

Behind The Scenes of Hog The Stage

☒ Last week, organisers of Edinburgh's Hogmanay announced the five finalists in the competition to support Biffy Clyro and The Charlatans at this year's New Year celebrations on Princes Street. Come On Gang!, Kitty The Lion, Jakil, Pooch and The Stagger Rats will play in a live showdown before a live audience and panel of music industry judges at the HMV Picture House on November 21st. We spoke to the finalists in an interview [here](#), and also had a word with [Leith Records](#)' Jim Wolff about the first new bands competition ever to be held by [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#).

Whose job was it to go through over a hundred entrants to whittle down the short list of five?

Leith Records managed [Hog-the-stage.com](#) and sorted entries into a long list for other judges to make their shortlist choices from. However, the judges could choose from any other entries on the site if they wanted.

Did they have specific criteria to help them choose?

Judges were looking for a number of factors, including whether the music was any good, what the band looked like live, general popularity, whether they were suitable for the Edinburgh's Hogmanay audience etc. Facebook likes and comments were used as a guide, but weren't the only criteria.

How will the event on the 21st work?

Every audience member gets one vote, and judges – Ed Stack from [Ten Tracks](#), The Skinny's Music Editor Dave Kerr, BBC Radio DJ Vic Galloway and a very special guest judge – get a

quite a few more. The aim is that the judges get some influence but the audience gets a say too.

Do you think there are any particular benefits or disadvantages to running this competition online?

Online competitions make entry easy, and it's good for everyone to hear the entries. Hog-the-stage.com is now a good place to hear a lot of the new music that Scotland has to offer right now.

We've done a competition before where it all came down to an online vote, but we didn't want a band with a big Facebook following to win this. It had to be about the music. The other side is that if it's just down to 'industry experts', then you're going to get accusations of bias. No competition like this is ever going to be perfect. When there are so many bands and different styles of music, it's impossible to say for sure which is better than the other.

Do you think that some bands who could have been great for this competition may have been put off by the perception you mentioned that it's a competition about who is best at persuading their fans to go online and vote?

Some bands we know just don't enter competitions full stop. And that's fair enough. You've got less than 1% chance of winning so why bother? But on the other hand, every band that entered got a bit of exposure, and bands that made it further get a chance to play the HMV Picture House, which is no bad thing.

We've hoped that bands don't take themselves, or the competition, too seriously. Going out to your fans for a bit of support doesn't need to be a big deal.

How popular has Hog The Stage been?

We've been really happy with the exposure it's given all the bands that've entered. Over 30 000 people have visited the site over the past few weeks, with over 2000 comments and thousands of Facebook Likes.

So would you do it this way again?

We'd certainly improve some things, but so far it's all gone pretty much to plan (amazingly). Ask me again in a few weeks.

Not wanting to be a stirrer, but we couldn't help noticing that both Come On Gang! and Jakil are on the latest 'ten tracks' bundle available to download from the Leith Records website... have you been accused of favouritism at all?!

Lots of different factors came into short listing bands. Favouritism wasn't one of them. Bring on the 21st November and the gig at the HMV Picture House – let the music decide.

Tickets for the Hog The Stage finale cost £5 and are available [here](#), or from Ripping Records.