

JOSE'S JOURNEY

or How I Met a Rock Legend Through Music

In June 2014, Jose Cortes, a proud guitar player in Vince Womack's Jazz Band, graduated from Foshay Learning Academy in South Los Angeles. His best memories in school were being in band: *"I remember that every time we had a performance, every single one of the band members gave their very best. There were times when we played for just a handful of people and other times we played for hundreds of people. No matter how many people we performed for, everyone played with such passion that it was contagious. Being able to play beside such great musicians that I did not only consider classmates, but family. Those are the best memories I had and will hold and cherish them for the rest of my life."*

MHOF donated instruments to Mr. Womack's music program over the years and invited his jazz quartet to play at a small event at board member Robert Cort's home. Eddie and Janie Van Halen were invited to attend. Eddie donated 75 guitars that went to 7 LA area schools and Jose was lucky enough to get one to play. Eddie was excited to see a student play one. *"When Mr. Womack asked me to be part of the four people that would be performing, he never mentioned that Eddie Van Halen would be there. I understand why he would not tell me. If he told me he was going to be there I probably would have had a nervous attack before even arriving at the location. When I met him, I was in complete shock. I never imagined that I would get the privilege to talk to him and perform a few steps away from him."*

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Eddie was so inspired after the event, he offered to come to Foshay to surprise the music class and talk to the kids about music: *"I was very happy when he came in the classroom and as soon as he saw me, he recognized me and called me by my name. His origins as a musician inspired us all to be the best we could ever be to obtain our goals. At the end, not only did I get to talk to him, but he himself taught me a guitar lesson from one of my favorite songs: 'Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love'. That was one of the greatest experiences I ever had."*



Eddie Van Halen, Jose, and Vince Womack

Now a freshman at Cal State University Northridge, Jose doesn't have much time to play music, but every now and then picks up his guitar: *"I try to stay connected with music as much as I can. I cannot let that passion fade away. Being in the music program meant a great deal for me. Being in the jazz band was a good way to deal with stress from school and it also helped me develop skills that could be applied outside the band room. For instance being part of the means you have to be patient, be perseverant, communicate, and be able to listen. All those things not only apply to other classes but to our daily lives in general. I feel thankful for being part of the band because although I only joined during my senior year of high school, I got to experience many things with many fantastic people."*

Jose hopes to become a physical therapist for athletes and is studying Kinesiology. It was a privilege to know him and to hear him play. Jose - you are a rock star!