

TAKE THAT

High school band geeks get the last laugh

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IF YOU HAD TO BET ON one kid from high school finding fame and fortune, would it be:

- a) The quarterback
- b) The head cheerleader with the winning smile
- c) The National Merit Scholar
- d) That blond geek who played flute in the marching band

That's right, it's the band kid who turned superstar, and there's no doubt about it — yesterday's band geeks are today's band badasses. Scores of stars from bands like No Doubt, Nine Inch Nails, Mötley Crüe, John Spencer Blues Explosion and even R.E.M. marched to the beat of a high school drummer before they made it big.

Imagine Gwen Stefani, clad in the marching Saxon's finest red and gold polyester, playing her flute. Or Nine Inch Nails' front-

man Trent Reznor with his tenor sax and keyboards in Mercer, Penn. Or R.E.M.'s Mike Mills rousing a crowd on sousaphone and electric bass back in the day.

Little drummer boy Tommy Lee says his high school band days were a real stepping stone to his career with Mötley Crüe, who kick off yet another world tour in October.

"It's where I learned a lot of my showmanship — as in twirling sticks, bouncing the sticks off the snare drum and shooting them up in the air and catching them while I'm playing," Lee says. "I would've never learned that stuff if it wasn't for the drum corps in high school."

And if it wasn't for his high school trumpet training, Reel Big Fish's Tavis Werts probably wouldn't have traveled the country with the Warped Tour this summer.

"When I went into high school, that was pretty much the only band I could get into," says the 20-year old. "I just wasn't very good then." But by his senior year, Werts was playing in four bands at school — symphonic winds ensemble, the symphony orchestra, the

jazz ensemble and the marching band — not to mention Reel Big Fish.

"We had a really good music program at Poly, so a lot of the kids in the music program were in other bands," he says. "Everyone was kind of respected for that."

But respect isn't always the best word to describe how other students treated kids in the band.

"The worst thing was being known as a 'band fag,'" Lee says. "It traumatized me."

Morphine's Dana Colley knows what that's like. "It takes a certain strength to be different, especially in high school," says Colley, who played saxophone for his high school. "It's hard enough having the discipline and desire to learn an instrument, but to endure the insensitivity of one's peers, and still have enough confidence in yourself to block it out and continue in the face of it, can only make one stronger."

Unless you just don't care. "I was the type of kid that was made fun of from day one," says Dan Regan, who plays trombone for Reel Big Fish. "Being in a band made me feel a part of something. Even if we were made fun of, I didn't notice it."

So the next time you hear a fight song, hold back those fightin' words — befriend-ing a band geek just might get you backstage someday.

Cello player Marisa Laudadio was kicked out of her high school marching band because she couldn't move her chair fast enough.



Mötley Crüe: Tommy Lee

High school: Charter Oaks High School, Covina, Calif.

Colors: blue and gold

Mascot: The Charger

Instrument: drums



No Doubt: Gwen Stefani

High school: Loara High School, Anaheim, Calif.

Colors: red and gold

Mascot: The Saxon

Instrument: flute

Reel Big Fish: Tavis Werts and Dan Regan

High school: Long Beach Polytechnic High School, Long Beach, Calif.

Colors: green and gold

Mascot: The Jackrabbit

Instrument: trumpet and trumbone



Morphine: Dana Colley

High school: Whitman-Hanson Regional High School, Hanson, Mass.

Colors: black and red

Mascot: The Panthers

Instrument: sax

