

NEWS

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What Does It Take to Make the Penn State Marching Blue Band?

WPSU documentary to offer inside glimpse next month

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — High school musicians across Pennsylvania dream of one day marching into Beaver Stadium before 107,000 screaming fans. Each year about 200 freshmen audition for the Penn State Marching Blue Band; less than half make it. Next month, a documentary by Penn State Public Broadcasting (PSPB) will showcase the experience of several hopefuls as they pursue their dream of playing for one of the nation's most celebrated college marching bands.

"Making the Blue Band," is a one-hour documentary that will air on Pennsylvania Public Television Network stations beginning Nov. 5, 2008. This behind-the-scenes show follows eight incoming freshmen through auditions, cuts and the grueling days of band camp as they pursue their goal of playing in the Penn State Blue Band. The documentary trailer can be seen at <http://wpsu.org/makingtheblueband> online.

"I am very excited to have our band members profiled in this documentary," said Dr. Richard Bundy, director of the Penn State Blue Band. "The time and dedication these musicians give to the Blue Band really help them develop life lessons — in this case that they are part of something much bigger than themselves."

Students featured in the documentary come from across Pennsylvania. The positions they are trying out for and their hometowns include:

Chris Garguilo, Trombone — Altoona, Pa.
Eleanor Graham, Trombone — Saylorsburg, Pa.
Jeremy Railing, Trumpet — Carlisle, Pa.
Bryan Aument, Percussion — Lancaster, Pa.
Kristen Stufft, Mellophone — Lewistown, Pa.
Casey Thompson, Clarinet — Spring Mills, Pa.
Matt Sabo, Drum Major — Delmont, Pa.
Courtney Fickes, Majorette — Hollidaysburg, Pa.
Michele Sassano, Majorette — Altoona, Pa.
Ashley Scott, Silk — Pittsburgh

For Jeff Hughes, executive producer at PSPB and trombone player for the Blue Band between 1986 and 1987, filming of the documentary brought back fond memories. "Producing this film gave me an opportunity to combine my professional career with my passion — making music," said Hughes. "Most people don't realize that nine days before the first performance, there is no Blue Band roster. This documentary shows exactly what can be done in a short amount of time and follows a couple of hopefuls as they embark on a journey that stays with them the rest of their lives," he added.

The Marching Blue Band numbers 310 members and includes: 260 instrumentalists, 34 silks, 14 Touch of Blue (majorettes), a feature twirler and a drum major. Members come from virtually all curricula and colleges represented at the University Park campus of Penn State. The Blue Band has appeared at 33 bowl games, including multiple appearances in the Orange, Cotton, Sugar, Fiesta and Citrus Bowls. The band has performed at the Outback, Blockbuster, Holiday and Rose Bowls and for the Buffalo Bills on Monday Night Football.

“Making the Blue Band” will also be available on DVD through Penn State Media Sales for \$24.95 plus shipping and handling. It can be ordered by calling 800-770-2111 or by visiting <http://mediasales.psu.edu> online.

Funding for the production of “Making the Blue Band” was provided in part by Clara “Pat” Lamade Robison, The Pennsylvania Public Television Network, The Penn State Alumni Association, and members of the Penn State Alumni Blue Band Association.

For air dates, check with your local PBS station within the Pennsylvania Public Television Network.

Penn State Public Broadcasting (PSPB) serves central Pennsylvania with programming, educational services and community outreach. This public media service produces, acquires and distributes programs that address local interests and reflect the diverse cultural, political, geographic and demographic characteristics of an audience within central Pennsylvania. For more information, visit <http://www.wpsu.org>. Penn State Public Broadcasting is part of Penn State Outreach, the largest unified outreach organization in American higher education. Penn State Outreach serves more than 5 million people each year, delivering more than 2,000 programs to people in all 67 Pennsylvania counties, all 50 states and 80 countries worldwide.

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