



MUSICIAN PROFILE

Name: Joshua Bartholomew

Born: July 30, 1984, Pembroke, Ontario

South Simcoe Link: Moved to Alliston in Grade 4 and attended Alliston Union Public School and graduated from Banting Memorial High School

Instruments: guitar, bass, drums, synthesizer, piano, vocals (all self-taught)

Style of music: pop, folk rock, alternative mix

Influences: Inspired by all music

CD: Produced a self-titled EP with six tracks in fall 2005, for sale at shows and through his web site, www.joshuabartholomew.com.

Popular with: Toronto area music scene and worldwide, thanks to MySpace.com, all within the last few months.

Big breaks to date: Invited to open for Canadian singer/songwriter Ron Sexsmith in April at the Old Roxy Theatre in Mount Forest, Ontario. Performed LIVE in the studio on CBC national radio. Receives radio play on Toronto's Mix 99.9. At press time was preparing for tour with Bachman/Cummings.

Alliston's Homegrown Idol

| BY SANDY POITRAS



Ever since he can remember, Joshua Bartholomew has had a connection with music. At age three, with Fisher Price microphone in hand, he would make up jingles for popular consumer products like Pepsi. His mother, Gay, has kept tape recordings of them.

His love for entertaining an audience also stretches back to his childhood days, when during the family's annual trek to Florida, the blue-eyed fair-haired Canadian boy

would end up on stage with Disney's Christmas brass band, playing drums.

"I'm sure I'm in lots of people's vacation photos," Joshua muses during an interview at his Alliston home.

Life has been hectic these past few months, in a positive sense, with offers to play gigs coming in steadily as the gifted artist continues to write and record new songs.

While his draw to music was fairly organic, with a guitar-playing dad and a family whose listening interests were highly diverse, Joshua credits his Grade 4 teacher from Alliston Union Public School, Tom Shephard, for instilling in him a love for writing poetry, which eventually grew into songwriting.

"I've always been an observer – incredibly into everything that's going on around me," he explains. "The way I like to express myself is by writing it down. Mr. Shephard really encouraged me to write poetry. He was passionate about making me passionate about it."

Not that Joshua was always holed-up in his room writing poems; while he tended to be an honour student, he also did all the usual 'kid stuff' growing up. Before getting busy

with the guitar, he played his fair share of sports, including hockey.

He started getting more serious with music by the age of 13, starting with the drums. The emerging artist seems to have a penchant for getting down to business too, teaching himself whatever he needs to know. He did it for his own voice (his range is over four octaves, demonstrated admirably on his latest haunting track, "The Mirror's Always Right") and for all of his instruments.

At the age of 15, Joshua added guitar to his repertoire and eventually bass, teaching himself from chord books.

"It all came out of being resourceful," he says. "It was something that needed to be done so I learned how to do it. That's always the way I've been, even in school. It's never been a question of, oh... I can't do that."

It wasn't long before Joshua began marrying his lyrics to notes on the musical staff.

It may seem contradictory that a person who writes/records/produces his own music claims not to be any good at taking on several projects at the same time. It's the way he focuses that seems to make it all happen, by putting his heart and soul into each exercise.

"I can't multitask, but when I take on a project, once I do get started, I usually do not stop until it's done. It's all-consuming. It's the way I like to work," he explains.

His mom concurs, recounting the story of how he got his website set up. Not knowing the first thing about designing one — in typical Josh form — he reasoned "it can't be that hard" and spent three solid days figuring it out and ultimately completing the task.

When the co-operative education opportunity presented

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itself in high school Joshua got permission to gain the required work experience in his own recording studio. What resulted, over a span of about three and a half years, was the acquisition of a wealth of knowledge about how to record music and ultimately how to produce a high-quality CD.

After graduating, Joshua went on to complete his first CD. The songs he wrote for it, like all of his lyrics, are based on his own observations and experiences. They range in style from intense guitar with a driving drum beat to softer, soulful pieces.

One track, "What Happened to Our Love", which is in rotation on Mix 99.9, has been made into a music video.

The past few months have proven to be exceptionally busy for this young musician, who clearly has not only the talent, but the head for business too (thanks in part to Gay, a former Alliston-area entrepreneur

I was doing and make it into a music career. I just had no knowledge of the business. Then this website comes along, myspace.com, and I find out that you can upload your songs on it for free and anybody can hear your music. People can search for you; they can randomly search by genre so they can find your music by chance.

"I had no idea that people could find me randomly when I put my songs up there. I got a message from an artist in Toronto who said, 'I really think your music is great.' 'I'd like you to come to one of my gigs.'"

That led to a meeting with the other artist's booking agent, who told Joshua he needs to start playing gigs in Toronto.

"I got my first gig in Toronto and naturally throughout the year it just built and built and I was getting more calls all the time. I started organizing my own shows, booking people to play with me. I couldn't keep up with it, so my mom became my booking agent. She does a lot of the hard work I don't

"It all came out of being resourceful," he says. "It was something that needed to be done so I learned how to do it. That's always the way I've been, even in school. It's never been a question of, oh... I can't do that."

who has currently taken on a full-time management role in her son's music career). When he isn't in his studio writing or recording a new song, he is being invited to play at various venues, or brainstorming ideas on unique ways to market himself and his music.

"Where it all started was on the internet, on my MySpace (a website where musicians and fans can connect). When I got out of high school that's when I started to record and write and practise but I had no idea how to translate what

have time for because I'm too busy in the studio."

Okay, but how did he land a gig opening for one of Canada's hottest singer/songwriters, Ron Sexsmith? That too, seemed to be an "organic" progression as Josh and Gay like to call it.

"I actually met Ron Sexsmith, who is a hero of mine, at Beachfest last summer, which is a big concert Mix 99.9 organizes down at the (Toronto) waterfront. It's a huge all-day event outside with a lot of really great artists like Tom

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Cochrane, Blue Rodeo, the Barenaked Ladies, David Usher. I was able to get backstage and I just introduced myself to him. We ended up talking for a long while, I gave him my CD and I guess the rest is history. We kept in touch back and forth a little bit and then I got the phone call (from Ron Sexsmith's booking agent, Richard Mills of SL Feldman) to open for Ron at the Old Roxy Theatre in Mount Forest."

As a result, Feldman is now Joshua's booking agent. As for the concert?

"It was unbelievable. I was in another place. Knowing something you created is inspiring a bunch of people. It's such a cool feeling. Getting to do that, and sitting down afterwards to watch your favourite songwriter play an hour and a half-long set, knowing that his crowd, that was there to see him, responded really well to you... It was unbelievable."

Can any aspiring musician hope to have this much success so soon? It's possible.

According to Joshua, any musician who is serious about making a career for themselves these days had better have a business plan. Gone are the days of the "sex, drugs and rock'n roll" attitude where all the musician had to do was show up for the concert and perform.

"Major record labels aren't necessarily looking for that undiscovered star that they can make into this big, humongous superstar. They're looking for somebody who's already done all the hard work, who already has a big following, that they can now get behind and bring to a bigger audience. They're not taking risks anymore."

What does the future hold for Joshua Bartholomew?

"I can't really give any specific details, but there are a lot of goings-on with a lot of major record labels. It's been a very exciting time in the last couple of months with people coming

to see me play, then we sit down and talk and I think that is where I come across best. I'm a normal person. I have no intention of playing it up and pretending to be someone I'm not. On a personal level, people appreciate the fact that I'm just a regular guy from Alliston."

"The industry is changing," adds Gay. "I believe record labels are at a crossroads. Music is being delivered digitally now. Josh is coming up with a lot of marketing ideas for his (next) C.D."

Will he be signing any record contracts soon? Joshua's smile broadens, but he remains tight-lipped on that question.

"It's looking like its going to pay off. Trust me, I want to tell you. I want to tell the world everything. It's so exciting for me. It's my dream come true."

What this ambitious singer/songwriter can say, however, is that he intends to keep writing his songs and performing them for an audience.

"Ideally I just want to make music for the rest of my life and make a living doing that. I love to play shows and as long as I continue to do that and not have to worry about paying the bills, I'm happy.

"I know that's all very broad and vague but that is the goal. At the end of the day that's what it's all about. And if my music inspires people along the way then I can't really ask for anything more."

Joshua's growing fan base can keep track of what he's up to and where he will be playing on his web site, www.joshuabartholomew.com. Any local area businesses that might be interested in carrying his CD can also contact him through email links at that address. There are also links there to his MySpace URL under the "Links" icon. While you can download music directly from his own site, more songs are available for play in his MySpace site. ■

CHARITABLE SPIRIT

Joshua has shown a generous, charitable spirit in his career so far. He played for a young Alliston Union Public School student's birthday earlier this year at her request and at press time was in talks with Mix Radio 99.9 about auctioning off the guitar he won for a songwriting contest to help raise funds for a charity.



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