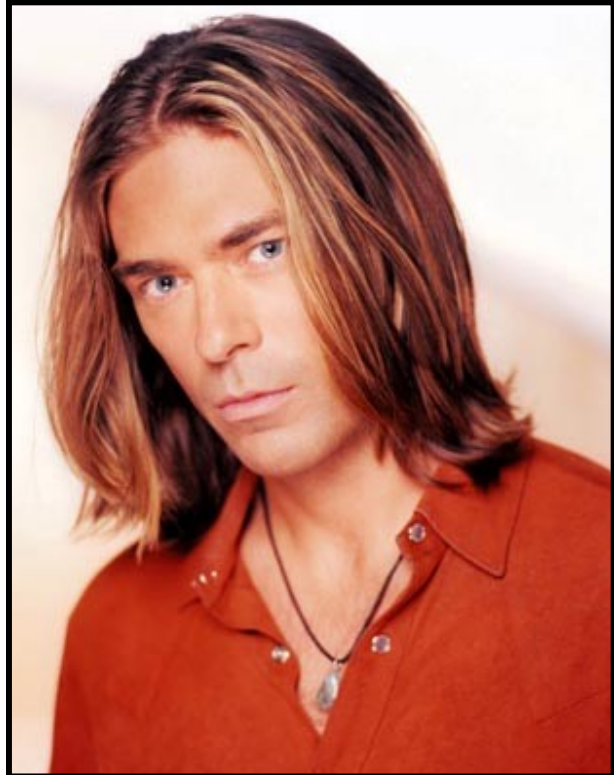


## JAMEY GARNER

Nashville Star—Season One  
by Tamela Meredith Partridge  
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Country singer, harmonica player, and Nashville Star finalist, Jamey Garner, was only eight years old when he found a muddy harmonica in his Chester, IL. backyard. Picking it up, he began to play -- and never stopped.

"I've since graduated to playing a Hohner Golden Melody harmonica," Garner said. "I think the harmonica is one of the greatest country roots instruments out there. But it's become lost -- forgotten. It's been a goal of mine to try and bring it back out into the forefront of country music."



Garner, 33, will perform on Thursday, September 9, at The Blues and Greens Fund-raiser at Hickory Point Golf Course and Banquet Facility in Decatur. Co-sponsored by the Decatur Area Arts Council and the Decatur Park District to benefit performing arts in the community, the event consists of a round of golf in the afternoon, a dinner with live jazz and blues entertainment, followed by a 7:30 p.m. concert featuring Garner and opening act, Shonna Bonds.

"Jamey is a great guy, a talented singer, and a charmer on stage," said Sue Powell, Program Director of the Decatur Area Arts Council.

Garner, a former Decatur resident and Park District employee, was also a member of The Greater Decatur Chorale and The Decatur Park Singers. In conjunction to singing and performing, Garner assisted in publicity, marketing and with numerous music and summer playground programs.

Garner was initially introduced to a variety of music through his parents collection of Kenny Rogers, Willie Nelson, Tony Bennett, Mel Torme and Frank Sinatra records.

"When Jamey auditioned for the Decatur Park Singers he wore a pin-striped suit and sang the Frank Sinatra tune, *The Lady Is A Tramp*," said Karen Benjamin, Director of Recreation at the Decatur Park District.

Garner participated in sports and music while attending Chester High School.

"I ran track and was the quarterback on the football team," Garner said. "I also played saxophone and was involved in the band, mixed chorus, and show choir. I took a lot of razzing from my buddies about being a quarterback and a singer. My uncle used to call me the Singing Quarterback."

Garner moved to New York City after graduating from Eastern Illinois University in '93 with a degree in Speech Communications.

"New York City so big and diverse, that you're kind of forced to figure out who you are," Garner said. "While researching, exploring, and trying to find my niche, I did some modeling, acting, and a off-Broadway show, My Sinatra. What I discovered is that I can't run from my small town, Midwestern roots. What naturally comes out of me is wearing cowboy boots, playing harmonica, and writing and singing country songs. Once I realized what I was supposed to be doing, it all just started falling into place."

Garner was one of twelve Nashville Star contestants chosen from over 8,000 other unsigned artists to compete live on national television for a Sony recording contract.

"Nashville Star has been the opportunity of my lifetime," said Garner, who was the sixth contestant voted off the '03 Nashville Star debut season. "I've really had an open door to the Nashville industry when I want to get something heard, when I need to listen to different music, or when I want to write with somebody. I haven't had any road-blocks that I normally would have encountered had I not been on the show."

Garner, who's currently seeking a major label recording contract, has released two independent projects -- "America and Me," as lead singer with Quick Draw, and a solo cd of original material, "Jamey Garner."

"I try to inhabit a song -- live it!" Garner said. "Then throw in some fiery down-home harmonica and a whole lotta heartland upbringing. What comes out is honest country."

Garner also received a gold record for playing harmonica on '03 Nashville Star winner, Buddy Jewell's, #3 country single, "Sweet Southern Comfort."

"Jamey is a close friend of mine and an amazing harmonica player," Jewell said. "Having Jamey play on Sweet Southern Comfort is a source of pride for us both, because now the song is something he helped create as well."

Current endeavors for Garner include exchanging August 29th wedding vows with GERALYN DEL CORSO, co-writing, and touring.

"All of my career dreams revolve around music," Garner said. "Hopefully, one of these days, I'll have the freedom to be in a place where I'm comfortable enough to enjoy some of the other things in life. But right now, I'm really focused on my music, getting it heard, acquiring a record deal, and getting to that next level."