

# Brian Haner – Biography

Like most musicians who were children of the 60's, Brian Haner received his first guitar after seeing *The Beatles* perform on the Ed Sullivan Show. He was only five years old, but still remembers it as one of the defining moments of his life. "I strummed an old broom and whined for two weeks until my dad finally broke down and bought me a guitar just so I'd shut up and my mom could get back to sweeping."

He joined his first band when he was ten-years old. "It was called, *The Plastic Mind*. We played at a schoolmate's birthday party, but we only knew one song, *Windy*, by *The Association*. We just played it over and over. Midway through the fourth time, the kids rebelled, unplugged us and started playing records. It taught me a valuable lesson that I still use to this day – When you're doing a one hour show, always try to know more than one song."

Haner played in several local bands until he was sixteen. That's when he was asked to join *Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs*. "Nobody remembers them, but everybody remembers their hit songs, *Wooly Bully* & *Little Red Riding Hood*. I spent the entire summer singing *Wooly Bully* behind Sam. It was a bit surreal because the last time I had played that song was on my mom's broom."

He spent his high school years working in nightclubs around the greater Los Angeles area. Just shy of his eighteenth birthday, he auditioned for Frank Zappa. "I auditioned for his touring band, but didn't get the job. I assumed I would never hear from him again, but a few months later I got a call from his office asking if I was available for some session work. Needless to say, it was an unforgettable experience."

After high school, Haner spent a year studying composition, music theory and orchestration at the prestigious Grove School of Music in Los Angeles. During that same time he began a year long relationship with ex-Motown mogul, Norman Whitfield. "Norman penned tunes like *Ain't too Proud to Beg*, *Papa was a Rolling Stone* and *Car Wash*," Haner notes. "Recording for him and watching him produce was like getting a Masters from Julliard – except I didn't get a diploma or the respect that comes with a post-graduate degree."

At the age of 22, Haner signed a multi-record deal with Polydor Records. His first album, *Don't Stop Now*, was released under the pseudonym, *The Brian West Band*, and was certified gold in Scandinavia. "We toured extensively in Europe and had some limited success there," Haner says, "but by the time we got back to the states, the band blew up and we all went our separate ways. I think I may have slept with the bass player's girlfriend. The 80's are kind of a blur."

Haner continued doing session work and working the club circuit in L.A. during the 90's as well as dabbling in television and movie scoring, working on shows like *TV 101* and *Eerie, Indiana*. "Music scores are like wallpaper," Haner explains. "It's there to add ambiance, but you're not supposed to notice it. I had a lot of practice writing music that nobody noticed, so I was confident in my abilities. But wouldn't you know it? They noticed it, so my scoring career was somewhat short-lived."

He was signed to a publishing contract in Nashville as a writer in 2003 and released two indie CD's entitled, *My Old Guitar & Carney Man*, respectively. "No matter how hard I tried to be serious, my songs always came out *left of center*. I was getting far more recognition as a comedy-song writer than I was as a serious one. A lot of my songs were in the first person so nobody wanted to record them. I suppose it makes sense," Haner continues, "I mean, Kenny Chesney doesn't want to sing about being a carney – even though I think he'd make a dandy one."

Haner stepped on stage at The Improv Comedy Club in Los Angeles for the first time as a standup comedian in the summer of 2006. Within six months he was working the comedy circuit full-time, playing to packed houses and getting rave reviews.

In 2007, he lent his talents to the latest Warner Bros. CD by his son's VMA award winning band, *Avenged Sevenfold*. "Watching my son succeed at such a high level and being able to help him has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life – and he gives me free guitar strings."

For the past year, he has been touring the U.S. with Jeff Dunham, selling out arenas from coast to coast. Besides receiving rave reviews as Jeff's opening act, "Guitar Guy", he has brought his gift of song to Jeff's loveable cast of characters. The whole gang will be singing Haner's original tunes on Jeff's upcoming Comedy Central Christmas special and DVD – *Jeff Dunham's Very Special Christmas*. The companion CD, *Don't Come Home For Christmas*, will contain 12 original songs.

On the rare nights Haner has off from The Jeff Dunham Show, he can be seen headlining Improv Comedy Clubs across the country.