

# Hanging On to Music Dream

November 13, 2008 • By [Amy Schlinger](#), *Contributing Writer*

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Chad Hanger doesn't exactly remember when it all happened.

"I might have just been watching CMT [Country Music Television] one day and they had an ad for it," said the 2007 JMU grad. "I thought 'Wow, what a cool opportunity.'"

The advertisement was for CMT's Music City Madness contest, where any unsigned artist may submit a video performance of an original song he or she wrote. Out of all the submissions, CMT picked 64 finalists. The finalists then battled head-to-head in a single elimination tournament. The winner of the round moves on to the next round, eliminating the artist he or she were up against. All votes come from fans over an eight-week period.

"It's kind of like the NCAA tournaments for basketball," said Hanger, who after being chosen as one of the 64 finalists, has conquered his first competition and has moved on to round two.

"That was pretty amazing," said Hanger about winning the first round. "It's pretty amazing just to be in the contest."

With more than hundreds of videos submitted, the chances of being chosen are slim. There might be certain criteria that are used to pick the finalists, but Hanger just considers himself lucky.

As the youngest of five siblings, Hanger followed in the footsteps of his family, receiving his undergraduate degree from JMU. He majored in philosophy, but found time to also take music industry classes.

"I got into music at an early age, singing in church with my dad," Hanger said. In 2001, he dropped out of college to pursue his music career. After having a band for a little bit, he decided to play solo. This led him to Lost Angeles where he cut a demo.

“I didn’t want to look back and have regrets,” said Hanger.

Hanger remembers his first local showcase that he played in Los Angeles when he was 21. He had run into Elektra A and R representatives on Hollywood Boulevard.

“They liked my look and they said, ‘Alright, bring your guitar to our office and give us a show,’” said Hanger.

Hanger was able to play a live show, and although it turned out he wasn’t quite ready for a record deal at that point in time, the experience provided Hanger with motivation to work harder.

“There is no road to make it,” Hanger says is the best advice he ever received. “You can be the greatest guitar player with the most amazing voice in the world and unless you meet the right kind of person who can give you an opportunity, it won’t mean anything.”

Hanger later returned to JMU to finish his undergraduate degree. He is now working as a real estate agent outside of Bridgewater and getting his MBA through Kaplan University. This contest has allowed Hanger another opportunity to get his name out in the music industry.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” Hanger said.

Most of Hanger’s votes and support have come from his family and friends, of which he is very thankful for. Whether he wins or not, music will always hold a special place in Hanger’s heart.

Said Hanger: “If I’m just 45 and I’m a lawyer somewhere and I’m just playing my guitar at home for my wife and kids, I’m still going to love it.”

Contact Amy Schlinger at [schlinae@jmu.edu](mailto:schlinae@jmu.edu)