SENIOR SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

Dean Maggs

So, tell me about yourself! You're in the IB program, right?

I'm in the half IB program. I take one American course—Political Science—and the rest are IB. I'm doing Higher Level Business, HL English, and HL Economics. The transition from Saudi Arabia, where we didn't even have final exams, was rough—I was completely unprepared. I had to figure out how to study properly. English Language & Literature in IB was a huge shift—the terminology alone felt like learning a new language. The first few weeks I felt like a robot, just going through the motions. But over time, I adjusted. It made me mature and grow up mentally, fast.

What kinds of extracurricular activities have you been involved in?

I've tried a bunch of different things. I did martial arts back in 10th grade, which was really cool and taught me discipline. I was also on the basketball team, but music is where I really found myself.

You're a DJ, right? How did that start?

Yeah! My dad's actually been a DJ since the '90s, so it kind of runs in the family. Last summer, we started practicing together—three to four hours a day. Eventually, I felt confident enough to start DJing at house parties, and then I played in Saudi, Greece, and even Bahrain during New Year's. That Bahrain set was wild—I was the youngest person there at 17, and it's probably my favorite gig so far. I also played at the winter dance. That was... different. I usually play house or tech house for 18+ crowds, so prom was a totally different vibe. The playlist submissions were mostly songs I don't usually play, but I tried to make it work. I threw on a Pitbull track to save the energy, and luckily, people loved it. It was definitely a lesson in adapting to your audience. Adaptation is something I've really learned at Pinewood.

Would you say music is your passion?

Absolutely. Music is therapeutic for me. When I'm stressed, I DJ for half an hour and it resets me. Sometimes I lie in bed with my AirPods and just zone out to a good track.

Producing is a whole different experience—I'll sit at my laptop for hours layering sounds, finding vocals, building the track piece by piece. Once I get an idea I like, I have to finish it that day. It's addictive in the best way.

One of my tracks actually hit #9 on the Saudi charts. That was surreal. I started producing when I was 13, then stopped for a while, and got back into it more seriously through DJing. I've learned everything from YouTube. Once you dive in, it's not as complicated as it seems—and it opens up a lot of creative doors.

Balancing academics and your music isn't easy. What's your strategy for managing it all?
I pay close attention in class, so I don't have to study too much for regular assessments. For finals, I go through each chapter and focus on the parts I find challenging. I also learn better with videos—whiteboard lessons don't always work for me, but a good explainer video really sticks. And when I'm overwhelmed, music helps me reset. I try to keep a balanced approach. I care about school, but I also make time for creativity—and just living life.

Have you decided where you're going next and what you'll be studying?
Yep—I'm going to Ohio Wesleyan University in the U.S. They offered me a $50,000 scholarship and really made me feel like they wanted me there. It's in Delaware, Ohio—not too small, not too chaotic. It'll be my first time in the U.S., and honestly, I can't wait. New place, new people, new energy. I'm ready for that. I'll be studying Economics and Business.

So you feel prepared for that transition?
Totally. Most people at my university will be living away from home for the first time. I've already done that. I've lived independently, adjusted to new countries, and learned how to take care of myself. Pinewood—and Greece—was great preparation. The cultural shift will be big, but I feel ready.

What are you most excited about in this next chapter?
Everything. It's going to be my first time in the U.S., so I'm excited to meet new people and experience something completely different. I hope the transition is smooth, but I think the IB really prepares you well for university. I've lived in South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Greece... and now I'm heading to the U.S. That's four continents. Each place has shaped me differently. Studying and living across cultures gave me a kind of maturity and flexibility that I think a lot of people don't get. I feel lucky.

What's the most important thing Pinewood has taught you?
Adaptability and connection. When everything around you—countries, schools, cultures—is constantly changing, you have to adapt. Pinewood sometimes felt like a movie, especially dorm life. One moment it's calm, the next it's total chaos. You learn how to figure things out for yourself. That adaptability sticks with you for life. And flying back and forth between Saudi and Greece every few months, I've learned how valuable real friendships are. Pinewood taught me how to study, sure—but more than that, it helped me build meaningful relationships. Life isn't just about grades—it's about people. This place helped me see that.

Dorm life seems to have been a big part of your experience. What stands out the most?
So many things. Hanging out in the gazebo at the old building during breaks, making music, late-night conversations with people in the dorms. That first year especially—it was all new, exciting, a little wild. My sister was here before me, so she introduced me to everyone. That made a big difference.
This year has been even better—we've got a new dorm group, and the vibe is amazing.

What's a dream or goal you have for the future?
Success—not just in academics, but in figuring out what I really want to do. Maybe I'll go deeper into music. Or maybe I'll go into finance or economics. I'd love to do a Master's at LSE one day. That's the big dream.
But for now, I just want to meet new people, stay open-minded, and make the most of this next chapter.

In what ways has Pinewood shaped who you are today?
It's made me way more culturally aware. I've met people from Russia, Dubai, the UK, the U.S., even Brazil. You realize that cultural differences don't divide people—they enrich things. Everyone deserves respect, no matter where they're from or what they believe.
Being around so many cultures changes how you think.

Do you have a favorite Pinewood memory that makes you smile?
That first year in the dorms, hands down. The chaos, the food, the laughs, my sister helping me settle in, staying up late talking or playing music—it just felt like a movie. That whole year had this magical vibe to it.

What advice would you give to younger students just starting high school?
Don't overthink it. Take school seriously, but don't let it consume you. Don't get caught up in drama. Focus on what matters—your goals, your friends, your happiness. Take it one day at a time and enjoy the ride.

Last one—if Pinewood were a person and your friend, how would you describe them?
Spontaneous. Things just happen here—sometimes it's chaos, sometimes it's amazing, but it always keeps you on your toes. That unpredictability? That's where the best memories come from. Pinewood taught me to be flexible, to stay grounded, and to grow.