

Student's hard times bring musical dreams to

After a couple of chaotic years, student Bo Ernester is on the verge of releasing a CD and is ready to work with other musicians

Kyle Steele

Feature Editor

Student Bo Ernester has had to overcome numerous obstacles, ranging from a ninth-grade education to a criminal record, but has managed to flourish at Clackamas and become one of its more successful current students.

In April of 2005, following a rough divorce, Ernester's life wasn't going very smoothly.

"About a year and a half ago, I was in this program (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) for low-income parents in the poverty bracket," he said. "The first thing they did was to help me get a GED on this campus."

Following the completion of his General Educational Development, Ernester was talked into applying for enrollment in college courses by his work supervisor, Heather Chavin. Together, the two brainstormed ways to prepare him for the placement tests.

"It paid off, and I placed high enough on the test," Ernester said.

By fall term of 2006, he had already made significant lifestyle changes and was ready to try his

hand at being a college student.

"I never saw myself as college material, so I was really intimidated when I came here," he said.

With support from instructors like Clay Giberson of the music department, who took extra time to teach him the finer points of the school's Mac computers, and assistance from the Disability Resource Center, Ernester passed his first term at Clackamas.

"I didn't know what a Mac was; Clay was very patient with me" he said. "At first, I wanted to give up, but he never made me feel stupid or like I shouldn't be in the class."

In time, Ernester became good friends with many of the people who had supported him in his academic endeavors. Music

Department Secretary Aulani Wehage, tutor Matt Bingelli and Music Instructor Brian Rose have all come to his aid at one time or another.

"I've given Bo and his engineer Andrew Nagatori quite a bit of help trying to get their project working," Rose said. "He and Andrew are both classic examples of self-motivated students who have taken advantage of their skills and of the opportunities we've created for production here."

Ernester's work in the music department was seen in the improv classes' live performances last term, and it has even led him to work on releasing a CD.

Aside from his education, his true love is his daughter, Sarah.

"For me, I would say the hardest part's not money," he said. "It's time."

Ernester must carefully schedule his classes so that he can be with Sarah, who hasn't seen her mother in two years. Night classes

are not an option, because after 6 p.m., he has no one else to care for her.

"I run into Bo and his beautiful, little daughter in the most random places – around here, around town, at the airport," Rose said. "He seems to have a wonderful relationship with his daughter, and she is adorable, bright and loves her dad."

Wanted: Musicians

Musicians who are interested in working with Bo Ernester and engineer Andrew Nagatori can contact the two at kmgrecords@live.com. They are looking for a wide selection of musical students who don't have much money, but a lot of talent. They can also be reached at 971-340-5439.

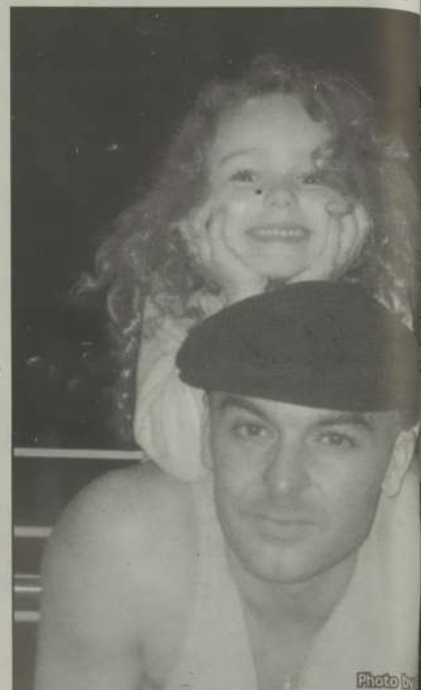


Photo by



Mistymarie Wilks-Salgado

ABOVE: Student Bo Ernester and daughter, Sarah, take photos for Bo's MySpace page.

BELOW: Ernester spends time in the music department while working on his project. Help from students and staff has moved his project along.

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