



## "Making music is like being natural high"



There are good musicians all over the world. Sometimes it's worth it, to leave the well-known place behind to explore some new music and some new stories. Taylor Carson, the 29 years old singer and songwriter from Washington D.C. is one of these guys who might not be famous all over the world, but who is living a life for music and who has so much to tell.

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Taylor Carson is sitting comfortably on a small wooden bar stool on the stage in "Acre 121?", a cozy restaurant in Washington D.C. One of his feet is positioned on the black floor, the other on the chair. The crowd is watching Taylor, whose bright green eyes are almost closed and whose face with a red beard is turning towards the floor, carefully.

They hear the folk-pop music Taylor plays and swing slowly from one side to another. It is dark in the little restaurant and the only light spot is turned towards the stage. There is just one man and his guitar. Taylor plays a chord, takes a deep breath and sings these few lines again and again: "My great grandfather was a moonshiner. He killed two men of cold, cold blood. Defending the name of the one's he loved. I would do the same. I would do the same. I would do the same for you."

### A tattoo as a mirror

"You are totally in your own world. When you feel the energy, the emotions and the connection with the crowd, it is like being natural high", Taylor explains his feelings while singing this song 'Moonshiner'. He wears blue jeans with his short plaid shirt that exposes a big colorful tattoo on his left arm showing how Taylor sees himself.

The camellia is a memory of his mum because it stands for the state flower of Alabama, where she was from. The gold finch, positioned near the camellia, shows the New Jersey state bird where Taylor was born. The bird is sitting on a huge microphone and is surrounded by Cherokee Rose flowers which are a symbol for the Georgia State flower – where his dad is from: "So the story of this tattoo so far is that the New Jersey bird gave me my voice, which is represented by the microphone, and I am who I am because of that and my parents."

When Taylor plays his first song from his sixteen song record 'Defending The Name' he thinks about the story of his own family. Taylor is a full-time singer and songwriter and performs shows several times a week in many different places – in the area of the nation's capital such as "Ebenezer's Coffee House" in Washington, D.C. or "Whitlow's On Wilson" in Arlington. Right now he is working on his fifth album which will be published next year. Taylor doesn't have any college degree but he has the passion and talent for making music. He taught himself to play guitar at the age of 16 and nearly all his songs are self-written.



### Making music and nothing else

“That it does pay my bill is a great thing, but that’s not the thing what keeps me going to do it. I can’t just see anything else for me. When I’m on stage, I’m more comfortable than walking down the streets”, according to himself. However, Taylor also admits that sometimes it is hard not to get regularly income with being a musician. He knows that he has to earn more money if he wants to have a family and to support everybody in the way he wants to.

Indeed, Carson is one of these family guys. He is glad to have a good relationship with his five years older sister, his three step sisters and his one step brother. He counts the moment he saw his two nieces for the first time as one of his happiest: “I remember my sister how she was walking down the stairs and didn’t even say a word. She just handed me my nieces and I started to cry. I love children. That’s a different kind of love for me and I didn’t expect that my heart can feel such a strong emotion. I want to have children someday.”

“At first, I didn’t think he was someone to take seriously. He was goofy – a guy with a guitar and a very lazy waiter. But as I got to know him I saw beyond that facade of his goofy personality – he really was a lazy waiter, no facade there – and knew that he had a unique story to tell and a poetic way of telling it,” Julie Scrafford, Taylor’s girlfriend, says. They met each other seven years ago waiting tables at “Irelands Four Courts” in Arlington. When Julie heard him singing the first time, she knew that he is someone special.

The 29 year old artist loves the work he is doing. Every day he wakes up about 9 a.m., takes his dog out and goes to the gym to get a clear mind. After drinking an entire pot of coffee Taylor gets on the computer and calls his manager James Kenly to work on new ideas with him. Kenly supports Carson and helps him with networking and all social media work.

At the moment they are planning not only a residence tour up and down the East Coast beginning in January 2012 but are also designing t-shirts and creating a subscription plan for fans who signed in to get the new songs from his next record every month before they will be published to the public officially. Besides that daily work Taylor gets invited to be a background singer in a restaurant, to give a concert in a bar or to have a show on a festival.



### Defending the name

Taylor knows that he is not that famous and he knows how hard it is sometimes just to be the opener of a bigger act at a concert of very well-known musician: "Then you have to work hard because no one knows who you are and everybody is just waiting until the real show begins," he says, "So you are the one who has to start creating a good atmosphere with the crowd."

Taylor also explains how hard it sometimes can be to bring himself back into a particular mood to play a song like 'Moonshiner', a song he wrote several months before. Returning to that mood and having to perform the song immediately at concerts can be difficult. That's why he is so dependent on getting something back from the audience to keep going. "If you get up there and you know the people are not really with you and with the songs, then it is just a hard work day", he continues, "Then it turns more to work than fun. I always want to have music in the combination with fun. 70 percent of the time it really is, but 30 percent of the time on stage it isn't because no one is giving you back that energy you need."

Luckily most of the time Taylor gets this energy back he needs. Then every song feels great and then he gets really proud. It's not just about making the people stand up and clap their hands but also to make the people feel the emotion and honest Taylor wants to transmit. "I always try to give my best to get back into this spot I was when I wrote the songs. So I can give the best to the people I am singing to. When I'm on stage, sometimes one line



really gets it out of me. That's the time when my emotions are fully there and when people can relate to the story in my songs."

Usually Carson sings about love. Even at times he hasn't been in a relationship he just sees people in love and imagines what their love must be like. In reality he isn't really sure of which person he is talking about in one or another song – then it's just about this special feeling. However, there are many hints of his personal life in every single song, especially in his last record.

When Taylor talks about his album 'Defending The Name' he chooses the words to describe it, very carefully: "These 16 songs are my story. This is the celebration of the triumphs that led to my confidence and the illumination of the tragedies that created my demons. My triumphs and tragedies brought me to music, music taught me to love and love is the resolution of 'Defending The Name'."

### **The world as a tough place**

Born in the north of New Jersey, right outside of New York City, Taylor got a part of an inherited family story. He describes his childhood as a "good, but interesting" one. His dad was a hard worker and to manage his own clothing manufactory he had to travel a lot. "I just remember him being gone a lot", Taylor says. His parents were really good to him, his family owned a big house and he was lucky to find some good friends in his neighborhood.

However, Taylor describes his childhood as an "interesting" one. The reason for this is this picture he has still clearly in his mind of coming back home from football practice as an eight years old boy and seeing his mum packing up a van with another man. His dad remarried when Taylor was ten years old. Taylor learned a lot from younger years: "That let me grow up really fast. It was the moment when my mum left, when I realized that the world is a tough place. I saw for the first time that the world hurts," Taylor remembers.

When he looks back to his past, he would describe himself as a "troublemaker". He wanted to do everything that was prohibited. That's why Taylor ended up in trying alcohol for the first time when he was twelve years old and consuming several drugs as a teenager.

### **Looking back to the past**

In school, Taylor had a music teacher who played guitar pretty well and who was the first inspiring person for him. Through him Taylor didn't only find out that music can transmit big feelings but also that he wanted to be such a cool guy as his teacher. Taylor did some college after high school because he was supposed to do it, but he figured out very fast, that his dream is to become a musician.

Taylor Carson moved down to Washington D.C. when he was 20 years old. That was the time when he was ready to do full-time performing and becoming a professional singer and songwriter. He is the only musician in his entire family. However, nobody questions what he is doing. Maybe it's because Taylor used to be this troublemaking kid and everybody was glad to see that he found something he is really interested in and what leads him on the right path.

Only three months ago, Taylor's mother died through a suicide after struggling with depression for years. He remembers her as a "good mum, a little crazy, but good." Unfortunately, Taylor didn't get to know her as well as he wanted to do. Shortly after she died, he decided that drinking shouldn't be such a big part in his life anymore: "I stopped drinking because that was how I was dealing with the pain all the time of losing her. At the point she died, I started to think, that I want to deal with the pain on my own and I wanted to figure out a different, more productive way to deal with it – that's songwriting for me. When I come up with a first line of a song I feel strongly about it and I'm thinking why I did create this line," he explains. Music is therapy for Taylor Carson. He hopes to get his problems from his soul when he treats them with a song.



That's why his last album just handles about his inherited family story. He sought to understand his personal struggles and tried to find his own roots: "I wanted to know why my mum was how she was and doing that brings me more to who I am", Taylor says. His mum was depressive for a long time because the first thing she could remember was losing her parents to a car accident at the age of five: "That explains a lot. Rather than being upset with my mum and the way she was, I wanted to understand her", Taylor certainly knows.

Taylor wants to understand what happened in his family's past; he doesn't want to judge someone about what he or she did. That's why he for example wrote the song "Moonshiner". This is the story of his great-grandfather. Falling on tight times, a hard-working and loving husband and father turns to alternative revenue streams – selling his home-brewed moonshine on the black market in Atlanta, Georgia. Other moonshiners became threatened by their decreased market share, took matters into their own hands and on a bluebird-sky day they drove up to the house to eliminate the competition.

Taylor's great-grandfather stowed his family and won the firefight. He was acquitted of the murders as self-defense but spent his remaining days in jail for moonshining. Taylor realized that in matters he would be faced with defending the name of his family, he will do the same.



### Music is me

"There is such tragedy in his family history and it has shaped who they are today," says his girlfriend Julie. But the way he tells their stories is relatable and engaging. You really want to listen to every word to know how the story ends. "I never get tired of his music, and think it's so cool to watch his songs develop. He is always afraid not being able to create another good song until he just does it and until there's the next good song", continues Julie. "There are so many guys out there with a guitar trying to do the same thing as Taylor does. The challenge is to figure out what makes Taylor different? That's the work part of being a musician – you have to come up with new thoughts and get the world to know you", explains Taylor's girlfriend.

And he will. Music seems like an important thing in Taylor's life, not only now but also in the future. If someone asks Taylor what music is like for him he answers: "Everything. It's my happiness, it's my therapy, it's me. Music is me."

*Taylor Carson, thank you very much for the interview.*



For more information about Taylor Carson and his upcoming shows click on [www.taylorcarson.com](http://www.taylorcarson.com)

(Text: Christina Hubmann / Pictures: Horizons Management)