

# 20 questions

Interview by **Makensie Coslett**

Photography by **Shannon Zahnle & Shanti Knight**

## for **Chi Chi Lightning & Tino Esposito**

### **IU's Middle-age Video Stars Are **BMOG** Once Again**

After nearly a quarter-century away from the IU scene, Chi Chi Lightning and Tino Esposito, both now 46, returned with a bang to their alma mater in time for the 2010-11 basketball season.

Their video “IU Anthem” transformed the IU fight song into a rap song (with a few obscenities scattered willy-nilly) and became an instant hit on YouTube, with well over a hundred thousand views at press time. This fluke video was soon eclipsed by their appearance in the even more popular “This Is Indiana” video (nearly half a million views) created in collaboration with their alter egos, IU students Daniel Weber and Brice Fox. “This Is Indiana” was shown at Assembly Hall on the Jumbotron during IU men’s basketball games, and Chi Chi and Tino got to run around with flags during game breaks.

How is this middle-age duet managing/ exploiting their newfound fame? They charge to show up at parties, sell “This Is Indiana” T-shirts, earn royalties from iTunes, and, oh yes, they claim much success with the ladies.

*Bloom* student-intern Makensie Coslett caught up with the dynamic duo for this exclusive interview.



(clockwise from top) Chi Chi (left) and Tino at the IU vs. Illinois basketball game at Assembly Hall; the crazy pair often intimidates players on opposing teams, here with a “big head” of iconic IU Coach Bobby Knight; Chi Chi runs around the court participating in the flag ceremony during a time out. *Photos by Shanti Knight*



(left) Fashion icon Chi Chi brings the looks to the dynamic duo and (right) Tino attracts girls with his music theory, which is like pizza.

Photos by Shannon Zahnle

## 'We are the four-leaf clover of Indiana basketball.' —Chi Chi

I would like to state publicly on the record that I have never murdered anyone, although I have seen some pretty disgusting things.

**CHI CHI** He's killed some hearts.

**TINO** I have broken some hearts but I will never break anyone's life.

**BLOOM** Chi Chi, that is a very Latino-sounding name, yet you are not Latino. Why did your parents name you Chi Chi?

**CHI CHI** Funny story about that. At birth I was covered in hair from head to toe and I reminded my parents of a Chia Pet. So they called me Chi Chi. I was definitely an accident child and I think they still might have plans to sell me into a drug cartel.

**BLOOM** Chi Chi, I also heard that you still live in your parent's basement. Is that true?

**CHI CHI** They're more like my roommates and the basement is more like my creativity cave where I come up with ideas for these songs.

**BLOOM** What inspired the two of you to do the "IU Anthem" video?

**TINO** It was a celebration of the chaos that we liked to create as students and it highlighted and encompassed everything that we went through as college students—from all the chicks we picked up to all the times we got arrested and ran around naked. We thought it was important to share these experiences with the world, the story of Chi Chi and Tino.

**CHI CHI** We wanted to show everyone that we are still relevant and that we are still fashionable and hip. As an apparel merchandising major, I have always kept up with the current trends. We still share what students at IU share today and we wanted to show that in the video and get them involved with it, too.

**BLOOM** What did you study while you were at IU?

**TINO** I studied marketing. My family, the Espositos, are well known in the Chicago manufacturing community. They make offers you can't refuse.

**CHI CHI** I studied apparel merchandising. I didn't really do anything with it, but I still see myself as a fashion icon.

**BLOOM** Chi Chi, you grew up here. What was that like?

**CHI CHI** It was amazing. I've always been a Hoosier. I knew I was going to go to IU right after birth. I was always the most popular kid in school, the most talked about, and that's just never really changed.

**BLOOM** How did the two of you meet?

**CHI CHI** We were at a John Mellencamp Christmas party. I was in a deep conversation with Jack and Diane and Tino just stumbled into the room, and I was like, "Hey, he's a cool guy and he wears what I wear."

**BLOOM** How long have the two of you been singing/songwriting?

**TINO** Personally, I've been singing forever. My parents were both musically inclined. When Chi Chi and I discovered that we both had a passion for '80s pop, it just took off from there and we've been making music ever since.

**CHI CHI** My family wasn't musically inclined whatsoever, you can probably tell that. It's more charm and creativity that I bring to the collaboration.

**TINO** I think Chi Chi brings the looks. I like to think I bring the music theory.

**BLOOM** What is your theory on music?

**TINO** My theory on music is that it makes the world go 'round. Music is incredible in every way in terms of meeting people, picking up chicks, and going to frat parties.

**CHI CHI** Tino told me this once: "Music theory is very much like a pizza. If you have a pizza, you're going to get girls, it's self-fulfilling, and it just makes everybody feel good." That's something I'll never forget about Tino.

**BLOOM** Tino, I heard a rumor that your family was in the Mafia.

**TINO** Yes, that is true. We were in the Mafia and I did witness a lot of drug trafficking growing up. I saw my father murder a few people. However,



**BLOOM** Both of you make several appearances in “This is Indiana.” How did a couple of cool cats like you get along with nerds like Brice Fox and Daniel Weber?

**CHI CHI** It was embarrassing. Some of our biggest fans are calling us sellouts because we have chosen to work with those people. We went a little mainstream with that video, but, hey, it’s something we sacrificed for the common good.

**TINO** It was a way to show that we’re still relevant, to show that we’re still edgy and that we can still party.

**CHI CHI** That we can still hang with the boys.

**TINO** And that girls, obviously, still love us.

**TINO** L.A. is definitely calling.

**CHI CHI** It’s hard to deal with at times. We’ve had to change our phone numbers every month just because it’s voicemail after voicemail.

**TINO** They’ve seen our video and know that we’re attractive and could be pop icons. But we’re having none of it.

**CHI CHI** Dean’s Milk actually approached me after our first video. I had a nice milk scene in the video and they wanted to make it part of their marketing plan but I turned them down. We’re not selling out to that level—at least, not yet.

**BLOOM** Are you working on any projects right now that you can discuss?

**TINO** Just friends, just a friendly cigar, every once in awhile.

**BLOOM** Would you consider yourselves good luck charms as far as IU basketball is concerned?

**CHI CHI** Absolutely, we are the four-leaf clover of Indiana basketball.

**TINO** Yes. We have seen a lot of games especially with the ’87 championship run. The recent games have competed with what the old Assembly Hall was like and what Hoosier fans are used to, the rowdiness and craziness of the fans.

**BLOOM** What are your thoughts about next year’s team?

**TINO** I recently spoke with Tom Crean about an assistant coaching job. I thought, maybe just for the wow factor I could bring on the bench, that might help.

**CHI CHI** But he didn’t want just one, he wanted both of us so he’s going to have to make room on the staff.

**TINO** Can’t you just imagine us sitting there on the bench intimidating the other team’s players?

**BLOOM** What are your plans for this year’s Little 500? Any special appearances or invitations?

**TINO** We will be VIP members at the parade and at the race.

**CHI CHI** And it’s possible we might be doing a live performance at the race, so you all should come. My shorts will be extra short and extra tight.

**TINO** My mustache will be extra thick and extra...

**CHI CHI** Flowing, like my hair.

**BLOOM** Do you believe it’s true that it is never too late to be the big man on campus?

**CHI CHI** Never. We will always be the big men on campus.

**TINO** As long as I live.

**CHI CHI** And as long as I live.

## ‘Music theory is very much like a pizza.’ —Tino

**BLOOM** Do either of you have any romance in your lives right now?

**TINO** What, the girl last night?

**CHI CHI** That is girls, plural. And where are you talking about? At Assembly Hall or in the car ride over? Just kidding. I actually have a significant relationship going on right now. Her name is Lesandra Lambfardi. She’s a sweetheart. She cooks and cleans, she puts up with a lot.

**TINO** I am still single and I don’t really plan on settling down because I’m still kicking. Let’s just say I still have the magic and I am very proud of that.

**BLOOM** Do you see yourselves more like George Clooney and Brad Pitt or like P. Diddy and Lil Wayne?

**CHI CHI** Definitely George Clooney and Brad Pitt.

**TINO** You know they’re usually associated with awards such as sexiest men alive and hottest 100 men and we like to think that we’re right up there with them. And they both had mustaches in their day and we can respect that, the mustaches and the sexiness that George Clooney and Brad Pitt have.

**BLOOM** Have the two of you ever been approached by talent scouts, music producers, or movie directors?

**CHI CHI** Yes, unfortunately we are working with Brice Fox and Daniel Weber again. They have a big project coming up with the Little 500. Brice and Daniel need the cool factor, they need the ladies, so they need us.

**BLOOM** Are Brice and Daniel writing the whole script or are you helping with that?

**CHI CHI** They can say that they have written everything, but really we have.

**TINO** Ultimately, they are going to channel some Chi Chi and Tino into their music and into their screenplay. Probably a lot of Chi Chi and Tino, let’s be honest.

**CHI CHI** It’s Little 500. Who would do it better than Chi Chi and Tino?

**BLOOM** I heard the two of you smoked Cubans with Mark Cuban. Is that true?

**CHI CHI** Cubans, yes.

**TINO** Mark Cuban is a great guy, we’re big fans and I think that’s why Brice and Daniel included him in their rap video. And that is another reason why we wanted to work with them. They’re admiring of Mark Cuban and we’re friends with Mark Cuban so it was just a mutual friendship that helped us work together.

**CHI CHI** It’s purely friendship with Mark Cuban, we are definitely not looking for money or job opportunities or networking or anything like that with the guy. We’re just friends.

Watch ‘This is Indiana’  
and ‘IU Anthem’  
on [magbloom.com](http://magbloom.com)

[magbloom.com/chichi-tino](http://magbloom.com/chichi-tino)

# Brice Fox & Daniel Weber

## The Egos Behind the Alter Egos



**I**t may be surprising how well Brice Fox, 23, and Daniel Weber, 21, relate to their comedic creations Chi Chi Lightning and Tino Esposito, characters who are, as Fox describes them, “in their 40s and still living in the ’70s with their mustaches.”

But Chi Chi and Tino are more than stage names for the comedy/music duo. “They have turned into our official alter egos,” Fox says. “But we don’t claim them, and they don’t claim us. It’s a love/hate relationship.”

“I am not Daniel Weber when I dress up as Tino,” Weber says. “I am a completely different person.”

The relationship of Fox and Weber to their alter egos is reminiscent of John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd performing as the Blues Brothers and to the more recent duo of New Zealanders Bret McKenzie and Jemaine Clement, stars of the HBO series *Flight of the Conchords*. Like these successful comedy/music acts, Fox and Weber have genuine musical talent and, like

the Conchords, write their own songs.

Weber, who attended high school in suburban Chicago, was a ‘gleek,’” he says, “a glee club geek.” He continued singing at IU and began collaborating with Fox after they met at a Big Man On Campus competition.

Fox, a telecommunications major who graduates in May, is a Bloomington native and has a lifetime connection with IU. Although Weber moved back to Chicago in December after he graduated with a marketing degree from Kelley School of Business, he still visits frequently and has strong IU ties.

“I come from a family of IU grads,” Weber says, including his father and both sets of grandparents. They love the video, he says. “It’s kind of heart-warming for them to see one of the Weber children carrying on the name at IU. It’s been pretty neat to know that I made them proud.”

Fox and Weber’s videos can be found on their YouTube channel, IURemix



Brice Fox (left) and Daniel Weber chillin’ with the Herman B Wells statue. Photo by Shannon Zahnle

(youtube.com/user/IURemix). YouTube has several school-spirit videos, such as “Teach Me How to Bucky,” an homage of sorts to the Wisconsin Badger’s mascot. But “Bucky” and similar tributes are knock-offs of commercial pop songs, whereas Fox and Weber’s rap ode to IU, “This Is Indiana,” is an original composition.

The video was edited by fellow student Ed Wu, who also plays an electric-violin solo in the video.

Fox says “This Is Indiana” drew more viewers than their first effort, “IU Anthem,” because the content is more family appropriate. And, Weber adds, “It’s about IU basketball, and who doesn’t love IU basketball?” —Ron Eid

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