

Steve Grand Biography
All American Boy
March 24, 2015

Singer-songwriter Steve Grand remembers the first time he realized how powerful music could be. At a young age, riding in the car with his dad, listening to the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Beach Boys, he saw how a song could transport someone through time and space to a moment in the past.

“He could tell you what shirt he was wearing, the name of the girl he was dating, and what the weather was like,” he says of his dad’s musical reminiscences. “That’s what first sparked my interest in songwriting. It was the first time I encountered music’s unique ability to provide a temporary escape from reality.”

It’s a feeling he’s now given countless people himself with 2013’s release of “All American Boy,” his debut single. The song became a smash, viral hit, thanks in part to the self-produced and self-financed video, which went from zero to a million views on YouTube in a matter of days, all without the help of a label, a manager, or an agent. The imagery was pure Americana—campfires, American flags, country roads, whiskey, and hunky, shirtless men. But there was a twist.

The song and video (now with close to 4 million views and counting) both depict a situation familiar to many people—an unrequited crush of someone out of reach, that burning desire for someone you can never have. It’s a universal truth, but Steve’s story was even more affecting, because he was telling that story from the perspective of a gay man who had a crush on a straight man. It’s not something that has ever been depicted in music quite so overtly.

Steve grew up in Lemont, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, in a Catholic family. When he was four or five, he saw Schroeder, Charlie Brown’s piano playing friend tickling the ivories, and became obsessed. He wanted a piano so badly, that he made them, dozens of models of them, out of campaign posters, crayon, tape and glue, most of them bigger than the tiny, future musician.

“I thought it was so cool to be able to make sounds and play a song just using your fingers,” says Steve.

His parents got the hint and bought him an old, beat-up, upright piano. After a lifetime of piano lessons, Steve became an accomplished singer and songwriter, playing in school bands, and later, performing in churches and jamming at jazz venues around town. He penned heartfelt tales of heartache and romance, longing and love, living out his childhood dream and making music with his fingers.

While he loved his family and his musical upbringing, as a young man who figured out that he was gay after a stint at summer camp when he was in eighth grade, Steve says he felt like many gay teenagers do: alone and confused. Looking around for public role models in music, he found few. Though his parents now accept his sexuality and support him, his religious upbringing didn’t offer any solace, either.

“I was 18 or 19 and I realized, hey, there’s really a deficiency here. The world is rapidly becoming a more accepting place. If we really are all the same and we really are all equal, there ought to be more artists who are open about who they are and even sing about it,” he says.

While it’s become more common for celebrities to come out casually, without the fanfare or announcements on covers of magazines, Steve says it’s just as important as ever. “While people say this is no big deal anymore, who cares? You know who cares? The kids who are still really struggling with this. The kids who feel like they would still rather be dead than live life as a gay person,” he said. “I’m thinking about them all the time when I’m doing these things because deep down we all just want to be loved, we want to experience love, we want to give love, we want to take in love, and we want to feel valued and understood.”

He knew that gambit for “All American Boy” would work: no one had ever seen or heard anything quite like it before. “What made the story impactful was the apparent dichotomy of a same-sex love story set against a very Americana backdrop—old cars, whiskey, American flags, and friends by a campfire,” he says.

Pegged as a “gay country artist” by the media—something of a misnomer—within a week, the video had made all the gay blogs, BuzzFeed ran a post about the video, and he’d appeared on “Good Morning America.” Later, he was interviewed by the revered Larry King for his online show.

On February 26, 2014, he launched a successful Kickstarter campaign raising \$326,000, the third highest funded music project on the site. He’s set to release his debut full-length album, “All American Boy” this spring.

With his full-length album, recorded with producer Aaron Johnson (who produced The Fray) in Los Angeles in the spring of 2014, co-writing a few songs with Itaal Shur, (who also helped to pen the Grammy winning song, “Smooth” by Rob Thomas and Santana), coming in March, fans will have even more to be inspired by. “It’s going to take them to many more places. The album follows an arc—each song is a plot point on that arc, and I think a lot of things in life follow an arc.”

The journey is told through Steve’s clear, soaring voice, and his emotionally uplifting, hook-filled songs including “Stay,” “All-American Boy,” “Whiskey Crime,” and “Say You Love Me.” The piano and guitar-driven tracks are instantly timeless and familiar; their sound is a tip of the hat to other American singer-songwriters like Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty.

“There is nothing all that different about my music just because I’m gay,” he says. “My music explores dimensions of the human experience: Love, loss, hope, regret, triumph—themes that have been explored by artists since the beginning of time. None of these experiences are unique to any group - they are universal themes because we all feel them, regardless of what our sexual orientation or gender identity may be.”

Twenty years later, like his cartoon inspiration, Steve Grand is making music with his fingers, creating new memories for them with his songs.

While he knew that “All American Boy” would gain a lot of attention, Steve says, “I didn’t realize how deep the emotional impact was going to be, until I started getting emails from people really saying ‘I’ve been waiting my whole life for someone like you.’” Nearly a year and a half later, he says, “that’s never stopped. People are still watching the video every day and being moved by it.”

Contact Information:

Management:

Brian Doyle Entertainment

Brian Doyle / Alana Mulford

646-674-1500

brian@bdmusicmgmt.com / Alana@bdmusicmgmt.com