

Canada's Young Rock Stars: The Brothers Dubé



Quinn, Liam and Jan

When the Brothers Dubé saw the Beach Boys perform in 2011 in Tennessee, U.S.A., they never imagined that they themselves would be playing on the same stage as this legendary Californian rock band. But that's exactly what happened on August 18, 2013. The brothers from our nation's capital opened the performance for the Beach Boys at Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) Bandshell.

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"It's pretty crazy, considering that I'm 12 years old," said drummer Quinn Dubé about the show at the CNE. Pretty amazing, indeed, when you consider that the band's senior member, Liam, who plays guitar, is just 17.

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Quinn and Liam, along with their brother Jan, who is 14 and the band's lead singer and bass player, started playing instruments when they were kids. Their father, Rob, taught them the fundamentals of music. Since then, "Canada's Youngest Rock Band" has steadily improved, taking lessons and putting in a lot of intense practicing time.

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In 2006, they started recording songs, mainly to entertain their mother, Michele, who was not well. "She really liked [the band] The Police," Quinn said. He and his brothers recorded the song "So Lonely" and posted it on the Internet through YouTube.

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The boys continued to play after their mother died in 2008. In fact, they started busking—performing in public areas—to support charities. They raised funds for medical research as well as an eye-popping \$150 000 in donations to help orphans in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake there. The Dubé brothers' work even drew attention from Stephen Harper, Canada's prime minister at the time, who sent them a letter praising them for their philanthropy.

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As they have grown older, the brothers have had to address the issue of their deepening voices, which has led to some adjustments in their quest to establish their own particular sound. "We're just trimming it down slowly and redefining who we are as time goes on," said Liam. They're certainly on the right track; they've already become stars across Canada—and clearly captured the Beach Boys' interest, which led to the CNE invitation.

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Not surprisingly, the Brothers Dubé spent the summer of 2013 preparing for their performance, practising three hours each day in the basement of their Ottawa home and planning for a fun playlist that included a makeshift hockey-stick guitar they had built. 7

Lots of practice means that they spend significant amounts of time together, and, like all brothers, they do argue occasionally. Jan says it can be frustrating sometimes but points out that “we all know we can yell at each other, and no one will hold a grudge.” He can’t imagine playing in a band without his brothers: “It’s pretty fun. It’s like a family journey for us.” The brothers have had lots of support from their dad, who helps his sons maintain balance in their lives with their music, their charity efforts and, of course, their homework. 8

The next step, after opening for the Beach Boys, was the release of a couple of extended play, or EP, albums (recordings with more than just a single song but less than a full album). A tour could also be in the cards—but only when they’ve finished school. 9

The Brothers Dubé are in no rush: “We don’t want to become really big really fast. We have time on our side,” Liam said. “We’re not looking to be famous or be the next [band like] Nirvana or Foo Fighters We just love playing music.” 10