

Bands Battle For Street Party Slot

Hogmanay is one of the biggest events in Edinburgh's calendar – after all, where better to celebrate the most popular Scottish holiday than the country's capital? But whilst event headliners Biffy Clyro and special guests The Charlatans were announced some time ago, local music fans are still in the dark as to who will have the task of supporting them.

This year [Leith Records](#) held an open competition called [Hog The Stage](#), where any band in the country could upload a song to the internet to be in with the chance of gaining the elusive support slot that launched the careers of Franz Ferdinand and KT Tunstall. Hundreds of entries had to be whittled down to just five bands who will compete in a live show at the HMV Picture House on November 21st.

We chatted to the five bands who made it through to the finale – Kitty The Lion, Come On Gang!, The Stagger Rats, Jakil and Pooch.

Here's what they had to say.

What would winning this competition mean to you?



Kitty The Lion

“It would mean that Simon Neil [lead singer of headliners Biffy Clyro] might finally realise I am the love of his life,” laughs Anna of [Kitty The Lion](#), adding “I think my patriotic heart would burst at being part of the best New Year party in the world.”

“If you look at the number of bands that applied and the number of people that attend the street party every year you can see how important this is to everyone in Edinburgh,” say [The Stagger Rats](#). “To win the competition would be unreal, and to be honest it still seems like there must be a catch! Local unsigned bands just don’t usually get this kind of exposure.”

“It would be a phenomenal privilege to open Edinburgh’s Hogmanay,” [Pooch](#) agree, “and a fantastic opportunity to stand out from the hordes of great Scottish unsigned bands out there.”

“I’ve seen some of my favourite Scottish bands play the Hogmanay party,” says Mikey of [Come On Gang!](#) “It would be an honour to follow in their footsteps and get people dancing into 2011.”

[Jakil](#), who have recently relocated to London, said, “it would be incredible to be part of the soundtrack to the best street party in the world. And it’s at home in Edinburgh, in our old back garden. Nothing could really top that.”

Do you think the online format of this competition is a good one?



The Stagger Rats

“It’s definitely a more open way of running a competition,” think Kitty The Lion. “Rather than competitors blindly submitting entries and waiting for a result, you get to snoop at everyone else’s entries and size them up!”

“It’s a really simple but effective way of giving everyone the vital information about the participants,” The Stagger Rats concur. “You can see the band’s live performance through their uploaded video, hear their studio sound through their uploaded

song and find out about them via their biography – everyone who’s interested in the competition gets to see all the bands involved and every aspect of their work.”

Pooch added, “the site was a great tool to display bands in a visually pleasing manner. And the fact anyone could browse entrants made things a bit more interesting than with other contests, where only winners are revealed and the pool of entrants go unnoticed by the general public.”

“The web is a great way to find new music, so it seems like a good fit to me,” says Rob of Come On Gang! Band mates Sarah and Mikey agree, not least because, “it’s instant and means that bands can easily get their fan bases involved from the very start.”

Meanwhile Jakil reemphasise that the site provided a platform for over a hundred Scottish bands to showcase their work, which is a great way to promote local music. “There are hundreds of fantastic bands in Scotland today,” they point out, “and a lot of people don’t know about the great gigs and concerts going on right now just on their doorstep, which is a shame.”



Pooch

Do you find the Battle of the Bands nature of the final stage at all off-putting?

“It’s pretty intimidating,” says Anna of Kitty the Lion, who has never done a competitive gig.

Pooch have no such qualms. “Surely there’s no better way to decide which band will give the best live performance on a big stage than a live show in a similar setting? We’re looking forward to a high-pressure showdown!”

The Stagger Rats are phlegmatic on the subject. "We're 'Battle of the Bands' veterans, having played several in our time together," they say. "We won The Evening News Battle of The Bands a while back and that competition also had a massive influx of applications, so we have experience in this area."

"If anything, it will make all the performance that little bit better since there is such a huge prize at stake," suggest Jakil. "You're playing to prove your worth, every fan of every other band doesn't want to like you. We find that motivating, a challenge, not off-putting."

"We actually really enjoy playing competitions," says Sarah of Come On Gang! "Apart from anything else, we like the energy of them, as all the bands are playing their hardest. And it's a good test to see how well you perform under pressure. Bring it on!"

Finally, if you don't win, will you say horrible things about the other bands in the press? What will you



Come On Gang!

say?!

"Of course," jokes Anna of Kitty The Lion, "Isn't that mandatory? I'll say that the winners stole the bottled talent from our dressing room before we went on and drank it themselves."

Nobody else is this forthcoming, though.

"As much fun as it would be to bitch about the other bands if we don't win, I think they're all great bands – it just depends what type of sound the judges are after," says Rob of Come On Gang! "We're not the bitchy types," adds band mate Sarah. "We're all in it together, really. Bitchiness is just

for the uninformed!” Mikey concludes that if they don’t win, “I’ll get a drink in with my mates who’ll be there to cheer us on... then I’ll try and sweet talk some free tickets from the winners!”

If they are unsuccessful, The Stagger Rats plan to be “the most gracious and gentlemanly of losers in the press and in person. An unattended pint might get spat in, but that’s the absolute worst the situation would come to. All the other bands are talented, they wouldn’t be in the final five if they weren’t, so we would have no harsh words for any of them. If we didn’t win, we’d obviously be upset, but if it’s not meant to be, it’s not meant to be.”

Pooch said, “at the end of the day music is subjective, each of the other bands deserve the place as much as ourselves,” and that the band who wins will get a “massive congratulations” from them.



Jakil

And Jakil agree that “at the end of the day, we will all be trying our very best but whoever I’m sure whoever wins will deserve it.”

It seems that we’re not going to have any turf wars on the Edinburgh music scene over this one...

Tickets for the live showdown on November 21st are available [here](#) or from Ripping Records for £5 each.

You can also read our interview with Jim Wolff of Leith Records on how the judges did their best to make this the fairest competition possible [here](#).