

STEVE WARINER

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
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When country singer/songwriter, Steve Wariner, performs at the Little Nashville Opry on Saturday, September 20th, it's not just another concert for him -- it's a homecoming.

"I just love coming home to Indiana," says Wariner, who was raised in the northern Indianapolis suburb of Noblesville. "And returning to the Little Nashville Opry is always a lot of fun and a treat for me. It's such an intimate venue where a performer can reach out, shake a hand and actually see the familiar faces of family and friends in the audience."



Aside from the musical opportunities, Wariner also enjoys the artistic aspects offered in the Brown county area.

"Painting and drawing is a great hobby that I've enjoyed doing for years," Wariner says. "My interest in art all started when I was growing up in Indiana. Art was my first love. I was going to be a painter. Strange how things happen, isn't it? I'll never forget when my high school art teacher brought our class to Brown county to paint. Even today, I could come to Brown County, sit in a park and draw a painting."

Even though Wariner appreciates all types of art, one style is particularly meaningful.

"Watercolors have always been my favorite medium to dabble in," Wariner says. "I just love the freedom, looseness and the spontaneity of it."

A number of Wariner's original watercolor lithographs (available Through his www.stevewariner.com website), have also been donated as charitable fundraising items over the years.

"Various charities have found the lithographs to be a good auction item in a lot of cases," Wariner says. "And being able to turn the art into a way of making money for a worthy cause is very rewarding."

For Wariner, the only thing more rewarding than art is his love of music.

"I can't imagine my life without music," Wariner says. "It just provides me with so much joy. It's what I do. It's all I do. People kid me because I've never done anything job-wise other than music. I did de-tassel corn for Pioneer one summer in Indiana, though. I respect farmers and love what they do, but I knew really quick after the de-tassling episode that music and playing guitar is what I wanted to pursue."

Wariner received his first paying gig at age nine by playing bass with his father and uncle at a local barn dance in Russell Springs, Kentucky. He was paid eight dollars -- and blistered his thumb.

"A lot of my relatives are from south-central Kentucky," Wariner says. "After all us kids were gone from home in Indiana, my parents, who were both originally from the same area of Kentucky, moved back to their home state years ago. In fact, my dad just turned 75 this year and teaches guitar to a group of young students where he resides in Russell County, Kentucky. He just lives to teach those kids. I started out with him, he was a great teacher to me. I learned so much from him. It just warms my heart to see him still teaching."

Wariner began his music career at age 17 when he met country artist Dottie West at the Nashville Country Club in Indianapolis. She jumped on stage and sang harmony with him on the song, "Shelly's Winter Love," and hired him that very night to play bass and sing in her band on the road.

By 1977, Wariner had his first "singles" deal as a solo artist, thanks to country artist, producer and friend, Chet Atkins.

"Chet Atkins was brilliant -- a true genius," Wariner says. "Not only about guitar and the industry, but about life in general. He had some great philosophies. When my career didn't take off as quickly as I would have liked, I can remember Chet saying, 'You can be anything you want if you are willing to work hard enough and be patient and wait for it.' Most people are blessed to have a close friend in their lives, and Chet was mine. He was the first guy that I could -- and I would -- call in the middle of the night about whatever problem or issue was going on in my life at the time. And he always had an answer. He's the first one I told that I was getting married. He's also the first one I called about being invited to join the Grand Ole Opry, and he played with me at my induction. I can't even begin to tell you how much I learned being around him and just watching him. Even though he's been gone a little over two years now, I still miss him a lot."

The 25-year industry veteran, who has practically every kind of musical award on his mantel, recently released his 24th album, "Steal Another Day." Although Wariner spent most of his career making records at major Nashville labels, he decided to record "Steal Another Day" at his own independent label, Selectone Records.

"We had just built my new 2000-square-foot studio when I left Capitol Records about 3-1/2 years ago," Wariner says. "I went off to write songs and produce for other artists, which knock on wood, has gone very well. At the same time, I started experimenting with my new studio and recording all these demos of songs that I had kept for myself and not pitched to other artists. When I started recording what I thought were demos, I didn't realize at the time that I was actually making an album."

"Steal Another Day" is a 16-song collection of eleven newly penned tunes and five faithful re-recordings of Wariner's favorite early hits. Special cuts on the album include a tribute to mentor and friend, Chet Atkins, "In My Heart Forever (For Chet)," and "There Will Come A Day (Holly's Song)," which he wrote for stepdaughter, Holly, who has been diabetic since she was eight years old. Wariner has given the song to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation to use for fund-raising and promotional purposes.

"This album represents about two years of saving away what I thought were the best songs I had written during that period of time," Wariner says. "To me, they are all special songs and have their own personalities and charm. But, of course, I'm partial. I'm like the father to these guys. They all came at different times in my life and they all mean different things, but together they all have a real nice common thread going through them."

With more than a dozen #1 songs and over thirty Top Ten singles under Wariner's belt, one could say that this hometown Hoosier boy has definitely made a name for himself in Nashville.

"As I go through life," Wariner says, "I'm always striving and keeping the faith to be a better person. I don't ever claim to be the perfect person. I'm making mistakes all the time, just like anybody else. But if somewhere down the road, years from now, someone brings my name up in a good light and says, 'That guy, he did some good with his music while he was here,' I'd be pleased with that legacy. Because trying to make someone else happy, make someone else's life a little bit better or to do some good for others is what it's all about."