IDS
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REGION



Lennon Beasley searches through his shows in the Community Access Television Services archives. Beasley has produced over 2000 shows for CATS.
(JORDAN SIDEN| IDS) Buy Photos

Producer creates thousands of shows

By JORDAN SIDEN | IDS
POSTED AT 11:55 PM ON NOV. 20, 2013 (UPDATED AT 12:09 PM ON NOV. 21, 2013)

The bowling alley appears empty, but a man cheers at every strike.

He curses every gutter ball. In front of a camera fixed on a tripod, he bowls alone.

After 15 minutes, the closing credits roll.

"'The Bowling Practice Show,' starring Lennon Beasley. Written by Lennon Beasley. The views expressed in this program represent the following individual, Lennon Beasley."

Lennon Beasley, the man both behind and in front of the camera, has produced more than 2,300 shows for Community Access Television Services, a Bloomington

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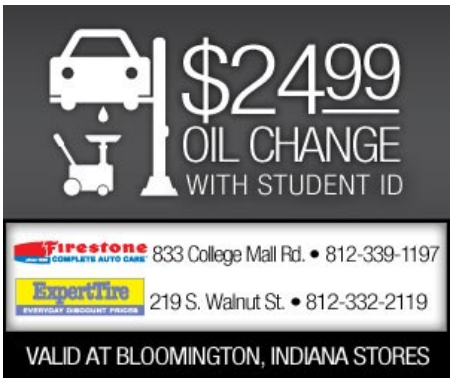
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station.

"This guy, as far as we know, is certainly the greatest local producer in CATS history," said Beasley's friend Adam Stillwell, programming manager at CATS. "Over the last 10 years, I haven't met anyone like him."

A janitor at Bloomington Hardware and an employee at McDonald's, the 31-year-old Bloomington resident carries a black briefcase with him almost everywhere.

It contains a clutter of tapes and wires, a camera and an external hard drive, all which CATS has provided for him.

Beasley has autism. He speaks deliberately, answering questions often with one or two-word answers.

He has an extraordinary memory — an ability to recall dates, places and days of the week from any given year.



Though he knows the date of every time he's ever moved and the first day of every job he's ever had, he doesn't know when he found out he was autistic.

"I love to come and record in various places," Beasley said. "When there's a drum show, it'd be at my house. When there's a jam session, I'll be recording at Rewind. Now I'm filming church services on Sunday nights, so I definitely set up a video camera before church even starts."

Shows ranging from "The Lennon Beasley Drum Show" to "Inspirational Today" and "Guitar Studio" are all filmed with a video camera on a tripod, with the lens focused on Beasley himself, the star of each show.

"He takes an album he likes, I assume listens to it once or twice, but I don't think he needs to hear it much," Stillwell said about the drum show. "Then he can play along with the entire album from start to finish and just trains a camera on himself in his house and goes to town."

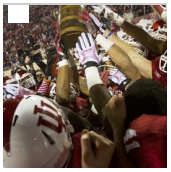
Aaron Chandler, owner of Rewind Records — the studio where Beasley has recorded nine albums — said Beasley is a solid drummer.

"He has a good time when he's playing," Chandler said. "He really gets into it."

When Beasley hit his first thousand shows, Bloomington Mayor Mark Kruzan declared Sept. 24, 2010, Lennon Beasley Day.

When Beasley reached his next thousand, Stillwell had a plaque made for his friend.

"We used to have a producer of the month category," Stillwell said. "We eliminated it, in part because it was him every single month. Certainly no one


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could outpace him."

The shelves of the CATS archive room house every one of Beasley's tapes in perfect order.

Each tape has a label with Lennon's meticulous handwriting recording the show's title, season and first-aired date. By next year, Beasley said he expects to hit 2,500.

Every show is cataloged into the CATS database, but for Beasley, there is hardly a need for one.

He knows exactly how many shows he has produced.

About a year ago, Stillwell suggested to Beasley that he try writing down his feelings as songs.

Before he knew it, Beasley was spending every day recording music at Rewind Records, which meant less time at CATS.

Just as he once started producing three-minute shows to drive his numbers up, Beasley started recording 30-minute songs.

"I've had jam bands do an eight-minute song, and it's like a little bit more work, but it's not really that big of a deal," Chandler said. "But Lennon did a 37-minute song, and I'm like, 'OK, this is like a whole album here.'"

"Romance Is a 7 Letter Word" debuted in fall 2012.

Beasley played all the instruments on the record and kept copies in his briefcase to sell to anyone for $10 a disc.

"The more you get to know Lennon, the more you realize that he's a public figure," said Beasley's friend Tim Thompson, worship minister at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. "Everyone knows him. He has friends everywhere. When he comes here, he has a large circle of people that know him and that he connects with and he looks for."

For many years, Beasley would bring his camera into Sherwood Oaks, set up his camera and record, Thompson said.

"He didn't broadcast them. They were just sort of his way of just documenting some part of his life," Thompson said. "I think for many filmmakers it's a way of making sense of their life. They're making sense of the world they live in. And I don't think Lennon's any exception to that."

Thompson said given his circumstances, Beasley's achievements are remarkable.

"He records music. He records programs," Thompson said. "He bowls. He maintains friendships from so many different spectrums of life in the community and age groups that I look at him and I'm really amazed. He amazes me at times."

There is no end in sight to Beasley's marathon of productivity. His ninth CD, "Ladies Night," hits the shelves at Rewind Records early next year.

"Can't touch him," Stillwell said.



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Mike B

Posted at 07:55 PM on Nov 22, 2013

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