

# time out

## Boy wonder guitarist stars in docu-series

A musician who can count Ozzy Osbourne and Dragon Force as fans while having an endorsement deal signed with guitar manufacturer Ibanez, multiple TV appearances, some professionally recorded original singles, plus a YouTube clip of an *Enter Sandman* cover that's amassed 8.2 million views has got a pretty sweet resume.

Plenty of career musicians would aspire for such a CV, and there's a young Canberra guitarist who's done all that and more by the age of 13.

Callum McPhie of Kaleen can not only seriously rock, but can also lay claim to an IQ in the 98.8th percentile along with being a maths wizard, and having chops as a writer.

He's being featured in an ABC docu-series called *Making Child Prodigies* that's about, well, exactly that.

Callum took his first guitar lesson when he was seven years old; a couple of weeks later he was dabbling in Metallica and playing songs other students take years to learn.

It's been through combining consistent daily practice with his relentless passion, undeniable raw talent and highly supportive family that's enabled him to make the most of it all.

Callum told *Canberra Weekly* he had a lot of fun filming the series.

"They basically went behind the scenes with me, figuring out what it would be like to film a music video and what it was like for me to record some music."

He performs under the moniker Callum the Heavy Metal Kid; and currently continues learning with three tutors, playing both classical and metal guitar.

He says he's continuously inspired when he discovers new bands.

"Metallica has been a huge influence, I've done a lot of Dragon Force and Dream Theatre and recently started listening to Children of Bodom, who have some great guitar lines," he says.

Callum's father Doug McPhie, once a professional guitarist himself, taught his son initially and says his son's immense talent was obvious very quickly.

"Within weeks of starting he'd developed a finger speed that surpassed mine ... he was playing songs most guitarists wouldn't learn until they'd been playing for two to three years."

Executive producer of *Making Child Prodigies* Jennifer Collins says the idea for the series came



Teenage Canberra guitar virtuoso Callum McPhie, 13, will be featured in an upcoming ABC docu-series about child prodigies. Photo: Eva Schroeder.

when having faced the challenges of being a parent, she became curious as to just how challenging it would be to raise a truly exceptional child.

With the docu-series being funded by the ABC's arts division, Collins says when they cast the show they looked for kids who were exceptional in an artistic sense.

"I knew of Callum through his appearance on *Australia's Got Talent*, where he gave one of the more incredible performances."

Callum was tracked down by Collins and the production team for the series, where he is profiled alongside four other unique, extraordinarily gifted children.

She says what stood out to her about Callum is his creativity and the many ways it expresses itself.

"Callum is obviously great at maths and playing heavy metal on guitar ... he came with something completely unique in that he's an amazing performer.

"Like all the kids, he's a real individual and he's surprising.

"We got to look at his writing, which is filled with humour ... His brain is quite amazing, and the humour that comes with that mind of his is quite remarkable," she says.

Collins says the series examined the children by looking at their lives, their families and their schooling environment over the course of five months.

"We asked all the families where the kids get their talent from and we commonly saw an acknowledgement that somewhere in their families there were genes ... but what was very common was parents supporting the child, and that it was a shared passion.

"That's where the nature and the nurture come together."

*Making Child Prodigies* will air on ABC TV on Tuesday 29 May 8pm, while Callum the Heavy Metal Kid's debut single *Injustice For All* is available via iTunes.

- Denholm Samaras



Callum took his first guitar lesson when he was seven years old; a couple of weeks later he was dabbling in Metallica and playing songs other students take years to learn. Photo supplied.