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Goodbye exams, hello Glastonbury

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Our Build a Band competition winners prepare excitedly for next week's debut. By Lucy Davies

Eight weeks ago, Arts Council charity Youth Music and The Daily Telegraph changed the lives of five teenagers. Luke Ryan, 15, Lizzie Massey, 15, Tom Ralphs, 18, Max Langley, 14, and Thuluxton Janenthirajah, 18, each won a place in a band that will perform on stage at this year's Glastonbury festival.

The group was sifted from about 300 applicants who submitted songs for consideration in the Build a Band competition. Chosen for their musical aptitude and "ability to articulate a clear interest in protest", the winners will perform as a group for the first time on the opening day of the festival, after spending two hours a day writing and practising their own modern-day protest song.

They have been mentored and coached by Billy Bragg, Hard-Fi, Get Cape Wear Cape Fly, Dirty Pretty Things and Jerry Dammers, the founder of the Specials.



Lizzie Massey: 'This is the best thing that's ever happened to me'

"We wanted them to choose the topics, come up with imagery," says Bragg. "Then we stepped in, because it's a big leap getting up on stage and saying, 'This is what I believe in', whether you're in a comprehensive, in prison, or at the Glastonbury festival."

The Telegraph has been following their progress. Between dyeing their hair blond, dodging exam revision, busking their way around East Anglia to raise money for charity, being interviewed on local radio, practising their singing faces in the mirror and persuading their parents to buy expensive electronic drum kits, they've certainly been busy.

advertisement But, adolescent behaviour aside, it is clear from their diaries that they believe wholeheartedly in their potential to exhilarate and energise the crowds.

Their excitement is both touching and highly contagious. Tom Ralphs, who will be providing backing vocals and guitar, says: "It's a crazy feeling to be put into an environment that was, up until a couple of days ago, a dream." "Thank you soooooo much," reads TJ's online diary. "I am actually ecstatic."

And from lead vocalist Lizzie Massey: "The only word I can use to describe how I feel is amazing! This is the best thing that's ever happened to me. I am going to enjoy every second of it. Glastonbury - here we come!"

Next week, we'll be with them at Glastonbury, updating the website with audio and video footage of the rehearsals and interviews with the band and their mentors.

The five teenagers will also be filming their own experience of the festival, which will be sent live to the website every day, bringing you some of the excitement (if not the squalor) of the Glastonbury experience. And we'll be able to bring you the final performance from the Left Field stage on Sunday evening.

- In support of the Build a Band initiative, Katharine Hamnett has designed an exclusive series of limited edition T-shirts featuring the slogan for which she became famous - "Revoluting Youth". We have five of these T-shirts, signed by Dirty Pretty Things, for Telegraph readers to win. To enter go to telegraph.co.uk/r2g
- To watch video footage of the auditions and interviews and see fact files and diaries for each of the winners go to the Road to Glastonbury page - telegraph.co.uk/r2g.

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