

**Ernie Ball Launches *PLAY* Warped Tour – Opportunity for Unsigned Bands to Perform on the Vans Warped Tour and Record with New Found Glory’s Chad Gilbert**

*The annual unsigned artist program, now in its 20th year, gives 41 bands the opportunity to play live on the Vans Warped Tour Main Stages on the summer’s largest music tour; Grand prize-winning band to record an EP produced by Chad Gilbert and over $40,000 in cash and prizes*

*Past winners and finalists of Ernie Ball’s unsigned band programs include Maroon 5’s James Valentine, PVRIS, Night Argent, Me Like Bees, Beautiful Bodies, Danielle Barbe and last year’s winner, Marina City*

(Coachella, CA, March 1, 2016) Ernie Ball, the world’s premier manufacturer of musical instruments, guitar strings and accessories, today announced Ernie Ball *PLAY* Warped Tour, the 20th installment of the family-owned instrument manufacturer’s annual unsigned artist program. Submissions begin today, allowing bands across the country the chance to be selected to receive career-altering opportunities and prizes. Ernie Ball has helped the careers of many well-known past participants, including members of Maroon 5, PVRIS and Nothing More.

“Ernie Ball’s Battle of the Bands was a game-changer for me. That contest is the reason I was able to make the move from Nebraska to L.A. and start this 15 year odyssey of a career,” says James Valentine, lead guitarist of the GRAMMY® Award-winning band Maroon 5. “It’s great that Ernie Ball gives this gift back to the music community. It’s a big part of why I chose to work with them on the Valentine guitar: they actually care about the players and are a big part of the community as a whole.”

Now in its 20th year, Ernie Ball’s longstanding unsigned artist program in partnership with the Van’s Warped Tour has become one of the leading platforms for up-and-coming acts, giving unsigned artists across the nation an opportunity to perform at some of the largest events and tours in the country. With thousands of bands participating annually in the competition, it has become a staple for the festival every year.

"The Vans Warped Tour is honored to partner with Ernie Ball for the *PLAY* Warped program, giving unsigned bands the opportunity to play the Tour each summer,” said Kevin Lyman, Vans Warped Founder. “Ernie Ball, together with the Vans Warped Tour, has been an important avenue for bands to jumpstart their careers. Through this partnership, it is our continued goal to encourage and support up-and-coming musicians and propel them to the next level."

“I started this program twenty years ago because the opportunity to experience playing music live seemed to be dwindling,” said Ernie Ball CEO Sterling Ball. “The opportunities are even fewer and far between today. That makes us even more passionate about continuing to create the programs that give bands the exposure and experience of playing these world-class events.”

**ENTRY PROCESS**

* Entries open March 1, 2016, and end on May 31, 2016.
* Unsigned bands enter their profile online for free at <http://ernieball.com/play>, upload their original music and choose a show date they wish to apply for.
* Bands are given digital promotional tool kits to promote their submissions, which are ranked using a proprietary algorithm that tracks social aggregation.
* Kevin Lyman and Chad Gilbert of New Found Glory will review the submissions for each market and choose a winner.

*NOTE: One band per tour stop will be chosen to perform on the Vans Warped Tour Main Stages, with one band from the 41 winners being chosen as the grand prize winner.*

**THE GRAND PRIZE:**

* 3-song EP produced by New Found Glory Guitarist and Producer Chad Gilbert.
* $10,000 in cash.
* Mentoring session with Kevin Lyman, Chad Gilbert, and Hopeless Records.
* $10,000 Guitar Center gear card.
* Thousands of dollars of new state-of-the-art equipment and gear from - DW, DTS, Electro-voice, Blue Microphones, Apogee, TC Electronic, Zildjian, Blackstar, Sterling by Music Man and MarkBass.

**About Ernie Ball:**

In 1962, veteran player and teacher Ernie Ball created Slinkys®, the iconic light gauge electric guitar strings widely revered by hundreds of guitar greats including Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, Jimmy Page, Paul McCartney, Metallica, Brad Paisley, Slash, John Petrucci, The Edge and John Mayer. In addition to industry-standard strings, as well as hand-crafted high-end Music Man® guitars and basses, Ernie Ball Inc. offers state-of-the-art instrument accessories that are carried in more than 6,000 stores in the U.S. and 120 countries worldwide. The family-run company maintains its founder's dedication to preserving the musician's playing experience and delivering superior sound quality through the development of new products, such as Cobalt Slinkys, M-Steel, Earthwood and the revolutionary Element Shield Packaging, which hermetically seals guitar strings to keep each set as fresh as the day they were made. The company also fosters artist development through musician-focused programs such as the world's largest and longest running Battle of the Bands, where unsigned bands compete each year for the chance to play live on national tours, festivals and events. Visit them online at[www.ernieball.com](http://www.ernieball.com) and [www.music-man.com](http://www.music-man.com).

**About Warped Tour:**

The Vans Warped Tour® is well known as America’s longest running touring music festival of the summer. Since 1995, the tour has been a showcase for both established and up and coming talent, across a wide range of eclectic sub-genres. The tour has also cemented its place in history by bringing alternative rock and skate culture from the underground to the forefront of global youth culture, while at the same time helping those in need through non-profit and eco initiatives. Alternative Press readers voted the Vans Warped Tour as the “Best Tour/Festival” and Rolling Stone called it “America’s Most Successful Festival”.  Now in its 22nd year, the 41-date tour will commence June 24 in Dallas, TX and end on August 13 in Portland, OR. For more information, visit <http://vanswarpedtour.com>.

**About Chad Gilbert:**

Chad Gilbert is a musician/producer best known for his work as lead guitarist of pop punk outfit New Found Glory. Since forming in 1997, the band has released eight studio albums, 3 of which are gold certified. New Found Glory released their newest album *Resurrection* last year via Hopeless Records, and the album debuted at #25 on the Billboard Top 200 chart. Gilbert has produced over a dozen records, including A Day To Remember’s *Homesick*, *What Separates Me From You* and *Common Courtesy*, H20’s *Nothing To Prove*, and Lisa Loeb's *No Fairy Tale*.

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