

JOEY STUCKEY: Georgia's Official Ambassador of Music

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Dialog Magazine
September/October, 2006 Issue

Joey Stuckey, 30, was born with music in his veins. Inheriting a love of music from his father, who played in country bands as a teen; and his mother, who introduced him to spiritual and classical musical styles, Stuckey has been constantly surrounded by methodic melodies. Thus, their influence inspired him to make music is ultimate career choice. "My home environment has always been spiritual, peaceful and loving," he said. "I have found music as a healing power, and it has been a positive influence on me." In 2003 Stuckey endured medical complications causing him to use a wheelchair temporarily; and it was the soothing sounds of music that has helped in his continuous recovery. "When I wake up I feel pretty rotten and music is what helps me to feel better," said Stuckey. "It gets the day started and is a big part of my morning regimen. Music gets me focus in the right direction."

Music has definitely propelled Stuckey forward, as a sound engineer and owner of Shadow Recording Studio in Macon, Georgia since 1996, he has created a rewarding and lucrative career that recently got him into the spotlight by the mayor of Macon. Stuckey was given an honorary position as the first Official Ambassador of Music for this year. "The Mayor and city commissioner recommended me because they knew how much I had done musically in the community," he said. "Georgia has a rich musical heritage and I am passionate about the music from here and what continues to come from here."

Stuckey, who was blind from infancy by a brain tumor, was never treated any differently by his parents and received a mainstream education; going to school with sighted children. "I find it preferable to interact with the sighted world as much as possible because that is how it is," said Stuckey. "We are moving toward a global community with cell phones, faxes, the Internet and other types of technology. It is essential for me in the music industry as well."

Even though Stuckey graduated in 1999 from Mercer University in Macon, he never felt the need to have a degree to be a musician. But his marketing degree did help enhance his popularity as a sound engineer and owner of a recording studio. "I was already working in the industry and getting paid for it," he said. "But word of mouth and some advertising helped." The music industry requires hard work, a deep passion and assertiveness. "You have to be ready for the opportunity, and have all your ducks in a row," Stuckey said. "You have to educate yourself on the business and devote time to learning and practicing the craft."

Starting off he eagerly applied these principles, volunteering for anything that dealt with music. "I don't want them to think to call anyone else but me," he said. "I made it my

business that every time they think or see Georgia music my name is included.” As a result, Stuckey now can pick and choose what gigs he wants to do. As a sound engineer and recording studio owner, Stuckey’s days are busy and rewarding. He works full-time recording bands and jingles. He cleans and restores audio tapes. When not working as an engineer he gives private music lessons and is a guest lecturer at conferences and schools. Additionally during the summer months, he teaches musical principles at a 2-week arts camp. He has hosted three radio programs dedicated to preserving and promoting Georgia music.

As an engineer who is blind, Stuckey’s Primary tool is his memory. “I use memory to maneuver around the sound board and the front and back of all equipment,” he said. “For example, I will memorize that the third button to the left does this or that.” His secondary tool is computer music technology. Accompanied by a screen reader, he uses a program called Sound Forge that is a music editing and sampling program. To work around in accessibility, he works with Jim Snowbarger, who sells scripts to music software. “I also use scripts from Dancing Dots for my multi track software and they work very well also,” said Stuckey. “There is some other folks that don't make scripts for the blind, but they have been very helpful in making there programs accessible.” He also uses a program called Best Practice that takes a sound and slows it down and changes keys. To overcome inaccessibility, Stuckey was able to work with the creator of the program and now it is user friendly to blind musicians.

Also, Stuckey is a masterful musician, releasing several albums; ‘Take a Walk in the Shadows’, ‘Ironies, Pain, and the Light That Guides’, ‘Live and Stuff’, ‘Live and More Stuff: The Sequel to the Prequel’, These last two albums were both recorded live at the historic Douglass Theater—the same venue where Little Richard, Otis Redding, James Brown and other southern greats made their debut. His current album entitled ‘So Far’ is a collection of the favorite songs from the previous four records with two new tracks. Stuckey is currently working on his debut jazz album entitled ‘Sneakin’ and a country album entitled ‘Welcome to Stuckey Country: Population You’.

He started as a musician at 17 taking **classical guitar lessons from noted music professor Terry Cantwell, while attending Mercer University.** He learned music by memorizing the notes, using his great natural ear and meticulously learning the neck of the guitar. “Terry would tell me the fret or note to play and which finger to use. He is a great believer in economy of motion and taught me a lot about how to use my fingering most effectively,” said Stuckey. “Terry even taught me to read sighted music by taking a box of sand and drawing in it with a stick showing me what the sighted staff and musical notes looked like.” These teaching techniques enabled Stuckey to teach music to his sighted private students. **Stuckey is a professional** guitarist, bassist and vocalist **playing in his own band. The Joey Stuckey Band performs a variety of music genres from country, rock, pop blues and jazz.** “All the guys in the band are in their middle 40's to early 50's and many of them have masters in music,” he said. “That's just the caliber of people I like to work with.” **To get a sampling of his musical talent log on to his website at www.joystuckey.com and hear the pulsing rhythms of his guitar and band.**

When he is not working in the music industry, Stuckey works on computer accessibility problems for the blind. From His own personal experience he has seen the challenges that blind people have accessing information. He has developed a blind-related resource website; www.blindresources.info. “My Problems with accessibility is part of the reason I launched the site,” Stuckey said.

“I looked at what technology is out there and there was no centralized place for blind people to go. Anytime I find out about technology I post it. The site is a resource only and was created especially for people that are newly blind. “I was concerned about them and not knowing what to do or where to go.”

When asked about his future plans; Stuckey jokingly laughed, “I want Ray Charles old job.” But then he got serious and said, “My goal is not to be a big star, but to continue doing business at a high, quality professional level with the equipment and people who are just as devoted. I want to keep writing my songs and recording my albums because it is a spiritual conviction for me. That is what is in my soul.”