



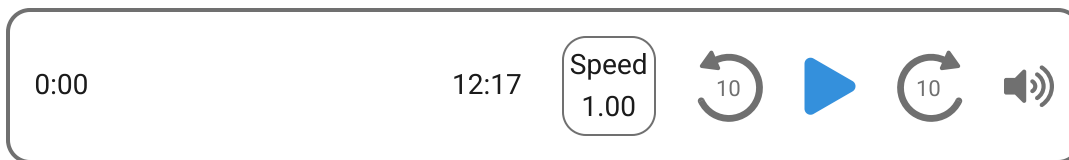
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Teenagers Jack Ziesemer and DJ BK build momentum in fledgling music careers by following their passions

July 3, 2026 | [Dave Lindquist](#)

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Already accomplished musicians as teenagers, Ben “DJ BK” Karazim and Jack Ziesemer have honed their craft for a decade.

Their origin stories have little in common, but 18-year-old Karazim and 17-year-old Ziesemer are emerging forces in the Indianapolis music community.

Karazim, who graduated from [Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School](#) this spring, recalls being 7 when he asked his parents for lessons at Broad Ripple’s Deckademics DJ and production school.

“I was playing basketball at First Baptist Athletics, and my parents said, ‘All right, if you make enough shots in the game,

we will get you DJ lessons,” Karazim said. “They incentivized me.”

Ziesemer, who’s progressing through academic courses while being home-schooled, said he was an avid Guitar Hero video game player at age 7.

“I distinctly remember having Christmas money and going into this thrift store to buy some sort of Guitar Hero thing,” Ziesemer said. “I walked out with a pawn shop [Fender] Stratocaster for \$50. ... It was about as tall as I was.”

By studying DJ skills such as turntablism, cross-fading and beat-matching, Karazim has ascended to the role of resident DJ for home games played by the [i Indiana Pacers](#) and [i Indiana Fever](#). Karazim was 15 when he made his first trip to perform in Ibiza, Spain — a Mediterranean island known as the global capital of electronic dance music.

There’s more to DJ BK than the stage, Karazim said.

“People see the guy rocking the crowds, cleaning up after the gig and driving away,” he said. “At the same time, there are early mornings responding to emails, sending thank you notes, putting out feelers for events and creating videos to promote my brand. The music performance aspects and behind-the-scenes entrepreneurship and business really go hand in hand.”



Ben Karazim performs as a DJ in Ibiza, Spain, the global capital of electronic dance music. (Photo courtesy of Barbara Siewer Photography)

Ziesemer, meanwhile, was 13 when he released his debut single, “Fool Out of You,” an original blues-rock composition in the style of the White Stripes or Black Keys. He subsequently issued one solo album per year from 2023 through 2026, drawing inspiration from genre-bending artists Beck, Pavement, the Flaming Lips and more.

Vocalist-guitarist Ziesemer also is a member of Indianapolis-based rock band New Disaster, and he made an album with bygone band the Problem Children in 2023.

Ziesemer, who carries a bag of his favorite compact discs wherever he goes, isn’t overly concerned with marketing his music on social media. He follows his influences who made alternative rock 30 years ago.

“I think people are going back to that ’90s way of promotion: Just play a bunch of shows, get opening slots, and get your name out there,” he said. “Sell merch, make physical media.”

Before their next chapters unfold, Karazim and Ziesemer talked with IBJ about their early achievements.

Infectious energy

May was a big month for DJ BK.

He spun tunes from the flag stand at the [!\[\]\(5361750c22c4e047a52f4eac1ec2d4cc_img.jpg\) Indianapolis Motor Speedway](#) during the May 2 dance party of Rev, the annual fundraiser for the [!\[\]\(f276343e5e0d2402c20fdc9e8443c0dd_img.jpg\) Indiana University Health Foundation](#).

On May 14, Karazim pulled a memorable double duty as the DJ who opened the show for [!\[\]\(870f5d5e9c0d57485634be3ecf52f3ca_img.jpg\) Eli Lilly and Co.](#)’s 150th anniversary downtown before driving to Carmel to provide the soundtrack for an event billed as “Victory & Vision: A Night with IU Athletics” at the Payne & Mencias Palladium.

At the Lilly concert, the bill included Lenny Kravitz, the Lumineers and a DJ set by Janelle Monae. In Carmel, IU football coach Curt Cignetti was the main attraction.

This fall, Karazim will enroll as a freshman at IU's Bloomington campus, where he's earned the prestigious Wells scholarship that includes the full cost of attendance for four years.

He's the son of Andrew Karazim and Heather Karazim. Heather is an IU alum who works at Lilly. Karazim's grandfather, Michael Rodman, is a former Marion County treasurer, and his great-grandfather, Allen Burke, worked at Lilly for 42 years.

Heather initially contacted Deckademics co-founder Nick "DJ MetroGnome" Saligoe about the possibility of her son taking DJ classes as a 7-year-old. Saligoe said 10 is a more common age for beginners, but Ben made a strong impression as a music lover.

"You can't find somebody who looks like they're having a better time when you watch him play," Saligoe said of Karazim today. "It's kind of infectious. If you see this young person playing with so much joy, people naturally gravitate to that. It's no surprise that he's done well for himself."

Founded in 2014, Deckademics has a wait list of more than 200 people hoping to enroll for weekly DJ classes. One of the company's early success stories was Ryan "DJ Prince" Robinson, who graduated from the program at age 13 and now tours as a supporting act for R&B group Tony! Toni! Toné!

Karazim said he travels with a laptop computer, DJ controller, headphones and a USB drive of songs when playing road gigs. In Indianapolis, he likes to apply an old-school touch.

“When I perform here, it’s important to bring a bit of vinyl and play on turntables,” Karazim said. “That’s my true at-home setup, and that’s how I learned with Nick at Deckademics.”

On the modern music landscape, one viral video clip can launch a DJ’s career, and talent buyers often want proof of a significant online following before hiring a DJ.

“Things have obviously changed a lot with streaming and the turnover of social media, for better or worse,” Saligoe said. “DJs have to adopt a Swiss Army knife approach. We have to do all of the things, which can be great for the people who are comfortable doing that. It also can be very tiresome. But I think [Karazim is] young enough, and he’s grown up with the internet and with these tools. I don’t think he feels threatened by them, which is good.”



Nick Saligoe (IBJ file photo)

Karazim’s resume includes the production of his own songs. He issued his debut single, “Acid Groove,” in partnership with Baltimore-based Quantize Recordings in 2022. His 2026 output includes the singles “Reach to the Top” and “Eiviza” — his tribute to Ibiza.

By landing on the roster of resident DJs for online platform Ibiza Stardust Radio, Karazim scored an invitation to DJ on the island as a 15-year-old.

“It was my first time out of the continent, speaking Spanish and meeting DJs from all over the world,” Karazim said. “Ibiza is a magical place, I have to admit. Every day feels like the weekend. There’s a very laid-back culture, believe it or not, on that island and an appreciation for turntablism and the art of the DJ.”

'True rock believer'

Ziesemer is the son of a pair of singer-songwriters, Greg Ziesemer and Kriss Lockett.

Greg Ziesemer has been a member of the Earthtones, Spud Puppies and the Spirtles, a group frequently described as Indiana's "original jam band." Lockett sang in a Muncie-based band known as Fire Hydrant, Man and Indianapolis-based folk-rock band Diamonds & Rust.

Jack Ziesemer co-produced his father's new solo album, "Acceptance."

"I enjoyed working on that, because it definitely got me out of my usual wheelhouse by trying to make something polished," Jack Ziesemer said. "A lot of my music is deliberately kind of noisy or rough. Trying to make something that's a clean product and accessible and pleasing to the ears was something different for me."

Scheduled to play a July 4 show at all-ages venue Healer, 3631 E. Raymond St., Ziesemer said listening to Beatles albums "Rubber Soul" and "Revolver" as a 5-year-old sparked his love of music.



Jack Ziesemer, now 17, was 13 when he released his debut single, "Fool Out of You." (IBJ photo/Chad Williams)

Ziesemer's family lived in Madison for the first 12 years of his life. Indianapolis-based musician Tim Brickley was visiting the Ohio River community to play a show when he first met Jack.

Brickley served as the producer of Ziesemer's first album with the Problem Children. That pop-punk band played a Record Store Day show on the sidewalk outside Brickley's recording studio, Hit City, and record store, Different Beat, at 707 E. 54th St., in 2023.

When Ziesemer makes solo albums, he plays all the instruments aside from cameo appearances by guest players. He produced, engineered, mixed and mastered the 10 songs of his current album, "Circulus."

Brickley refers to Ziesemer as a "true rock believer" and someone working in the tradition of self-sufficient artists Todd Rundgren and Prince.

“He’s writing a tremendous amount of music, and he’s taught himself how to play all the instruments in a very appropriate and smart way,” said Brickley, leader of Tim Brickley and the Bleeding Hearts.

Ziesemer said his prolific output arrives in waves.

“It depends on the day,” Ziesemer said. “There are some days when I feel like I have three different songs I want to write all at the same time. There are other days when you can’t come up with something. But usually, I tend to have a melody line in my head, or I’ll fumble around on guitar and come up with something I really like.”

In addition to this year’s “Circulus,” Ziesemer’s discography of solo albums includes “Warm Days of the New Harvest” (2023), “Everything, Nothing, and All” (2024) and “Year of the Frog” (2025).

Brickley, who organizes a “Troubadour Night” original music series that moves to 317 Burger, 915 E. Westfield Blvd., on Monday, said Ziesemer likely will have a chance to trade in his do-it-yourself approach for signing with a record label.

“He can keep making great records until somebody hears it and says, ‘Hey, we’ll give you some money, and we’ll do all the grunt work. How does that sound?’ But it’s hard to build up a profitable career, especially one that sustains,” Brickley said. “I don’t think it’s about social media buzz. I think it’s about making great music. That’s what Jack is undeniably doing, and I’m sure the world will hear lots of music from him.”

Regarding his age, Ziesemer said he doesn’t want to be treated differently than an artist of any other age. And he encourages anyone to make art.

“You can start creating art at any time, but right now is always going to be the best time,” Ziesemer said. “I don’t want people to see me getting a head start and think, ‘Oh, well, I’m fortysomething, and I’ve never made a record. So why should I start now?’ I want people to realize that art is not something you should be afraid of. I think it’s something that should be for everybody, because even if a piece of art isn’t traditionally ‘good,’ I think its existence is important enough.”

Ahead of their time

Ben “DJ BK” Karazim, DJ, producer

Age: 18

Career highlights

- Resident DJ, Indiana Pacers and Indiana Fever home games
- Resident DJ, Ibiza Stardust Radio
- Issued debut single, “Acid Groove,” in partnership with Baltimore-based Quantize Recordings, in 2022

Jack Ziesemer, vocalist, guitarist, producer

Age: 17

Solo albums

- “Warm Days of the New Harvest” (2023)
- “Everything, Nothing, and All” (2024)
- “Year of the Frog” (2025)
- “Circulus” (2026)

Source: IBJ research

Behind the scenes

When discussing the future, both Karazim and Ziesemer said their work could expand beyond the DJ booth and stage.

Karazim plans to pursue a double degree of music business and Spanish at IU, where he said the music business program addresses both the artist and administrative aspects of the industry.

“There are two paths,” Karazim said of his prospects. “My dream is to continue making music and performing. I want to be able to fully sustain myself being a traveling DJ and experience the different cultures of the world.”

The other path, he said, could include law school and studying to become an entertainment attorney. Karazim mentioned the roles of talent manager and record-label executive as other possibilities.

Ziesemer said he's highly interested in serving as recording engineer and producer on other people's work.

He points to Rundgren, who produced albums by artists such as XTC and the New York Dolls, and late Cars vocalist Ric Ocasek, who produced albums by Weezer and Guided by Voices, as high-profile performers who found success in production roles.

"I want to start working in studios," Ziesemer said. "I think the layering of sounds is my favorite part. The songwriting part is cool, and I do like it. Playing shows is fun, but I've never really been concerned with the whole fame or rock star shtick. I would rather make the music and have it be separate from me."•

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Lindquist joined IBJ in October 2021 after working as a reporter, copy editor and page designer at newspapers in Indiana, Illinois and New York since 1991. He's also host of "The Beat with Dave Lindquist" on WTTS. He lives in Indianapolis, and when he's not working, he enjoys getting outside with his wife, teenage son and their Aussiedoodle puppy.