



“WE ALL WANNA BE BIG ROCKSTARS...!”

fast facts

- The scheme has been running for five years in Ireland and has now gone international.
- To find out more and get involved in the scheme, visit www.blastbeat.org.
- You can download Girls Like Mandy, the first single from Nightbox, at cokemusic.ie.

... SO SANG NICKELBACK IN ONE OF THE BIGGEST HITS OF THE YEAR SO FAR. BUT SUE LEONARD MEETS FOUR YOUNG LADS WHO COULD BE CLOSE TO MAKING THIS DREAM A REALITY FOR THEMSELVES.

DO YOU DREAM OF BEING IN A MASSIVELY FAMOUS BAND? Of recording an album and rocking out on stages around the world? Well that dream has become a reality for four students from County Wicklow, Ireland. And it's all thanks to Coca-Cola Blastbeat.

Meet Nightbox aka Jake Bitvo, Andrew Kayes, Hugo Sharry and James Tebbitt, from St Gerard's School, Bray. The four lads, who were previously called Hotstop, won the Blastbeat Battle of the Band 2007 competition. But that's not all. When they went on to compete in the world battle of the bands in January this

year, they won that too. Playing three original songs, written by Jake, they scooped a whopping 5,000 (nearly £4000) worth of equipment, as well as a record deal and a world tour.

how to make it in the business and how to get people to notice us. There's so much involved and we're all loads more confident now."

it wasn't an easy ride. The four worked flat out, and not just on their songs. They took time to get their look right too and worked at getting an audience to take notice.

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But just as the band are being tempted by all sorts of new opportunities the reality of school and exams refuses to go away.

"We're just going to have to study," says James who, with a step-dad in the music business, is lucky to have parents who are happy for him to postpone college plans till later.

Whatever happens in the future,

the Blastbeat experience has been a brilliant one for the boys, who've been busy laying down tracks for their debut album. "Winning the national finale was the best part," says James. "It made me realise that if you work for something, and actually achieve it, it's a really amazing feeling."

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simon cowell watch out!

Blastbeat is about so much more than making music. The scheme also promotes the business side of the industry.

There are two competitions involved in Blastbeat. One for the best band, as you know, but also one for the best mini music company. "The students learn to plan marketing, stage promotions and use social networking," says Jeff Watson, the Blastbeat CEO in Ireland. "They learn how to run a business, but in a cool way."

Coincidentally, it was Jeff's daughter, Flavia who ran the mini company in St Gerard's school, and who managed the lads. A talented singer songwriter, Flavia also managed the other five bands from the school who competed in the contest.

"It was a new concept for the school," says Flavia. "None of my friends had heard of it, and it was hard directing everyone. At the start some people in the mini company were less enthusiastic than others, but when they understood the process, everyone loved it."

Flavia's company didn't win the mini music company competition, but that didn't faze her. "I've learned so much about the music business," she says. "I've made contacts, learned about leadership and found out how to direct people. I've always wanted to be a professional musician and I've been recording songs. Some of the Blastbeat producers I met have really helped me out."

"THIS HAS BEEN LIFE CHANGING - IN A WEIRD WAY!"