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## U.Va. drumline doesn't miss a beat

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"I almost missed the e-mail inviting me to play in the concert," Lindsay Johnson told me over the phone a couple days before Keith Urban and Carrie Underwood performed at John Paul Jones Arena in Charlottesville. "I was clearing out my in-box and noticed a two-day-old message from Bill Pease (U.Va's band director) inviting the drumline to play during the song "I Told You So."

My dad and I already had tickets to the concert and I would have been so bummed if I'd missed that e-mail and then sit in the audience and seen the drumline come out and not be a part of it!" Lindsay transferred to Bridgewater College this spring and commutes to U.Va for marching band. She plays bass drum in the drumline and has been playing drums for 13 years. She gets her talent honestly from her father, Glen, who is also a drummer. Glen works at Culpeper Regional Hospital in nuclear medicine and is a big supporter of the U.Va. band. He drives their van, carries equipment and goes to as many functions as he can. Both Glen and Lindsay are fans of Keith Urban and Carrie Underwood. Lindsay says her favorite Keith Urban song is "You'll Think Of Me." As far as Carrie Underwood is concerned she tells me they "must have voted over 600 times that night for her to win American Idol."

The U.Va Drumline received the music about 10 days prior to the concert. They held two separate one hour rehearsals and then met and rehearsed with Keith Urban's drum tech, Mark Arnold, outside the arena for about an hour on the day of the concert before running through it on stage with the click track. They were joined by 18 additional drummers that day from Tunstall High School and The Virginia Helmsmen to make a total of 32 drummers. The sound was spectacular.

I asked Mark who came up with the idea for the drumline during the song? He said it was all Keith's idea and its Mark's job to organize the various drumlines in the cities where they play.

The actual percussion number entitled "Hot Pepper Cheese" was written by Brian Nutter, one of Keith's guitarists. Brian attended West Virginia University and graduated with a music education major in voice with a minor in percussion. He taught music theory and percussion before touring, first as a guitar tech with Keith and later as a musician in his band.

The drumline consists of various marching percussion instruments: snare drums, tenor drums (also known as quads), bass drums and cymbals. Michael Purvis, a senior at U.Va. and Drumline captain,

plays snare and was right in the middle of the line. It was his responsibility to give the four- beat count to kick everything off. He had heard of Keith Urban but was unfamiliar with his music. He said performing with Keith in that setting was “thrilling” and the hi-def screen made him feel “larger than life.”

Ben Cooper, a senior who has earned the privilege of living on “The Lawn” at U.Va. due to his academic excellence, is the quad section leader. Ben was impressed by how much Keith engaged the audience during his performance and he enjoyed the roar of the crowd and the light show while playing drums on stage.

Laura Chesser plays the cymbals and is also unfamiliar with Keith’s music. She said her friends were jealous that she got to play on stage with Keith Urban. For Laura it was very exciting to be in front of so many people.

She enjoyed watching Carrie Underwood’s quick changes from the sidelines and was impressed that she does her own hair and make-up.

For Lindsay, who plays bass, being on stage was “crazy and intense.” She was so focused while playing that she momentarily forgot where she was. Once finished she realized Keith was directly behind her introducing the band. She said it was an amazing moment and one that she will never forget.

“I can always go see another concert and hear the songs I missed while waiting backstage to come out and perform but I’ll never get another chance like this again,” Lindsey said. “It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!”

To top things off, Lindsay managed to catch the drum stick tossed by Urban’s drummer, Chris McHugh, at the end of the show.

Yes indeed, I’d say it was a good thing Lindsay checked her e-mail. I’ll bet she was singing Keith’s song “Who Wouldn’t Wanna Be Me?” all the way home after the concert that night.

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