



Fort Bend Marching Bands

High school marching bands dazzle fans with spectacular halftime shows

Written by Emerald Smart

After many hours of rigorous practice, Fort Bend ISD high school band students take to the football field for spectacular halftime shows this season. In front of cheering stands of fans, they stand at attention beneath a field of bright lights. Their striking formations and sensational sounds wow and dazzle the crowd, adding a festive feel to each game. It's show time in Sugar Land.

Dedicated to the Game

Mastering the complicated moves of halftime shows and perfecting each note requires much dedication, determination, and commitment from each marching band student. Their loyalty to band extends far beyond after-school practices. To gear up for each new marching season, students begin learning and practicing material in the summer. Daniel Galloway, the Clements High School

band director for 10 years, takes pride in making sure his students are ready to perform for any show. "We work hard and play hard," he says.

Joe Pruitt, the Dulles High School band director for eight years, agrees putting musical performances together is not an easy thing to do. He says popular TV shows like *Glee* can downplay the amount of hard work and time actually required of perfecting performances. "In the summer, we are preparing for our show music, conducting uniform fittings, and getting used to this heat," he shares. Picking the perfect theme requires much planning, too. This year's choices range from the DHS band's "To Tame the Perilous Skies" to the CHS band's "Going Loco."

The Clements High School Band during the area UIL marching competition



“Everyone brings their own personality, but brings a common interest.”

- Clements High School band student Emily Tseisser

Although Pruitt recognizes the rigorous work of organizing a performance, he considers it just one of many ingredients in pursuing a love of music. “Being a part of the band is exciting,” he says. “Music is my life and passion. To be able to work with these students to create what we do is amazing.”

Taking Pride in Performing

Band students take pride in learning new routines that are sure to impress football fans each season. “It’s fun!” says CHS band student Emily Tseisser, who has been playing the clarinet for six years. “Everyone brings their own personality, but brings a common interest.”



Photo by Lisa Dierker

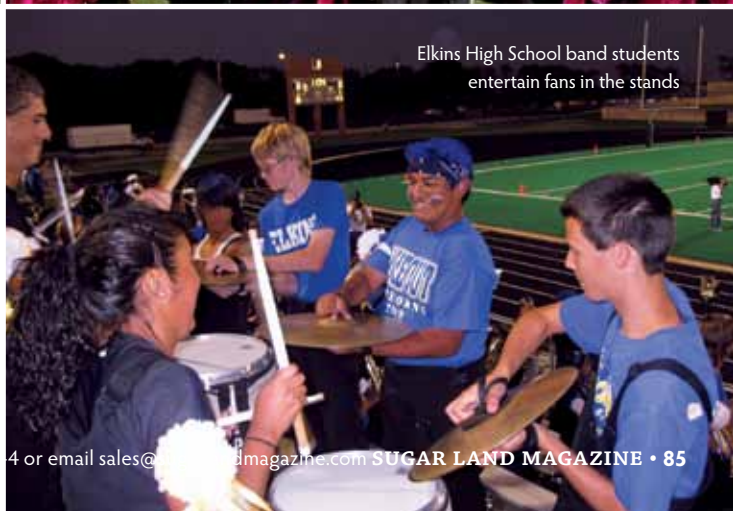
The Clements band gears up for marching season with summer and after-school practice



The Travis High School band performs during halftime



The Austin High School band prepares to take the field



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Photo by Lisa Dierker

The CHS band cheers on their team with a song

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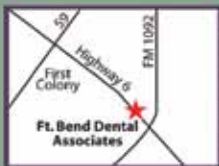
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THS band members march to a complicated pattern, never missing a beat



An Elkins percussionist gears up for halftime

Connor Jones, a 2011 graduate of Austin High School, enjoyed performing with the band and cherishes his memories of that time. "We take great pride [in putting] on a show," he says. "It's a great feeling to introduce something new to people when you realize how much effort and collaboration it took to put the show together." Even though Jones is currently attending the University of Houston to study music education, he still dedicated his summer to helping this year's students prepare for the upcoming marching season.

While some marching bands began practicing in the early summer months and others got a break and began in August, their main focus remains the same – preparing and working hard for their halftime shows, marching contests, UIL competitions, and concerts. "We do shows that are entertaining and competitive," says Galloway.

A Juggling Act

Along with mastering new music and marching choreography, band students must also perform well academically. "It was hard at first," says CHS student Lizzy Higdon, who has played the clarinet for seven years. "With all the time we spent learning new music, I had to learn to manage my time better. Coming home from school, I had to get straight to my homework. There is definitely no time to play around."

Marisa Henry, a saxophone player in the CHS band, knows that concentration and time management are the keys to being a successful student and band member. "Once you get home, you can't mess around on Facebook," she says.

Some band students juggle the demands of school and band, along with those of other extracurricular activities. "I have students who are on the student council and [in the] honor society," says Pruitt. Some band directors allow students to have an hour before practice to attend other student activities, receive tutoring, and start their homework.


Friends Become Family

Since band students spend so much time together, it is natural for them to develop friendships with each other. "Everyone is a family," says Henry. "We are all going through the same thing." The sense of camaraderie and accomplishment is rewarding for both students and teachers. "The most rewarding part is getting to work with students," says Dustin Winson, band director at Austin High School. "Seeing them grow and mature during the four years and becoming a young adult is really special."

Band students learn the necessary skills of working hard to achieve a common goal and build friendships along the way. "Come as you are, and we will make you the best," says Galloway. "All of our students rise to the occasion." SLM

EMERALD SMART is a Sugar Land resident who enjoys living a happy and spiritual life.

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