

Hometown boy makes good



With three CDs and a touring schedule that keeps him hopping, Midway graduate and Christian music singer Warren Barfield's life on a path started years ago

By **DOUG CLARK**
Assistant Editor

You may have heard his songs playing on any contemporary gospel station or may even have seen his videos on the internet. Either way, Midway High School graduate Warren Barfield is quickly becoming a name with a unique brand of faith-based music that is classified as “a mix of pop, rock, folk, and soul” and close friends say they are not surprised by his success.

With just three CDs, “Warren Barfield” (2003), “Reach” (2006) and the recently released “Worth Fighting

For,” a busy touring schedule, as well as appearances, Barfield is the true definition of a hometown boy made good.

“I remember him when he was little,” said longtime friend Bryan Jackson. “I got the chance to know him because my late wife, Carla, was friends with his sister, Renee, and all of the Barfields. His father is a pastor and we would go to their church — that is how I got to know him.”

Jackson, who is currently the youth pastor at Mintz Baptist Church, said that once he got to know Warren, he knew he had a special gift.

“I play drums,” Jackson explained.

“So when I would go (to their church), I got a chance to play with him. Even at a young age, Warren was really talented — he could *play* guitar. Everyone is born with a gift, but just listening to him play, I knew that God put a special calling on him because he had a gift that was way beyond average.”

After the two became friends, Jackson began to see a change.

“When I first met him, he wasn’t as open,” he said. “He was a pastor’s kid ... I am a little older than him, he is about 28 and I am 34, but we always got along well. When I was in my first year of college and he was in his

teens, there was a car wreck close to his house. I remember him telling me that he and a friend came up on the wreck after it just had happened. A young person had gotten thrown from the car in the accident and he walked over to the person and the person looked like they were dead. He never had dealt with anything like that before, so it hit him really hard. He was always a good kid, but there was definitely something that happened right there. I saw a change after that night. He really started to get serious about things. Not too long after, I noticed that he really started flourishing. Something about that night lit a fire up under him and he didn't waste any more time."

Not too long after, Jackson said that he heard him playing in church and said it wouldn't be too long until Barfield was out of Sampson County.

"I always told people and I even told this to him, that one day he would be in Nashville," he said.

Just years after that prediction, Barfield was in fact, living his dream.

In addition to his successful CD releases, in 2004, he toured with Toby McKeehan and Third Day and the following year, he was part of the "In the

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Name of Love Tour" with Todd Agnew and BarlowGirl.

For Jackson, seeing his friend make it is a testament to his hard work.

"It's exciting to see it happen for him," he said. "Especially a young person who is out there making good Christian music with the love of God in his heart. You know, so many people are chosen, but only a few accept the call. And to be honest, Warren really has given up everything to make it happen. I remember talking to him when nothing was happening for him and he wasn't sure if this is what God wanted him to do with his life, but he never gave up and he persevered and now he is reaping the benefits of staying true to God's word."

Treating people with love and

respect, is pretty rare in the business of music, but Barfield has remained true to his beliefs.

"I have known Warren for about six years," said Randy Maricle, of Maricle Management Group, who handles Barfield.

"I owned a Christian retail store and met him through that. I always felt that Warren was a great communicator and he had something special to say. When the opportunity came up to work with him day-to-day, I jumped on it. I'm truly blessed to be working with Warren."

"He has always been the same," notes Jackson.

"He has never changed. With him it is what you see is what you get — and he has always been a really good guy."

Currently Barfield is on tour through November. He lives in Nashville with his wife of six and a half years, Megan. The couple is expecting their first child at the end of the year.

For more information on Barfield or to purchase his music, click on warrenbarfield.com.

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A Q&A with Warren Barfield

By **DOUG CLARK**
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In an interview with singer/songwriter and Midway High School graduate Warren Barfield, Barfield explains the inspiration for his new CD, his faith in God, where he would like to be in 20 years, and of course, his memories of Sampson County.

SI: First of all, congratulations on the new CD “Worth Fighting For” — Tell me a little bit about the idea and song selection for the CD.

WB: The songs were written over a year or so of my life. As always I was just writing from my personal experiences. My A and R guy, my producers and I chose the 10 songs out of the batch of 40 or so that we thought deserved to be on a record. It wasn't until after the record was done that I realized there was a theme running through out the project about things that I feel are important enough in life to fight for.

SI: How exciting is it for you to work on something for so long and then have to wait for your fans to hear it?

WB: I have compared it to the first day of high school. It's exciting and nauseating. You put on your best and hope the people that like you outweigh the bullies.

SI: I love the build and lyrics of “Love Is Not A Fight”— how much do you think your background growing up has affected your song writing?

WB: Every experience I've ever had is a part of the overall fingerprint I leave behind on everything I touch. I can only speak of what I've seen, heard, or dreamed. “Love is Not a Fight” was written in a couple of days then re-written and re-written over a

riage has, without a doubt, affected my songwriting. Living with a woman has definitely improved my communication skills. My relationship with my wife has also helped me grasp a better understanding of my faith which, in turn, allows me to

write in a way that is much more relatable for the listener.

SI: Do you think that will constantly keep changing as your family grows?

WB: I'm sure. My wife and I will have our first baby by the first of 09. My writer friends who are parents say that I have a whole new source of inspiration on the way.

SI: Has it been hard to keep your faith in the music business and did the some-

times difficult side of it ever make you want to change your career path?

WB: Yes. It has been hard and I have come close to quitting many times. I have found the music business to be a harsh world with many power hungry greedy folks. But luckily, there are also a lot of great, honest, trustworthy people that I have had the privilege to work with. They have kept me focused on the fact that music was my life long dream before it was my business and it will still be that after the business and it's power-hungry, greedy folks crash and burn.

SI: After talking with some of your old friends from Midway High



couple of months. The inspirational compass through the whole process was the ways I have seen the success and failure of love during my life.

SI: Do you think that your writing has matured over the years, and do you think that your marriage has affected your song writing or has it?

WB: I am constantly learning more about the craft of songwriting, so I definitely feel the structure of my writing has matured. I feel the lyrical content has matured in the sense that I'm writing about universal life situations more than just pointed topics that only people with the same world view as me can appreciate. My mar-

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you were set for stardom, was being a writer/performer something that you always dreamed of?

WB: On career day while everyone was checking boxes for teacher, nurse, doctor or police officer I was left out. There wasn't a box for writer/performer at Midway High School. I dreamed of doing this but had no idea how to go about making the dream a reality. The fact that I have accomplished what I have and am able to make a great living today as a writer/performer is nothing short of a miracle to me. The right doors opened, the path was laid out for me and lead me here. It was the grace of God and I am grateful.

SI: When did you know you were going to be a musician/writer? What was your big break?

WB: I knew I was going to be a writer/artist about six months into my first year in college when I made the decision that I was going to be a writer/artist. I just had to make the choice. I left school and spent five years traveling the country performing as an indie artist. My big break was opening for a recording artist who took my music to some of his friends in Nashville. A few months later, I signed my first record deal.

SI: Who were some of your writing influences growing up?

WB: Southern Gospel was always in my life as a pastor's kid. As a teen in Spivey's Corner country music was an influence. I also listened to pop radio a lot. I was influenced by what I heard on the radio more so than any particular writers.

SI: I know you are a big fan of Jonny Lang, but who else inspired you to pick up the guitar?

WB: I always just gravitated towards guitar. My parents said that as a little

child I used to pretend I was strumming a guitar. They encouraged that by buying me toy guitars and then my first real guitar when I was 8. When I was a teenager, artists like Garth Brooks, Dave Matthews, Steven Curtis Chapman and Hootie and the Blowfish encouraged my interest in acoustic guitar.

SI: Do you feel that God's guidance is working through you everyday?

WB: I find myself constantly amazed at how He leads me. I don't always notice it while it's happening and sometimes the small steps and turns happen without me acknowledging his guidance. But it is impossible to take in the whole picture and deny His presence.

SI: What has been the biggest blessing that you have had in your music career, and in life?

WB: Peace that God is bigger. It took a while for me to get to that place. Some call it contentment or satisfaction but to me it's peace.

SI: What advice would you give to a young musician/song writer struggling to be heard?

WB: If you believe in what you have to say, it's worth the struggle.

SI: How often do you get back to Sampson County and do you still have family here?

WB: My sisters live in Johnston County. My parents live in Sampson County, they pastor Mt. Carmel in Autryville. I visit a few times a year. I have a lot of memories there.

SI: What is your best memory of Sampson County and do you miss it?

WB: My best memories are my times as a teenager in Sampson County. The good times I had at Midway High, the anticipation of Friday nights, football games, the marching band, friends and crushes. All the things we

wish away when we have them and wish we had back when they are gone. Sampson County provided the backdrop for me to discover who I was and dream about who I would become.

SI: I know you are on tour now, but is there any chance of a North Carolina stop?

WB: Dates are always being added to the schedule. I'm playing a lot of churches on this tour so maybe one will book me out there. Keep an eye on my website.

SI: How important is the internet for you as a working musician?

WB: It's a necessity. It allows me to communicate with my fans in a way I would never be able to without it.

SI: What is the worst part of touring? Best part?

WB: The worst part is the stress of always being on the go. You never get to relax because the minute you arrive somewhere you are already thinking about where you have to be next.

The best part is you get to meet a lot of fascinating people who are both very different yet so similar to you. It is really mind opening and grace awakening. I also love the fact that my job enables me to see so much of our country. The United States is a beautiful place.

SI: Why do you think that contemporary radio has shut out a lot of Christian artists. Meaning that there have been so many cross over artists, such as the recent country to rock; rock to country boom; With so much great Christian music out there, how come Christian artists rarely receive that opportunity? "Love Is Not A Fight" is a good argument for that — That could be on any pop/rock station right now.

WB: This is really a complicated subject. We could easily take up pages with this discussion alone.

Radio is a very political business. Besides the rare fluke, any song you hear on the radio is because a team of people have jumped through a lot of hoops and spent a lot of money to get that song on the radio in hopes that it will generate sales. In any radio form the artist with greater previous success or the belief of the record label stand a better chance of receiving airplay because of the marketing dollars that they have at their disposal. Even the greatest of these budgets in the Christian music industry can't compete with the kind of money it takes to break a song at mainstream radio.

SI: Where do you see yourself as a musician/song writer/family man in the next 20 years?

WB: I can't imagine a time when I'm not making music. It's as much a part of my life as anything else is. I'm sure I will not always be on the road as much as I am now, but as long as I'm living I will be singing about what I'm learning. As I said earlier, my wife and I will start 2009 as parents. We are both excited about having a family and hope to have more children. My prayer is that we lead them well and give them every tool they need to make an eternal difference in their world.

SI: What do you want your fans/old friends to know about you?

WB: That I am overwhelmingly blessed and I'm trying hard to make sure that those blessings aren't wasted on me.

SI: What is up next for you?

WB: God only knows ... and I'm OK with that.

For more information on Barfield or to purchase his music, click on to warrenbarfield.com.

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