

BIO-THE WRIGHTS

In 1998, I was living with a couple of guys in a rundown little house back in my hometown of Newnan, Georgia. I worked at a bar and grill during the day and would set up and play there on the weekends--sometimes by myself, sometimes with a little blues trio. We'd do lots of J.J. Cale, Jimmy Reed, Howlin' Wolf...some Dylan, Willie Nelson. Anything really. Things were kind of on cruise control for me then. I worked, came home, and wrote songs or played guitar. I didn't really hang out with a lot of people. I pretty much kept to myself. Even on the nights that we were playing, I'd go outside between sets and just walk up and down the sidewalk. Music wasn't my only friend, but in those days it was probably my closest.

Then one day our Budweiser rep for the restaurant comes in and tells me that her cousin plays music in Atlanta and really needs a guitar player for a gig on Thursday night. She gives me her cousin's number, and even though calling some stranger and booking myself on a blind gig was way outside of my comfort zone at the time, something told me to call that afternoon. I fell in love with her voice instantly. It was kind of smoky and sexy, and she was really funny. We hit it off. I showed up to the gig that Thursday and thought I might be the luckiest dude in the world. She was hot. She had this wild, curly brown hair and these rock star clothes. I was in heaven. A funny, beautiful girl that sang and played guitar. We were pretty much inseparable from then on. We started doing lots of acoustic gigs all over Atlanta and around Georgia. We used my band for some shows and eventually made a couple of full band albums. It was all original stuff. A critic in Atlanta once called us the "thinking person's rootsy quintet." I always liked that.

Shannon and I had been dating during this time, and in 2002 I asked her to marry me. She said yes, and we decided to move to Nashville as newlyweds and take a real shot at the music thing. I had an uncle in the music business, and he thought he might be able to help us. He was a big star and knew a lot of people. He also really believed in what we were doing, and, for us, that was huge. We set up a couple of showcases one weekend and ended up recording some demos with a big time producer. We all liked the stuff, and before long we were going into the studio to record a full album on my uncle's small label ACR (for Alan's Country Records, as in country singer Alan Jackson--he's the uncle.)

We had a ball recording. We tracked at The Castle, which is an old castle-looking building on the outskirts of Nashville where, in the 1930's, Al Capone and his gang would hide out on the long run from Chicago down to Miami. We had Paul Franklin on steel guitar, Eddie Bayers on drums, and Pig Robbins on piano; and we got our old friend from home Alex McCollough to play bass. We recorded all originals and tracked almost everything in a couple of days.

We pitched the album to RCA, and they decided to put it out as a joint venture with ACR. We got to do a video and tour with Alan to promote the album. It was a blast. We had a full band and tour bus and traveled all over the country playing arenas. It was quite a ride.

When it came time to start thinking about recording our second album, because we were now in contract with RCA, we had to go through the A&R process--which is basically where a team of people who don't write songs or play music all get to vote on which songs the singers and musicians get to record. It's pretty much a drag. The only thing that made the process worth it for us was the day a publisher brought in some songs by a legendary songwriter named Paul Kennerley. We sort of flipped out. It made everything else they had played for us sound like kids' music and advertising jingles--something other than real music. We said we wanted to hear everything they had by him, and they asked if we wanted them to contact Paul about booking a writing session. We did.

That second album was our attempt to please the label without ruining whatever integrity and self-respect we'd developed over the years. We were proud of the album, and the label seemed excited also. Then after months of writing and pitching and listening, compromising and negotiating, and finally recording, RCA decided not to pick it up. This is why you don't ever record anything you're not proud of--there's no guarantee that you'll make it even if you sell out. It's not worth the risk. It's better to be able to look back and say "yeah, I did that for the right reason." We ended up packaging *The Wrights* as an EP and putting it out anyway. I'm glad we did. It's representative of where we were, musically, at the time.

After the fallout with RCA, we were pretty disappointed by the philosophies and procedures of the Music Row machine and really needed to just make some music and be creative without any outside forces and with absolutely no agenda other than to serve the song. So, in the summer of 2007, we rented some old microphones, borrowed a few pieces of gear from our now friend Paul Kennerley, and practically locked ourselves in the basement to record twenty-one cover songs. All live complete takes. No edits or fancy digital manipulation. It was exhausting and frustrating and incredibly fulfilling. We trimmed it down to eleven songs and name the album *In The Summertime* after the Roger Miller song that inspired the project.

We were on the road for most of 2008 promoting both *The Wrights* and *In The Summertime*. Having released *In The Summertime* on our own label, TOUR, we felt completely liberated artistically. We looked at that album as a stepping-stone, a cleansing of the palette. We were now ready to dive headfirst back into the deep waters of self-indulgent creativity from whence we came. Surf's up.

Where *In The Summertime* was a kind of sigh from the pressures and artistic compromises of our dealings with a major label, the new album, *Red and Yellow, Blue and Green*, feels more like a long deep breath followed by a forceful exhale. The kind that makes birthday wishes come true by blowing out all the candles, or sends dandelion seeds soaring out over a summer field, or even the kind that saves lives.

We feel like we're getting better at writing songs and creating music. More importantly, we feel like we're doing it for the right reasons. I hope this album is just another step on a long journey toward an unattainable destination: satisfaction. Maybe you'll dig it, maybe you won't. But know this: it was honest and we're proud of it.

Adam Wright