

Text: BRONWYN FORBES-HARDINGE | Photo: PATRICK ROYAL



# Young musical prodigy

A young Durban North musician is making waves in the music industry with a song he wrote and produced during lockdown aimed at helping people focus on the positive.

As his young fingers work the fretboard and he strums his Ibanez electric guitar, Ethan Briggeman is a quiet, 'no drama' performer. But still waters run deep.

The 12-year-old musician attracted a great deal of attention after writing and recording his inspiring song, titled 'Change Your Mind', during the Covid lockdown. The song focusses on optimism for the future and sees Ethan on lead vocals and rap, as he delivers some impressive electric guitar work. "Like most kids, I had a toy guitar when I was very young, but I think my parents must have seen something more in me than just a little kid jamming, because they bought me my first acoustic guitar when I was just five years old."

At the age of nine, a family member gave Ethan his first electric guitar and from there things just took off! "I am really passionate about playing guitar and grateful to be part of a family of musicians who are also my biggest supporters. My sister, Emily, plays the keyboard very well and my dad, Edwin, plays the trumpet as a hobby. He was in a cover band in the Netherlands called Zenith of Zeal for a few years until he moved to South Africa. He also played in a Glenn Miller-style big band before conducting that band and he still plays for fun now and then. My mom, Eloise, is our organiser and greatest support when my dad, sister and I sometimes perform as the Briggeman Band."

In 2018 Ethan started weekly lessons at Destiny Music Academy (DMA) in La

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Lucia. That same year, he played his electric guitar at a solo jam and was part of a band in the show, 'The Greatest Show', where he played electric guitar and sang a duet. The Grade 7 Reddam House Umhlanga learner was also recently asked to sing an inspiring song for their junior executive induction ceremony and he sang Hall of Fame by The Script.

"The first song I mastered on guitar was Apache by The Shadows. It's uploaded to my YouTube channel (which was launched in July last year) along with a number of other covers I have enjoyed trying my hand at. I really enjoy music that's catchy or funky to play like the music from the Beatles. I'm a huge Lenny Kravitz fan because he does a variety of songs and his technical ability with solos is amazing and inspiring, so naturally when it comes to the ultimate guitar I'd like to own... it's a Gibson Les Paul... because Lenny has one!"

Speaking of inspiration, during the first lockdown Ethan desperately wanted to inspire the world and encourage people to focus on a brighter future. He began to play around on the keyboard (yes he can do that too!) and his guitar and composed the tune to the song he titled Change Your Mind.

"It took only a few hours to match the words with the music, but two months to fine-tune the song before it premiered on his YouTube channel in December last year.

The video was choreographed and edited by Patrick Royal and features appearances by Ethan's family and a few close friends.

Apart from becoming a successful song writer, singer and guitar player, Ethan, who has more than just musical talents, would like to be an Olympic champion for track and field athletics and a successful businessman to show people that hard work does pay off.

The cross country champ, who belongs to Aspire Athletics, has competed in the Tinman Triathlon Series Mini and is a two-time SA Judo gold medallist. A big feat for a little kid!

Change Your Mind is available for download on various platforms and the promo video can be viewed on Ethan's YouTube channel: Ethan Briggeman. He can be followed on FB: @EthanHBriggeman and IG: @ethan.briggeman