**York author raises over £2,000 in 2 weeks for
children’s book to inspire the rock-stars of tomorrow**

* **Children’s picture book *Ballistic Kids* tells the story of a young rock ‘n’ roll band**
* **Story highlights how playing music helps children develop confidence and important life skills**
* **Written, illustrated and scored by musicians, inspired by their personal experiences**
* **£2,000 already raised through Kickstarter crowd-funding campaign**
* **Extra support needed from rock ‘n’ roll parents to fund print and distribution of first edition**
* **Kids Music Day highlights the positive role of music in children’s development**



**Summary**

Ballistic Kids is an illustrated rhyming children’s book which introduces young readers to the amazing experience of playing in a rock ‘n’ roll band. Created by a team of musicians and based on their personal experiences, the book shines a light on the far-reaching and well evidenced social, academic and health benefits for children of learning to play music, as well as its power to unify people of all shapes and sizes. The book is being published to inspire children at a young age to pick up an instrument, start learning and form a band with their friends.

**The story**

The story of Ballistic Kids follows Scott and Matt, childhood outsiders from the small, sleepy village of Hilltop, who dream of rock ‘n’ roll stardom. When a new girl arrives at their school, her musical abilities and can-do attitude inspire the young boys to make their dream a reality and they quickly join forces with class-mates Thom and Su to form a band.

Their noisy rehearsals are soon upsetting local residents, but the youngsters keep on rocking, channelling all their energy and creativity into pursuing their dream. Eager to prove themselves and show the world what they can do, they decide to enter the Summer Spectacular School Talent Show. Will their debut performance be the disaster that everyone expects, or will all their hard work and dedication pay off?

Author, Thom Craigen explains the lessons he hopes children will take from the book: *“It’s about having fun, working together and persevering until you get where you want to be. And if you’re not sure how to get started, the book shows that all you need is three chords and attitude…!”*

**The book & soundtrack**

The 48-page book is written by York author, Thom Craigen and illustrated in full colour by Matt Riste, whose dark artwork style evokes classic children’s books such as “Where the Wild Things Are”. The story is also accompanied by a soundtrack of raucous rock ‘n’ roll songs by the young band in the book. Written by Scott Lee Andrews, they add an extra dimension to the story’s universe and help to bring the characters to life.

**The crowd-funding campaign**

The 30-day Kickstarter campaign for Ballistic Kids launched on Friday 4th October 2019, chosen to coincide with the fourth annual "Kids Music Day” when schools, retailers, and other music organisations around the world work together to focus attention on the importance of including music as part of children's education and to enable people of all ages to enjoy the academic, social, and therapeutic benefits of playing music.

In the first two weeks, nearly 100 backers have pledged over £2,000 to fund the print and distribution of the limited first edition of the book. Anyone can pre-order the book and soundtrack by becoming a backer of the Kickstarter funding campaign.

There is also a range of other rewards available for those who want something a little more unique, including limited-edition art prints, a baby-shower gift set and the opportunity to appear as a character in the book!

Thom explained: *“The project will only go ahead if we achieve our funding target of £4,900 before 3rd November. We need every punk-rock parent with children between 5 and 10 years to get behind Ballistic Kids and reserve a copy for their little rock-stars!”*

**The future of Ballistic Kids**

With another 3 books already in development to follow this first instalment, the team believe there is a long and exciting road ahead. *“We cannot wait to share Ballistic Kids with the world,”* enthuses Thom; *“there is a huge community of music-loving parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles who already understand what a powerful force music can be in a young person’s life. We’re confident they will love the book as much as the children they are reading it with and - who knows, maybe it will inspire the next generation of rock stars to pick up an instrument and start playing!”*

**Links**

Ballistic Kids Website [www.ballistickids.com](http://www.ballistickids.com)

Kickstarter Page <http://bit.ly/BK-Kickstarter>

[www.kickstarter.com/projects/thomcraigen/ballistic-kids](http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/thomcraigen/ballistic-kids)

**More information:**

**Why rock ‘n’ roll is good for you**

There are numerous studies (neurological and social) which support the idea that playing music is good for you - and is particularly beneficial for children’s development. Learning to play an instrument takes patience, persistence, and focus, which are also important qualities needed to succeed at school, at work and in life generally. Being in a band also provides a sense of belonging, pride and comradeship; it helps forge life-long friendships and has a huge positive effect on confidence and self-esteem, as well providing a vehicle for children to develop a wide range of life skills and personal abilities. These range from patience, and persistence to focus, creative thinking and attention to detail; from teamwork and problem solving, to loyalty and resilience.

**Other inspiration for the project**

Elements of the story were also inspired by a quote from Foo Fighters frontman, Dave Grohl, who in 2013 expressed his dislike of televised singing contest in an interview for [Sky Magazine](http://deltaskymag.com/Sky-Extras/Favorites/Rock--n--Roll-Jedi.aspx): *“Musicians should go to a yard sale and buy an old f\*\*\*\*\*\* drum set and get in their garage and just suck. And get their friends to come in and they'll suck, too. And then they'll f\*\*\*\*\*\*\* start playing and they'll have the best time they've ever had in their lives and then all of a sudden they'll become Nirvana. Because that's exactly what happened with Nirvana. Just a bunch of guys that had some s\*\*\*\*\* old instruments and they got together and started playing some noisy-a\*\* s\*\*\*, and they became the biggest band in the world. That can happen again!”*

In the same article, he touches upon a truth which is a key theme of the book: *“When you put human beings together with other human beings to make music you get magic.”*

**The Ballistic Kids Team**

The team behind Ballistic Kids met whilst their bands were recording at the legendary Rockfield Studios in Wales (most famous for the recording of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody"). They became friends and ended up touring together, having an absolute blast playing live music venues around the UK. Conversations on the road highlighted that for all of them, being in a band as they grew up provided a unique sense of identity, improved their confidence and self-esteem and helped forge life-long friendships. Some years later, inspired by children’s authors like Julia Donaldson and Jonny Duddle, Thom Craigen turned his love of language and rhyme to creating Ballistic Kids, a children’s picture book based on real-life experiences, to encourage young children to discover the magic of playing music and being in a band.

**Author - Thom Craigen**

Thom has played guitar and bass in bands since the age of seventeen, mainly playing tiny venues and parties for friends whilst at school and university. In his twenties he played bass with rock four-piece, Colour of Fire, and enjoyed a few years recording and promoting their album 'Pearl Necklace' across the UK, Europe and Japan - supporting the likes of Placebo, Biffy Clyro, Idlewild and Silverchair along the way. Thom now lives in York, UK with his wife, who plays the drums, and their own two ballistic kids - who are also learning to play drums, guitar, piano and bass. Ballistic Kids is a way for Thom to share the magical experience he had playing in bands and hopefully to inspire the next generation of rock stars to experience it for themselves.

**Illustrator - Matt Riste**

Whilst at school, Matt formed a band with friends (including Scott), called Midasuno. Their chaotic live shows created a buzz on the UK music scene, winning them best unsigned act at the Welsh Music Awards. Signings with Frontline, Lockjaw and Sugarshack records during their 7-year career saw Midasuno record a number of singles, EPs and albums with a relentless touring schedule to promote their various releases. Midasuno decided to call it a day, despite rave reviews from rock press titles including Rocksound, Metal Hammer, and Kerrang, although at the request of their fans, they briefly reunited three years later for one almighty last show. Matt went on to pursue a career in illustration and recent projects have included album cover art for (ex-Motorhead guitarist) Phil Campbell and the Bastard Sons, re-imagined illustrations for "The Twits" for The Roald Dahl centenary as well as exhibition pieces for the Royal Horticultural Society. Matt lives with his wife and son in the Valleys in South Wales where he also still plays drums in All The Damn Vampires.

**Songwriter - Scott Lee Andrews**

Despite being huge local heroes, Scott was never quite satisfied with the level of success achieved with Midasuno. He formed Exit\_International, a 3-piece bass-guitars-and-screaming noise pop machine, using crowdfunding platforms to finance the recording of two critically acclaimed albums during their nine-year career. More recently Scott has also collaborated and toured with Ginger Wildheart on the Mutation III - Dark Black project and now lives with his wife in Australia from where he has released material under his solo moniker Jaws of Deaf, as well as working on writing the catchiest punk rock songs in the world for Ballistic Kids.

**Kickstarter**

Kickstarter is a crowdfunding website which allows individuals to raise money for a creative idea, by offering a range of “rewards” for specified donations. The risk for supporters is minimised because the projects are run on an “all or nothing” basis - so anyone pledging any money for a reward will only be charged if the campaign successfully achieves its target. The money raised will be used to pay for the illustration, layout and initial print run of the book, as well as Kickstarter’s platform and transaction fees, postage and packaging. The Kickstarter funding campaign for Ballistic Kids can be viewed at [www.kickstarter.com/projects/thomcraigen/ballistic-kids](http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/thomcraigen/ballistic-kids).

**Interviews/further information**

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Images: Sample pages from the Ballistic Kids book, illustrated by Matt Riste.

High resolution images available at [www.ballistickids.com/press](http://www.ballistickids.com/press)

 