I'll always remember my first marching band performance. We played "Jurassic Park" and ended the show with a company-front formation, high-stepping in cut time. We ended on the sidelines, playing with horns up to our home fans.

As a college band, our primary goal involved support of the football team (see "Smells Like Team Spirit" on page 30). Yet with every show we learned, we grew as musicians and as people. So I truly can attest to the value and fun of marching in a noncompetitive setting.

On the other hand, this issue of Halftime Magazine focuses on competition. Our cover story, "Battle of the Bands," page 24, highlights the show-style bands from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, where halftime is like going to war. "To Compete or Not To Compete, page 18, poses the important question: Does competing help or hurt students and the school's overall marching program? And "Demystifying the Judging Process," page 22, gives valuable advice to those who do choose to compete. We also profile and congratulate the 2007 Drum Corps International World Champions, page 34.

So since I never marched competitively, I felt I should share this letter with my husband, Josh. He served as drum major of the Ferndale (Mich.) High School Golden Eagle Marching Band in 1993. Incidentally, Ferndale is now a three-
I just want to wish you and the Halftime Magazine staff the best of luck and future success with the magazine.

As a freelance AV person in the drum corps (including DCI) and marching band championships nationwide, I believe that your publication will be a welcome addition for those with drum corps/marching band ties attending DCI.

From what I have seen in the last several months and presently, there has been such a huge fan buzz about DCI Pasadena from local to national.

The word is: Fans around the country (me included) have been waiting so long to finally come to the West Coast for DCI and where else but in the Rose Bowl.

At the same time, West Coast fans have been waiting forever and a day for the DCI Championship to finally touch down on West Coast turf.

Local fans + national fans = “a well-deserved weekend party!!!!!!!”

Hope to meet you in between the corps shows. I will be on the Tom Blair/ESPN-TV crew (field audio-shotgun mic) near the 50-yard line. I refer to it as “my field office.” Thank you for a moment of your time.

Once again, best of luck,
Joe Anthony
JAG Productions
Southington, Ct.
In the shadows of the ESPN
Broadcast Center near Bristol, Ct.

I am a 1989 Sac State graduate and a former marching band student. I marched all through junior high, high school and college, and I also marched with the Spirit of America Marching Band on their 1989 tour of Europe.

I was browsing on Drum Corps Planet and came upon the link to your magazine. In short, this magazine is something that the marching community has needed for a long time. To my knowledge there have been attempts in the past to develop marching band magazines, none have succeeded. Hopefully you will do well and become an exception.

Sincerely yours,
Paul Mendez, Sac State 1989

Followup message:
I just wanted to let you know that I got my issue of Halftime Magazine last week. It looks really nice, and it made my day when I got it. Here’s hoping for many more in the coming years. Anyway, thanks again and looking forward to the next one.

Congratulations on this new venture. It looks great, and I can tell you’ve put a tremendous amount of hard work and passion into this magazine. I just got off the phone with my friend and band director of the Ferndale High School Band Program, Elon Jamison, and he said he was interviewed by an intern for the Sept/Oct issue. Very cool. . . .

The Ferndale Band as well as the entire fine arts program continues to be one of the strongest in the area. Obviously, we are very proud of the marching band, which has won three state championships in a row. The first championship was my last as director with my son Gordon as drum major and my other son Gregory in the pit, playing keyboards. I have moved on to become the assistant principal at Ferndale after 23 years as band and orchestra director. Gregory will be a senior this year as the band goes for four in a row. . . .

Keep up the great work, Christine.

Roger Smith
Ferndale High School
Assistant Principal

My oldest daughter turned down Berkeley because she hated their band uniforms. My youngest daughter is interested in Northwestern (she’s a high school junior, and, like her sister, drum major). Hope you’ll have a great looking-at-colleges section.

Susan Boiko
Band Mom
GOLDEN EAGLE

Elon Jamison, director of the Ferndale (Mich.) High School Golden Eagle Marching Band, shares his thoughts on competition, his career and his band's three-peat as state champions.

For the past three years, the Ferndale (Mich.) High School Golden Eagle Marching Band has finished first in Flight III of the Michigan Competing Band Association (MCBA). How has this success affected the band and community? Halftime Magazine recently caught up with head director Elon Jamison, who discusses his emphasis on musicality as well as his philosophy on competition.

Halftime: What do you love most about marching band and being a director?
Jamison: It's getting to go through the process that I like best. All the people involved are people that I respect a lot. By that, I mean the rest of the staff, the parents who are heavily involved and the kids.
The performance and competition side is really cool, and we enjoy it, but it’s the process and spending the time creating a show with them that I really enjoy. The concept that goes into it and the process to make it into a finished product: that’s the best part.

**HalfTime:** Where did you go to school? How has that affected you as a director?

**Jamison:** I got my undergrad in music education and bassoon performance at Northwestern University in Evanston [Ill.], and then I did my master’s in wind conducting at Michigan State [in East Lansing]. Both experiences prepared me quite well. I worked with some fantastic professors, and I learned from them both in terms of content and how to motivate. I learned where the bar should be set in terms of excellence.

**HalfTime:** How would you describe your teaching style?

**Jamison:** I try to be inspiring, but not by any dog and pony show. For the kids, what they see is what they get. I try to demonstrate that you don’t need to put on an act.

Certainly I want to get to know the kids, and knowing those individuals helps me do my job, but at the same time, we—students and teachers—are in service of the music. That’s sort of my ethos when it comes to marching band as well as concert band. The music comes first.

I’ve had many people throughout my career say marching band is a horrible thing, that it’s anti-educational, that people are only interested in winning and sacrifice the music. So I try really hard to do just the opposite. I see my job as making sure that we are as true to the music and honest to our interpretation of it as we can be.

**HalfTime:** What are some of the most important lessons you’ve taught your students?

**Jamison:** Hard work pays off. It’s taught them that it’s the process and relationships you build in any activity that are important. You’re never going to say, “Gee, I wish I’d spent more time at the office.” You want to make sure that the time you spend doing anything is worth your while. The kids that walk out of our program are better for it. They’re smarter, better lateral thinkers. They’ve been forced to use all parts of their brain and body at the same time.

**HalfTime:** What is your philosophy on competition? Do you believe it is important for high school bands to compete?

**Jamison:** Our society is a competitive one—we compete for jobs and contracts; we compete to get into college. To deny that is doing our young a disservice. At the same time, though, if you look at the front page of the BOA [Bands of America] rulebook and the MCBA rulebook, there’s a statement about the dangers of competition.

To a certain extent, I think we’ve gotten ourselves caught up in those dangers—especially these last three years. I’d never say we regret winning three state champs in a row—of course, I’m so proud of our band—but it’s so tempting to lose sight of what’s important. It’s the process and the people, not just winning. It’s a fallacy to assume for one moment that if you don’t get first place that you’re unsuccessful.

That’s what we’re trying to keep sight of this year. We could win a fourth, and that’s great, but band is supposed to be about fun.

**HalfTime:** How does it feel to be defending state champions of the past three years? Is there a lot of anticipation?

**Jamison:** It feels good; there’s no question. The parents, staff, students and community have really gotten behind us, especially the first year. The police gave us an escort out of town going to state finals. We have a sign on all the major streets that says “Welcome to Ferndale, Home of the 2004, 2005 and 2006 State Champion Marching Band.” And that’s pretty cool. But at the same time, it’s hard to be on top. You’re the band that everyone’s gunning for.