

Tate Stevens

Biography

When asked if Tate Stevens was the right person to win FOX's second season of *The X Factor*, Simon Cowell said, "I have to say yes. There are times on these shows when you think, 'Oh God after all this time the wrong person won' – but you know, when he sang ["Tomorrow"] at the end and you hear how good his voice is and his story, you could not NOT root for him. I think America got it right..."

Stevens' win on December 20, 2012, sent him directly to Nashville to begin work on his album on January 3, where he signed his recording contract two days later. He debuted "Holler If You're With Me" on a Pepsi clip during the GRAMMY® Awards on February 10 and shipped his first single, "Power Of A Love Song," to Country radio on February 12, which started spinning on March 11.

"It's going awfully fast," he admits with a smile. "But I'm enjoying every minute of it. This is the most exciting time of my life."

Tate Stevens' self-titled album reveals not only the personality and towering vocal presence that won over fans and judges on *The X Factor*, but also an extraordinary ability as a songwriter. "Holler If You're With Me" is a rollicking invitation to party. "That's How You Get the Girl" and "The Last Thing I Do" are roaring rockers.

His stunning vocal range is on full display in "Power of a Love Song." There is innocent joy in such performances as "El Camino" and "That's Where We Live," while "Ordinary Angels" contains a powerful, heart-tugging message about the unseen grace that surrounds us.

The sublimely countryfied "Sweet" smiles with rural romance. And his co-written "I Got This," "Ride It Out" and "Can't Get Nothin' Done" all communicate the cheer and good-time vibe that Tate Stevens takes with him wherever he goes.

Although this is his first major-label recording, Stevens brought a wealth of experience when he came to Music City to create it. Born in Japan where his father was stationed in the Air Force, Stevens spent his earliest years in Wichita Falls, TX. His father played in country bands, entralling a young Tate with the genre.

"My dad played drums and bass guitar and sang. He had a big, full, powerful voice like Ray Price. And I wanted to be just like my dad. When I was between four and five years old, Mom took us kids to see him play. He got me up on stage and I sang Merle Haggard's 'Silver Wings.' I remember standing there looking at people watch me sing, and thinking, 'This is cool! I wanted that feeling, even at that young age.'"

Shortly after his “stage debut,” the family moved to Belton, MO, about 30 miles south of Kansas City. During his high school years, Stevens began singing in talent contests and small Opry-type shows in the area.

“Right after high school I put a little band together. I said, ‘I’m gonna chase my dream.’ I graduated in May of 1994 and went on the road in December.”

His band Dixie Cadillac played 250+ dates per year, traveling across the U.S. and as far as Germany, Puerto Rico and Canada. Singing the songs of George Strait, Garth Brooks, Clay Walker, Alan Jackson, Merle Haggard, John Conlee, Gene Watson, George Jones and Joe Diffie six nights a week gave Stevens not only a massive repertoire, but imbued his voice with a burnished glow.

Inevitably Dixie Cadillac came to Nashville in 1996-97 in search of country stardom. The band landed several two-week stints at the Wildhorse Saloon and spent its days auditioning on Music Row, recording an album, making contacts and trying anything and everything to make it big.

“I thought, ‘This is it. We’re here. We’re gonna make it. Somebody’s going to see us and go, ‘My God, you’re amazing!’ It never happened... But we were doing pretty well. I was making good money on the road. There were a lot of places to play back then. But in the back of my mind was, ‘When are you going to get a real job and support your family?’”

Stevens married his high school sweetheart in 1997, but because of his musician’s lifestyle, Ashlie and Stevens never really settled into home life. He reached a turning point a few years later when his son Hayden was almost three years old.

Stevens recalls after being on tour for several weeks, he was home putting Hayden to bed before yet another road trip. His son was reluctant to go to sleep and Stevens says, “I finally told him, ‘You have to go to bed. Daddy has to go to bed.’ And he said, ‘No, you’ll leave.’ And I decided: it’s time. It’s time to be home and raise my family and do the right thing.

“My mindset at the time was, ‘I’ll just do music for fun. It will be a great hobby.’ And then our daughter Rylie was born in 2001. I didn’t play for about a year and a half.”

Stevens started working construction and in 2003 landed a job with the city of Belton doing road maintenance. But it wasn’t too long before his love of music drew him back into the game.

“A buddy of mine had a band and when they needed a singer, I was happy to oblige. By 2003-2004, we were working weekends regularly. So music appeared in my life again.”

Stevens formed his own band in 2007, recording an album in Kansas City the following year. In 2009 he returned to Nashville to record demos for his friend, songwriter Drew Davis. During that visit Stevens met record producer Blake Chancey and they hit it off. Back at home, Ashlie, Hayden and Rylie began pestering him to compete on *The X Factor* after the family watched its debut season in 2011.

“I said, ‘Reality shows, that’s not me.’ But when they announced the audition cities for 2012 and Kansas City was one of them, my wife and kids kept after me. I said, ‘That’s just not something that I would do.’ And my wife said, ‘Well, too bad. We’ve already signed you up.’”

Singing songs including Craig Morgan’s “Tough,” Randy Houser’s “Anything Goes,” Garth Brooks’ “If Tomorrow Never Comes,” Lonestar’s “I’m Already There,” Shania Twain’s “From This Moment On,” and Chris Young’s “Tomorrow,” Tate Stevens sailed to victory. Even before the contest’s outcome was clear, Nashville manager Ken Levitan contacted him. By the time Stevens came back to Music City to record, he already had Chancey in mind as his producer and Levitan on board as his manager.

“I want to be a part of the community of country music,” Stevens says. “And being the fan that I am, I’m so appreciative of this opportunity. I respect this genre so much. I want to be accepted as a true Country artist, because it’s the love of these artists and the love of this music that drive me.”

X Factor judge L.A. Reid told *USA Today*, “The first time I saw [Stevens] I said, ‘This guy’s an American classic, an authentic, true-to-life country singer.’” With that stamp of approval along with the admiration of Reid’s fellow judges, the support of millions of viewers and an *X Factor* win under his belt, it looks like Stevens’ dream is already coming true.

Explains Stevens, “In February 2012 I woke up and it was, ‘I have to go plow snow today.’ A year later, it was, ‘I get to write a song today. I get to go record today. I get to go hang out with my heroes.’ I’m so blessed. And it’s the coolest feeling.”