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Max Brown
Butler University

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Just Start Somewhere (to be great)

Max Brown

Maxwell Franklin Brown (born April 18, 1999), is an American musician and composer. He has played in (insert awesome band here) and (insert awesome band here) and collaborated with artists such as (insert awesome artist here) and (insert awesome artist here). Max Brown has also been a very successful solo artist winning a Grammy Award for his second solo album...

Hey look, that's me... well sort of. It's who I want to be in the future. My name is Max Brown, I'm 18 years and, as of now, I haven't done a single great thing in my life. I am an aspiring musician and have loved music for my entire life. I speak its language, I have always had a feel and understanding for music. So i'm great musician right... well not really, not in perspective. I have a long way to go to get to where I want to be and even where I need to be as a musician. I am a trombone player, which is obviously all the rage right now. I like playing all styles of music, but my favorite style to play is jazz. I know music is subjective and all, but if I had to pick a genre that was the best I would definitely choose jazz. Jazz combines the skill of classical music, the showmanship of popular music, and the emotion of music with emotion in it (I guess), and adds its own unique flare to the mix. Jazz is great.

I've wanted to be many things throughout my life. My ideal has always been changing. I've wanted to be an athlete, I've wanted to be an FBI agent, I've wanted to be an author. I've also wished that I were a different person... several times. This musician is who I want to be right now and what I have been working at for years. This musician might not be as exciting as some of the characters that I have wanted to be, but at least this character shares my actual name and operates in the realm of the real world.

Early life

Max Brown was born on April 18 1999 in Madison Wisconsin to John and Ruth Brown. Max has a twin brother named Ben. Brown spent his entire childhood in Madison Wisconsin. Brown attended Edgewood High School in Madison and graduated in 2017.

Technically I actually am a professional musician at the moment. The amount of money I've actually made from gigs is pretty laughable. I'm pretty sure it's about 20 bucks in total. I haven't put myself out there enough. I like performing, but I am not the guy that won't stop playing his music for you no matter how many times you tell him to stop. Do I have to be that guy in order to succeed?

I guess if there's one thing that I want it is to be great. I want to be great whether I become a musician, or a music teacher, or a businessman, or a writer, or a Target worker or whatever. I want to be a great husband, father, friend, son, role model, teacher. If I ever do get really successful I will have to be humble and not let it get to my head, because I already promised myself that I would be. I also promised myself that I would never drink alcohol, I don't know why I did it, but now I'm totally going to be the guy who walks into a bar and asks for glass of water.

Early music career

Brown's mother Ruth, who came from a musical family, started her sons on music very early. Brown started music at very young age, he took his first piano lesson at the age of five and his first guitar lesson the age of seven. Brown claims that he has always loved performing and his love for music started was started in his two man jam sessions with his brother Ben in their basement. "My brother and I would play rock tunes in our old carpeted basement, just the two of us". "We would play Beverly Hills by Weezer or Warning by Green Day, and as we got older we would move on to harder stuff like Can't Stop by the Red Hot Chili Peppers or White Room by Cream (Eric Clapton's band)". "Ben was always on the drums, and I was always on the guitar". "He (Ben) was a great player, but he was too humble, he didn't have the ego to be a performer for a living".

There have been so many days where I felt like I couldn't make it. Sometimes I feel like I don't have the drive or motivation, and sometimes I feel like the journey is too hard and I don't deserve this shit. The last time I felt like this was a couple of days ago. The white walled practice room can feel like my own little jail cell when I am forcing myself through the same boring exercises everyday. Its like solitary confinement with a trombone and a piano. Sometimes I get so hot headed that I don't even think twice about what I am doing. Slapping my music off the black metal stand across the practice room. Kicking one of the white walls that already has a hole in its cardboard wooden outer layer. Packing my trombone up as fast as possible and slamming its hard plastic case closed.

There is a quote on my trombone professor's door that says "Just start somewhere" this quote is attributed to a drummer named Ed Soph. The quote is accompanied by a black and white image of a disheveled looking Soph sitting in a thoughtful position and smoking a cigar. This quote is a reality in everything that we do. It's impossible to start something being really great. I guess you could be what some people call "a natural" at an activity, but that just means that you show a lot of immediate potential. Becoming great at something takes a lot of time, and you are never going to be where you want to be when you start. But we all have to start somewhere to achieve our goals.

Brown started playing his main instrument, the trombone, at age 11. He began playing so he could be in the middle school band. Music went from being a hobby to being a career idea for Brown late in his high school career when he found his love for jazz music. Brown cites trombonists such as JJ Johnson, Curtis Fuller, and Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews as his main inspirations as a musician.

I hope one day my kid looks me up on google and realizes that I am a lot more of a big deal than I let on to be. They will realize that their dad isn't just an annoying guy who made them take music lessons and play old jazz songs with him. Wouldn't that be the greatest way to impress your kid? They look you up, totally not expecting to find

anything and BAM there it is!

Why do we only hear about the greats working hard and loving what they do? Why do they never talk about the greats doubting themselves or wanting give up? Has every great musician always put in the work and practiced, and never spent their afternoon watching youtube videos in their dorm room? Why can't they ever talk about that?

College

Brown went to Butler University to pursue a BA in music (trombone performance). Brown claims that college was where he learned what was required to be a professional musician. “Before college I didn’t really know how to practice”. “In my first year of college I learned that success isn’t only achieved by putting in the proper amount of work, it’s also achieved by putting in the correct type of work”.

It’s around 9 at night and I am in the usual practice room. Most of the rooms surrounding me are empty, and I can only hear myself. I feel relaxed, its the day before I go back home from college for spring break. I pull the usual gray etude book out of my black backpack and open it up to the piece I am playing that week. I put the trombone to my lips and just play. I soar through the piece in an uncharacteristic way as I feel the relief of being done with a long and strenuous stretch of school and music. About halfway through the piece of music I actually use my ears and take a whiff of what I am playing. For a rare moment I hear something that I have been working towards for a long time, its myself sounding great.

I want to be the guy that everyone wants to hear. “When is that Max guy gonna play a solo”, “man, I wish that I could play like him”.

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Throughout my life, there have been many times where I have felt like I could not reach my goals. So far I haven't really felt like the person that I want to become. Now I am going to start thinking about it in a different way. I feel like my rise to becoming a great will end up being more impressive because of how unlikely it was. I didn't have the greatest start, but I will finish very strong. On the road to greatness “ just start somewhere”.