

DAVID COOK

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David Cook knows what it takes to reach an audience – and keep them coming back for more.

“Music has always been a way for me to connect,” said Cook in a recent phone interview with The Times. “From an early age, I watched my dad play guitar and both my parents listened to a variety of music. I was brought up on a steady diet of country and classic rock, so music was always around and a connection point to other people.”



The 31-year-old Missouri native — who will perform Friday, August 15, in the Ottawa Township High School auditorium as part of the Starved Rock Country Concert Series — was the season 7 (2008) winner of the popular television show, “American Idol.”

“I grew up in the Midwest music scene,” said Cook. “It has some of the nicest and most loyal fans in music. Having the opportunity to come out and play for them in Ottawa is a big honor.”

Cook’s show is the third in a series of five Starved Rock Country Concerts for the 2014 season.

"I hope the fans leave at the end of my concert thinking they got more than expected or paid for," Cook says. "In today's music market, everything is so accessible online now. I firmly believe we'll put on a show in Ottawa that'll capture something they won't ever get on You Tube."

Other upcoming Starved Rock Country Concerts include, "Illusions of Legends," featuring Elvis Presley, Elton John, and Johnny Cash impersonators on Sept. 27th at the OTHS auditorium, and the 2014 season finale Christmas stage show of "Brule," a multi-award winning contemporary Native American musical and dance experience, on Dec. 6th at the LaSalle-Peru High School Auditorium.

"The purpose behind our Starved Rock Country concert series is to offer performances that appeal to all ages, and more importantly – families," said John Newby, publisher of The Times and founder of Starved Rock Country. "David Cook brings the energy that appeals to the younger crowd while offering the talent and history with American Idol that crosses all age categories."

David Roland Cook was born in Houston, Texas, and raised in Blue Springs, Missouri. He is the middle of three brothers – the late Adam Cook being older and Andrew younger.

Cook began singing in 2nd grade and received his first guitar, a Fender Stratocaster, at the age of 13. Cook was also an avid baseball player (pitcher) during high school, but focused more on music after sustaining a sports injury. At 15, Cook formed a band with his friend, Bobby Kerr, which they initially named Red Eye, then later changed to Axium. The band produced 3 independent albums, "Matter of Time," "Blindsided," and "The Story Thus Far," as well as a number of live albums including, "Live In Tulsa."

After earning a graphic design degree from the University of Central Missouri, Cook relocated to Tulsa, OK, where he joined the band, The Midwest Kings.

"Axium and Midwest Kings helped me find my voice," said Cook. "They also taught me the lesson of being on the road and camaraderie. Even though my name may be on the marquee now, those bands taught me that I'm not by myself and how to lean on my team a bit. I'm definitely a proponent of it takes a village."

In 2006, Cook recorded and self-released a solo album, "Analog Heart."

"Cook was performing and working as a bartender at the Blank Slate in Tulsa, OK, when he competed on American Idol," said Katherine Morgan, a music aficionado from Tulsa, OK, who's currently visiting relatives in the Ottawa area. "The 7th American Idol season was the first to allow contestants to play musical instruments while performing. I was already a Cook supporter, but the way he sang the Chris Cornell version of Michael Jackson's song, Billie Jean, made me a fan."

Since winning "Idol" in 2008, Cook moved to Los Angeles, CA, and released two major label CD's – "David Cook" (2008) and "This Loud Morning" (2011) – and resulting singles, "Light On," "Come Back To Me," "The Last Goodbye," "Fade Into Me," and "Laying Me Low."

In 2012, Cook relocated to Nashville, TN, and submerged himself in the songwriting scene. As a result, country artist David Nail released the current 2014 steadily-climbing Billboard Top Country single, "Kiss You Tonight," which was co-written by Cook, Jay Knowles, and Trent Sommar.

"That song came super quick, we wrote it in less than hour," Cook says. "Then we sat on it for about 6 months before David Nail reached out and wanted to record it. I think he's made the song his own, which is the sign of a great performer."

Cook is working on his yet untitled independent third CD, due to be released in 2015, with it's first single scheduled for a late 2014 release.

Continuing to find ways to connect, Cook, who's older brother Adam passed away from a brain tumor in 2009, has helped to raise over 3 million dollars for brain tumor research and funding through such charities as the Accelerated Brain Cancer Cure.

"Losing Adam was devastating for his wife, kids, and our family," Cook says. "I'm not a scientist, so I don't know how to cure brain cancer. But if I can go and put myself out there and help motivate people to raise awareness and funds so somebody can find a cure – then I'm on board."