

Todd Duffley

“Lord, I am a simple man,” he sings on one of the featured songs on his “Todd Duffley and Friends” debut album. Though he may sing about being a simple man, it sure wasn’t a simple path in life that took Todd from his troubled teenage years and near-self destruction as a young adult to become the “Normal Joe” and working class musician he says he is now.

Born and raised in Ohio, Todd’s parents were music lovers, and his uncle, Larry, was a guitarist that performed in a working band that performed across the state. Duffley says some of his earliest musical memories center around singing along to AM radio songs in his father’s Dodge, and attending musical jamborees hosted by his guitar-playing uncle.

His musical dreams started young as he sang in choir in grade school, junior high and in church. The radio sing-alongs and family jamborees didn’t last forever, though, as he entered his teenage years and hit a rough patch in his young life. It’s an understatement to describe Todd’s teen years as rough. They were rough times, sure, like any kid’s teen years are, but his life seemed to be on a rapid downward spiral.

“My parents divorced and I was shuffled back and forth between my mom and dad. I felt like a pawn in a chess game. He quickly became one of those troubled teens you hear about. Todd ran away from home a couple of times, and later stole his stepdad’s truck and crashed it into a tree while joy riding. Drugs and alcohol soon reared their ugly heads, eventually leading him to nearly overdose on prescription drugs. He also became a father at the age of 17 and was living on his own. After graduating early from high school, he went to work to support his new family. That childhood love of music that was an integral part of Todd’s early life had to be put on hold for a while as he worked as a truck driver to support his family. For eight long years, Todd abandoned his music dreams and toiled away as a working man. His teenage chemical abuse problem, however, continued, putting him in what he calls “self-destruct mode.” “It was right after my father died... I had been away from music at that point for six years, and went through two more years of hell,” Todd says. “I straightened up after an arrest and nearly dying from alcohol poisoning. I quit drinking and got my life straight.”

Getting his life back in order included rediscovering his childhood love of music. Todd says one of the first wrongs he set right was to go out and buy a Martin acoustic guitar. Todd took six guitar lessons in 1988 and taught himself from there. Before leaving the guitar lessons, Todd played for his teacher a demo tape of him singing, which he says “floored” the instructor. Todd’s guitar teacher became his producer as the pair spent late nights working on a demo to submit to The Nashville Network’s “You Can Be a Star” talent show. “I was rejected on the first audio demo I sent,” Todd says, rebuffed by the judges but leaving with valuable advice. “They suggested I come up with an original song.” One month later, Todd and his producer, Chris Wintrip, had a song recorded and sent it back to the producers, even though Todd and Chris thought the song “didn’t sound country at all.” Describing the song “You’re My Lady,” Todd says it was a cross-over Country song – part Americana, part roots Country, and part rock. The song was accepted by the producers, but in the end, the show was cancelled a month before taping ever began, leaving Todd with nothing more than “bragging rights” and a hankering to do more writing and recording. By 1991, he had 10 songs recorded, and all 10 songs didn’t quite fit in with the current crop of Country music being picked up by the labels. Chris and Todd’s lives soon led them in different directions. They wouldn’t see each other for 13 years, yet it was hooking back up with his producer and friend that spurred Todd to start writing and recording music again.

Todd was still doing the blue collar-working man thing, driving a truck and supporting his family. He used what little spare time he could scrounge up over the next five years to write and record his debut “Todd Duffley and Friends” album – a roots-rockin’, Alterna-Country

singer/songwriter record with 13 strong songs sung by a man whose been around the proverbial block of life more than a few times. Themes of love and pain, hard times and workin' hard and of family and friends fill the debut songs with an earnestness and honesty that is both uplifting and refreshing. Todd himself talks about those themes and how his life has now aligned to fulfill a musical promise that went unanswered for over two decades. "My motive has never been about fame or fortune," he says, "but it all goes back to what my Dad tried to pound into my head... You know, back when you were a teen and you thought you knew it all, and what your parents told you went in one ear and out the other. Well, ain't it funny how things come around full circle?"

Todd recalls his father's advice spoken all those years ago. "He told me that when I start something, that I should finish it. First or last to finish, it doesn't matter. All that matters was that you tried. He said, 'You ain't got nothing if you ain't got heart.' That's what this album has been for me – pride and passion and heart, and me finishing something I started 20 years ago."