



Interview: Heidi Duss / Foto: Marco Duss

Interview with Rex Norton at the CMA Festival 2007, Nashville

Q: How did you get started in country music?

A: Actually, I started with my grandparents in a southern Gospel music group when I was about 3 years old. That really got me hooked at an early age. I was born into music. I used to play my Dukes of Hazard guitar. My father loved country music, it was almost like a rule. We always listened to great artists like Conway Twitty, Merle Haggard, George Strait and the list goes on and on.

Q: Did you just sing Gospel music?

A: No, that's what I started singing. The love for country music was in me from a young age. I started singing southern Gospel, but like I said, my parents listened to a lot of country music. I was just born into it. You know, southern Gospel music has a lot of country roots in it.

Q: Your Grandparents had a Gospel group, did you belong to it?

A: Yes, they both passed away now, but the Gospel group is still going.

Q: Did you also go on tour with this group?

A: Yes, we all packed it up in a van, we would go from Church to Church and we would travel the states. It was really quite fun at an early age, and just doing that, helped me to get set up to what I am doing today.

Q: Wasn't that hard on you at that age?

A: Well, it probably was tougher on my mom than it was for me. Yes, it was rough, but just loving music so much, it didn't really matter. Music was there, the singing, the peoples reactions. To be singing just was incredible even at that age. It was fun, I think it's real fun for a kid to get out there and do that.

Q: You mentioned that you started writing at about 12 years old?

A: Yes, I wrote my first song when I was 12 years old. I'd be riding the Tractor, when I helped out on my Granddad's farm and the lyrics just started coming to me. I started to put all that stuff together, I started to learn and by listening to the radio, it would help also with the lyrics and stuff like that. I believe it's just something that God blessed you with, it's a talent that God either gives to you or he don't.

Q: You have a demo CD with two songs, did you write these songs?

A: I did write "A lot to live for", the other song I did not write. I know the guys who wrote it. It's a great song, I have a lot of admiration for these guys, they are just unbelievable. Now "A lot to live for" is a song very dear to me, to my heart, because when I wrote this song, I was going thru some rough times in my life and it really helped me thru it. So I know, this song could really help other people out there too. I'm really partial to this song and proud of it too.

Q: You are working on your debut album?

A: Yes, actually we were in the studio last night until about 2 in the morning. We were just in there mixing and fine tuning. We hope to wrap that thing up by the end of the month and get it released. The songs are great on there and we're really excited about it.

Q: Is the country scene in your hometown really big?

A: Yes, it is huge. I grew up in Royston, north Georgia, also home of baseball legend Ty Cobb. It's a small town, but it strives from country music. In the southern States, you're born into that and it's hard to go find anybody that lives in Georgia that doesn't like country music. I attended a lot of George Strait country music festivals, he came to Atlanta, Georgia every year. Country is really big there.

Q: Who are your heroes?

A: You know, George Strait is probably my biggest one. He's so consistent of putting out great records, hit after hit after hit. I want to strive to be like that, being consistent of putting out great records. You know, there are so many great and talented artist out there, like Brooks & Dunn, Alabama, Tim McGraw and so on, that I would just love to share the stage with, have some fun and entertain. Entertaining people, that's what it's all about, having the people reach out and sing their songs back to you, that's truly amazing. I played for a lot of crowds, just not the biggest like they played, but I hope to work up to that point. You have to start somewhere. These guys are professionals and have been doing that a long time. You learn a lot by watching them, like Brooks & Dunn, they won entertainer of the year, they are incredible to watch, you learn from people like that.

Q: Do you live in Nashville now?

A: Yes, actually, I live on the outskirts, about 20 miles from Nashville.

Q: Have you done any tours?

A: I've had some local stuff and some stuff back in my hometown. A lot in the southern States, anywhere from South Carolina to Georgia and here in Tennessee, a couple of things in Alabama, just kind of widespread in the south. I haven't ventured up north yet, or around the world like I want to. I know that's coming though, but it takes time.

Q: What will your CD be about?

A: We're hoping to generate a lot of fans for the album, bring the music to the fans. I want to touch people with my songs. You know, if somebody is listening to the radio and "A lot to live for" comes on the radio, if this song saves somebody's live, I feel like I accomplished something.

Q: How would you describe yourself?

A: Well, I'm an honest person. I strive to do good by people. I have such a giving heart and I believe I get that from my parents. They did such a wonderful job by raising us kids. I have an older sister and a younger sister. We were brought up in a great, honest Christian home with loving parents. They supported me in anything I wanted to do and this is what I dreamed of doing. I believe, their support got me to where I am today. They supported me 110 percent and I could not have asked for more than that. When people speak my name, Rex Norton, I want them to think, honest guy, great guy that would do anything for you. I'm also big into cancer relay for live. I lost my Grandmother to cancer and I lost my Grandpa to cancer. There will be a song on the album called "squeeze my Hand", it's a true story. I want to start a foundation and get on TV for cancer patients, do anything to prevent it or to catch it faster, I know the technology is improving every day. I just want to give as much of me as I can to each individual. I believe that God put us down here for that, to help each other and to love one another.