

# Chippewa Valley students part of song getting Grammy consideration

Four high school students and two graduates sing background vocals



Chippewa Valley High School students and graduates were among those who participated as singers on the song “2020 Vision” for recording artist Jesse Palter. The song is under consideration for a potential Grammy nomination. Pictured is Chippewa Valley High School student R.J. Kilcher, one of the students who contributed vocals for the song. (Photo courtesy of RJ Kilcher)

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As if being singled out to perform on a single by jazz and pop musical artist Jesse Palter wasn’t enough, Chippewa Valley High School students and a few graduates can now say they contributed background vocals to a song under consideration for a potential Grammy nomination.

Students R.J. Kilcher, McKenna Mead, Evan Smith and Kara Thompson, along with recent graduates Jamie McLaughlin and Sofia Taylor, were among those who contributed to the background vocals for the song “2020 Vision” by Palter.

The song is an ode to the student experience during the pandemic. As of Nov. 2 the song was under consideration for potential Grammy nominations in the categories of Best American Roots Song and Best American Roots Performance.

Teacher and choir director James Pecar said through connections of his colleagues, he learned Palter was seeking high school students to contribute to the background vocals on a song. Toward the end of last school year, he was able to recommend some of his students, including a few of those about to graduate, and had them send audition videos to Palter.

The recommended students participate in several of the different types of choir offerings in the school, according to Pecar. Pecar said Palter selected those who she felt would work best for the song and invited them to recording sessions.

“They went to a studio. There were strict COVID protocols that they had to follow,” Pecar said, adding that the song’s producer was Jake Bass, who has also produced for Eminem.

St. Clair Shores resident Kilcher, 17, is a senior and participates in four different choirs through Chippewa Valley High School in Clinton Township. He has also participated in the Detroit Children’s Choir and a choir program through Macomb Community College. His prior recording experience includes participating in a recording with singer and songwriter Jill Jack, as well as performing with jazz musician Dave Koz.

“Originally Mr. Pecar contacted me and another choir student. He said ‘Here, I can’t guarantee anything but here are some tracks. Learn this and send in a recording.’ I did it and within a day or two I heard back from Jesse Palter’s managers, I heard from her team,” Kilcher said.

Kilcher also put in the work so he would feel well prepared to enter FBT Studios in Ferndale on the requested mid-May date and perform.



The song “2020 Vision” by recording artist Jesse Palter is under consideration for a potential Grammy nomination. Pictured is Palter at FBT Studios in Ferndale. Students and graduates of Chippewa Valley High School were among those who contributed background vocals for the song. (Photo courtesy of Lilac Lens, Michele Palter)

“Her team was amazing to work with and very kind and welcoming to us,” Kilcher said.

Kilcher said that although multiple singers contributed to the background vocals, due to COVID-19 considerations, only two were permitted in the studio at a time to record. Kilcher’s recording session was held with Smith, as they sing similar voice parts. Palter was present at the session and provided feedback, according to Kilcher. He added singers from all recording sessions were put together to create the background vocals.

Pecar said that he sent a message to those of his students who participated on the song as soon as he saw a social media post from Palter about the song being selected for potential Grammy consideration. Kilcher said this occurred in late October. As first round voting by the Recording Academy members ends Nov. 5, Pecar anticipated he would soon hear from Palter if the song received an official nomination nod.