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Artist Interview: There's Something About Coffey

Posted by Candace on Oct 01, 2010 | 2 Comments



Released on September 28th, Coffey Anderson's new self-titled album features songs that mix pop, country, Christian and soul.

Through hard work, confidence and the power of belief, [Coffey Anderson](#) has become the poster child for every indie artist hoping to find success on his own terms. Without a major label or corporate distribution, Anderson managed to garner such a massive fan base both in the U.S. and abroad that studio executives couldn't help but take notice. But how did a 6'5" Practical Theology major from Bangs, Texas (yes, it's as small as it sounds) create such a large splash in the inundated, superficially focused world of music singing tunes that have more in common with Charlie Pride and Sam Cooke than Justin Timberlake and Jay-Z?

I had an opportunity to chat with the "Southern Man" the day after his first major album release under [Dream Records / Universal Music Group](#). The self-titled album is technically his fourth, but read a little further to find out how this Internet sensation was determined to not be just another flash in the pan. What is it about Anderson and his music that has struck

a chord with so many? And can he bottle it for the rest of us?

Your new video, "You Are All I'm After", kicks off the release of your new album. It features a small psych out where it begins like many of your other guitar lesson videos featured on YouTube before diving into the song. Are there any plans to turn other tracks from your new album into video releases?

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We're choosing between two videos right now: "Free" or "You Alone". But we're also looking at "Better Today". The good thing is that I can always look to my fans for direction. They let me know what they would like to see. But we're definitely planning to do another video soon.

"All The Way To Texas" sounds like it has a beautiful story behind it. What inspired you to write that song?

"All The Way To Texas" started with a buddy of mine who doesn't go to church, who doesn't believe that with all of the world's problems—wars, Hurricane Katrina, diseases, suffering and pain—that if he prayed to Jesus, He would answer him or listen to his prayers. So the song starts with that very simple question asking will Jesus come "All The Way To Texas" to hear and answer my prayers?

That conversation combined with my Mom getting lung cancer and passing away when I was 10 years old, all influenced the lyrics to the song. It came about from conversations about how powerful God's reach is and how we are all pieced together with emotions. We're always searching for the time to pray, but He always has time for the big and small. Nothing is beyond his reach or unworthy of his attention.

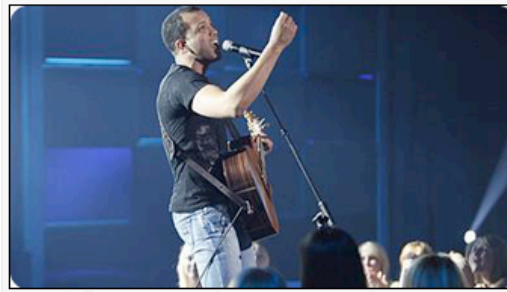
Some reviews of the new album compare you to Jimmy Needham and Brandon Heath, but I like to think your sound is a little too unique to invite comparison. Having said that, is there anyone who influences your music and style so much that a comparison to that artist wouldn't come as a shock at all?

No. Brandon Heath, Matthew West and Jimmy Needham are great guys, but I don't listen to them. My music is very pop-driven. I want to make music that you listen to everyday of the week, not just on Sunday. And as talented as they are, we're all from different backgrounds and are influenced by different things, so I don't think my sound is anything like those guys.

Your style has been described as a mix of different genres including: Americana, gospel, R&B, country, pop and folk, but you describe it as a "Lifestyle" genre. Do you have a preference for that specific label or are you okay with however anyone describes your sound?

I want it to be whatever anyone wants it to be. Sometimes you want to hear something that'll help you get going in the morning. Sometimes you need something to lift you up with things get rough. My music is for anyone who

the morning. Sometimes you need something to lift you up with things get rough. My music is for anyone who wants to listen, so whatever labels you want to add are fine. As long as you're listening, I'm okay with it.



Coffey Anderson performing on Nashville Star in 2008.

You've opened for Boyz II Men, John Michael Montgomery and Trace Adkins. Those aren't just three very different artists, but three very different musical tones in terms of message and style. How did you approach each audience for those three distinct acts?

Let me tell you a story. Boyz II Men held a concert in Lancaster, CA. While I was performing my opening set, they came out to watch me sing from the side of the stage. Now, Boyz II Men are pop music royalty and they wanted to see who this cat was with this voice. They couldn't ignore it and we got such a huge response that night. There was a 7-minute break between the end of my set and the beginning of their show. During those 7 minutes, we sold 300 CDs. That's over 40 CDs sold per minute. People were just throwing money.

But I'll tell you, I still wear my Lucchese boots and my blue jeans and carry my guitar out on stage at every show. I do what I know how to do best. I've never seen any boundaries. Genres went away when MTV started playing Green Day followed by Snoop followed by Gwen Stefani. There's only two types of music now: good and bad.

But how much of your act do you adjust for the sake of the headliner? For instance, would you throw in some country while opening for Boyz II Men? Would you perform a praise song opening for Trace? How much does your set change?

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Some of them stay, some of them don't. I can have 10 songs that I think will go over well with a Boyz II Men crowd. But for a John Michael Montgomery crowd, I can keep 6 of those and add 4 others that will suit his audience and do just fine.

You've performed on BET's 106 & Park, competed in Nashville Star and you regularly play praise songs at churches, festivals and fairs. Is it your hope to one day have your music played on radio stations across multiple genres?

I would love for you to turn on a rock station and hear one of my songs, then switch to an R&B station to hear another and then turn on a Christian station and so on. I want people to hear my music all over the radio dial and say, "That dude's nuts and I love it. No one's ever done that before."

While we're on the subject, Nashville Star has come and gone, and you've certainly moved on to bigger and more wonderful things in its wake. But, does it still bother you that you were told you weren't "country enough", especially after artists like Darius Rucker have not only found success in the genre, but seem to have been welcomed with open arms by the Nashville community?

That was their opinion. That's all I can say. It was their opinion. All I know is there were 52,000 people competing that season of Nashville Star, and I came in 3rd runner-up. I was country enough for somebody. What I can do is be me and hope people like it. That's all I know. I'm always me.

Within 4 days of posting your first YouTube video, you had over 17,000 views. Within a week, you had 63,000 views. Were you surprised by the massive following you've garnered online in such a short period of time?

I wasn't surprised. I thought everybody was getting that number of views. I had to have someone tell me that wasn't normal. I was more surprised by the amount of e-mails. Between Facebook, MySpace and my personal e-mail, I had well over a thousand e-mails within that same amount of time. Let me tell you, I had over 400 messages from people I didn't even know had my personal e-mail address.

Do you feel that the Internet has opened the door for more artists like yourself to find a following and moderate success without studio executives acting as sentries to the music industry?

Drake was a Grammy nominee this year, but his YouTube channel only has 11,000 subscribers. I have 22,000 subscribers, but more than 7 million views, so I know it's not just the same people over and over again. Before I signed with my label, I sold CDs in markets all over the world thanks to the Internet. We've developed a massive following in the UK, France, Switzerland, Holland and Sweden.

Because of the Internet, I just signed my contract with Universal Music Group (UMG) in June 2010. UMG offered to sign a distribution deal with a Christian music artist, which is something they never do. They came in and said, "Man, what are you doing?" Anyone not using the Internet to the best of their ability and taking on everything it has to offer, is missing out on a lot.

And last, but not least. Whose music do you enjoy listening to lately? Any pleasant surprises from artists that you thought you might not enjoy?

Wow, now there's a question. I'm listening to the new Chris Tomlin single. He went with a more pop sound than I would've expected, but I like it. Taio Cruz. My wife's a dancer and we like dancing whenever we can in our house. So I like him. Oh, and Ricky Skaggs. Let me tell you, listening to his new album just lets you know that no matter how hard you try, you'll never be as good as him.

Coffey Anderson is available via iTunes, Amazon.com, Best Buy, Christian bookstores, Target and Wal-Mart.



Bringing Southern charm to pop music, Coffey Anderson has created a genre all his own.