house of rock so-to-speak.

Each time Jeff and I would get together, we would spend the day recording 4-5 tracks each day, some serious, some goofy. He had several songs, and together we wrote several more. We eventually found a drummer that was into our kind of music, and we began playing shows.



Jeffery Brinkley.



We played Downtown Music, Juanita's, Vinos, Whitewater Tavern. We played shows at bars in Hot Springs and took part in Battle of the Bands there as well. Our biggest venue was the Clear Channel Metroplex, opening for the Starks. Never heard of them before, but it was surreal. We eventually connected with a local producer Gary Trimble and recorded a short demo. I played lead guitar, so I layered my guitar solos over the tracks. It was like a dream. Everything was falling into place. We were set to do a small tour which included several gigs in Memphis. It was all going according to plan, then it happened.

The drummer was about 10 years older than the rest of us and was married. We held practices in his garage, so he could have his drums set up there when not at shows. If you've seen Spinal Tap, you know where this is going. We were set to start travelling, when the wife of the drummer convinced him that this was not what he wanted to do and convinced him to no go play shows with us. This led to the eventual exodus of the drummer from the band. We searched high and low for a replacement drummer, but they either sucked or didn't want to stick around. Eventually Jeff gave up and moved to Flagstaff to be closer to his father. Plexis as I knew it was no more.



Juanita's Bar and Grill before it moved to the River Market.



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Nowadays I still record something occasionally, but I've settled down since then. The life of the rock star turned into the life of the husband and father. I've got a nice guitar and amp, but lately I'm busy with work, family life, and school. Playing music is a meditative experience for me these days, although I do miss the thrill of being on stage and letting it all loose. Music will always be a hobby of mine, no matter what scale it is on. I still get excited looking at new gear and going to the music shops or putting on a fresh set of strings. I wonder what the future holds.