

# Marine steps from struggles to success

The Cody Wayne Band is flying high  
Mary Jane Farmer, Scene In Town

**T**O LISTEN TO THE CODY WAYNE BAND live is like being a part of the action. Cody insures that, with his stage style and his friendly smile. Not to mention — oh, yes, let's mention — the great songs he and the boys in the band write, arrange, and perform.

The Cody Wayne Band is East Texas home based, and travel into the Metroplex and beyond as often as they can to perform.

Playing with Cody, who carries the lead singer and songwriting duties along with his rhythm guitar, are Daniel Brousseau on lead guitar, Brandon Pinkerton on bass, Billy Rasnake on drums, and Vic Andrews on fiddle. "If you're gonna play in Texas you gotta have a fiddle in the band."

Cody said that he's had band members before this current crew, and that the earlier musicians have been talented as well, and that this group is carrying on to even greater heights what others set in motion.

"Daniel came to us and tried out, and then came to just sit-in at a big monster truck show, with 30,000 people there. He came to sit in, yes, and ended up being the lead guy at that very show."

Daniel is, like Cody, a Marine veteran, and then Vic answered a Craig's List ad for a fiddler, and it seemed like old home week when they learned that Vic, too, had been a Marine. "He had just gotten out of the Marines himself, and hadn't even moved to Texas yet. His wife already lived here, and so, bam, the next day here he was and we practiced and he's been with us ever since."

Brandon and Billy aren't military veterans, but are veteran of the music world. Both of them, Cody said, are multi-instrumentalists, and they both teach guitar, and Billy also teaches drums.

## East Texas native

"I STARTED OUT IN NACOGDOCHES, we moved to Henderson, and I went to school in New London," said the East Texas native."

One very recent gig was also a unusually special one. In late January, they played at the Texas Air National Guard hanger, which had been temporarily transformed into a celebration room.

It was the USO / NFL Super Bowl LI Salute to Service Barbecue. It became a case of military veterans entertaining active military. "Such a great day, honoring our local service men and women," Cody said.

It's no short trek from that East Texas neighborhood to play

in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, or any of their other gigs. "We plan to leave earlier or later that you'd think to miss all that I-20 traffic, but you get used to it. We all got used to traveling when we'd have to go to Kilgore and Tyler for school clothes and such."

Cody's career began after a series of fluke starts. He said, "Right after I got out of the Marines, I'd just walk into places, put down my guitar, and say, 'I want to play a few songs.'" And the venues were happy with that. He played a lot.

"I first started outside Franklin at Big Mike's. I had a job lined up for me, and then, about two or three months left before I got out of Marines, I had surgery and the Marines sent me home. I got down on myself, and went to that bar in Franklin where I found my roots and replanted them."

He said that was on a Tuesday, and he walked in and played two or three songs. "And the guy there told me about their open mic. I went back for that, sat down and played my songs. I made \$4 in tips, and my momma still has that \$4 at her house."

That was about 2009, Cody remembered. A couple years later, he moved back to Nacogdoches and started college. "I figured I wasn't going to make it playing shows for \$4 tips each. I had military benefits for school, and had an aunt and uncle living right outside of town, to went to Stephen F. Austin and studied sound recording technology, you know, so let me work as a studio engineers for movies and such."

"Then, another place — a honky-tonk — called me. I started going to visit there and talking with the sound guys and being there all the time. So, I brought my guitar one night and told them I'd like to open for the band. I got down that night, and then the next night I opened for some local band and every night after that, I was knocking on that door."

## It all comes together

SLOWLY AND SURELY, THE bigger dates and bigger places begin to knock on Cody's door. He and a friend decided to travel around and, as he said it, "do some duo stuff. Then, he said, 'Why not a band?' and he knew a drummer who knew a bass



His mom still has his first \$4 he made in tips at an open mic: Cody Wayne

player. We picked up our first gig at a bar in College Station.

At that point, it was a band without a name. "We threw around a few crazy ideas, and decided on Westbound 21 because we had to head out west on Highway 21 to get to College Station."

It was around July 4, 2015, when the band started having some problems, "as all bands do. We all kinda wanted to go in different directions. I had some big shows lined up, including openings for Kevin Fowler and Roger Creager, and then we picked up a July 4 show with Trace Adkins. I went to some guys I knew and hired them for three weeks. We traveled for those shows, but they wanted to keep the original band." So the search began. And ended over time with the current crew.

Now, the Cody Wayne Band was complete, and ready for the next step — recording. They've had three songs that charted; and the fourth song, "Fly High," is flying up the Texas Regional Radio Report. When it first entered, it had the most spins of all chart newcomers that particular week."

The band hasn't yet recorded a complete project, but has chosen instead to record and release one song at a time.

"When our first single ("Making Love In The Moonlight") came out, we just wanted to make it into the Top 100 and not get cut off at No. 101. We did, by the hair of our teeth. It charted at No. 97. But, it charted!"

"Then, we picked up one more single, 'Footprints On My Windshield,' which topped out at No. 72. For the first half of 2016, we put out two, the second one was 'Take Me Home, I'm Drunk,' and that one went up to No. 35."

Those hits opened more gig doors, too. The band traveled to South Dakota with stops in Minnesota, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska.

During that time, Cody recalled, they had hired a radio promoter to do what radio promoter's do — promote songs. But, when that tour ended and Cody began going to the various radio stations — "That our promoter told us knew about us and yet they (radios) didn't know anything at all about us." It was then that everyone agreed the

promotions could better be done themselves.

"We pulled up our bootstraps and took a shot in the dark, and called every station, and knocked on their doors. And they got them (the songs) in there, with a positive reception like, 'If there's anything I can do to help out...'" Now, Cody, his wife and family handle that.

## The family

THE BAND IS GETTING BETTER and more comfortable and are having fun at the same time.

"It helps having a fun song to play, this all did a lot of good for us. We do all the promotions and booking and logistics, and we take turns driving the RV to gigs. We've got our own sound equipment — all we need is power outlets."

During and throughout all this, from the Marine Corp days to nowadays, Cody's family has remained the number one fans. His wife, Tamra, is, in Cody's words, "the essential part of this whole photo." She handles the publicity and much more; his 22-year-old daughter, expecting a baby girl soon, and 19-year-old son who is in college, still live at home, as, of course, do their 11-year-old twin boys.

"The twins are our little helpers. Once, we put out a video (on social media) showing the family getting everything ready to mail out. They sometimes travel in the RV with us, they have their bunk beds and X-Boxes and they curl up with books. Then, when we get to the gig, they'll help us load in and set up and sell merch."

Their original plan of releasing a single at a time will stretch into the near future. "People may not buy a CD, but are likely to download a single. We'll do that a few more times, getting our feet wet. If we'd recorded a CD at first, and it flopped, we wouldn't have any way to get out of it (financially). That can kill a band."

So, what's up next for the Cody Wayne Band? "Our next aspiration will be to do more shows and build a wider fan base. That way, if we decide to go with another single or even an album, there are people out there who are confident in us and it will work." Not bad for a small-town Marine who started out busking in bars in order to play his music!

Cody Wayne will have acoustic shows on February 10 and 24 at The Ranch at Los Colinas; and the full band will be at Hank's Texas Grill on March 16. ■

*"When our first single ("Making Love In The Moonlight") came out, we just wanted to make it into the Top 100 and not get cut off at No. 101. We did, by the hair of our teeth. It charted at No. 97. But, it charted!"*

—CODY WAYNE