

## Chuck Wicks Biography

Everyone has heard the phrase "practice makes perfect" and though it's a mantra more often associated with sports than songwriting, it's just as apropos for that vocation as any other endeavor--just ask singer/songwriter Chuck Wicks.

Though he took the country format by storm with his Top 5 debut single, "Stealing Cinderella," and his Top 15 follow-up hit, "All I Ever Wanted" (and recently earned a whole new audience of fans as a celebrity contestant paired with real-life girlfriend Julianne Hough on the ABC mega-hit *Dancing with the Stars*), it hasn't all come easy. Wicks spent several years paying his dues by parking cars and writing songs. He developed his craft, apprenticing with some of the top songwriters on Music Row. That hard work pays off on *Starting Now*, Wicks' RCA Nashville debut album, which showcases the depth of his artistry as a vocalist and songwriter.

"If it wasn't for the Music Row community and a lot of the songwriters around town, there's no way I would be where I'm at now," says Wicks, who wrote or co-wrote every song on his album, except one.

Growing up on his family's farm in Smyrna, Delaware, Wicks immersed himself in a variety of music, from traditional country to R&B, and cites a diverse array of influences, among them Alan Jackson, Kenny Rogers and Brian McKnight. As much as he loved music, he really didn't give much thought to making it a career. Like many young men, sports dominated his world, and he dreamed of being a professional baseball player. He moved south to attend Florida Southern College and play baseball, but it was during his senior year that the desire to play music began eclipsing his athletic aspirations.

"My passion for country music just kind of took over, and I learned about Nashville," recalls Wicks, who began performing during college. "I decided to take a couple of trips there and figure out how to get into music. I quit college two classes short of graduation and ended up getting a development deal on RCA."

Long on desire and talent, but short on experience, the timing just wasn't right, and that initial development deal didn't lead to an album. As Wicks would learn, it takes so much more than talent to achieve success in the country music arena. If good looks and a great voice were the only ingredients necessary to launch a career, small town America wouldn't be littered with the broken dreams of every aspiring artist who gave up and went home.

Giving up and going home never crossed Wicks' mind. Instead he dug in deeper and spent the next several years writing songs, learning and practicing his craft alongside such well known Music Row writers as Monty Powell, George Teren, Rivers Rutherford, Neil Thrasher and Wendell Mobley and his brother Mike. "I had a lot of great songwriters take me under their wing and show me the ropes--how to sit down and put pen to paper and try to write a song. So that's all I did for four years. I just sat in a writers' room and wrote with some of the best writers in the world. I learned from them and just kept writing and developing my own style."

Wicks would write songs during the day and at night he often found himself parking cars that belonged to some of the co-writers he'd just written with. "As soon as I moved here, I had to get a job," Wicks says. "I parked cars seven days a week at Fleming's Steak House. I was writing during the day and working at night. Some of those songwriters that I was writing with, I would actually park their car at night

when they'd go out to dinner. It was a humbling experience for sure. I knew that I had to work hard, and I knew there was a time where it wasn't going to be easy--and that was definitely the time--but I knew I just had to keep on going."

When asked what kept him going during those lean years, Wicks replies: "I've always believed in myself. I knew I had work to do. I knew my songs had to get better, and that's why I really worked on the craft of songwriting. When you have a good meeting, it makes you want to stay a little longer. If you have a good writing appointment, you want to stay a little longer. When someone tells you, 'Man, I like your songs!' or 'I like your voice!' it's those little things that make you want to stick around and keep going for it."

Perseverance paid off. Wicks landed a deal with RCA Records and began working on his album with producers Monty Powell and Dann Huff. The result is a compelling debut, a collection of songs that demonstrate a depth of artistry not usually found on a first album. The strength of the record is a reflection of the years Wicks spent honing his talent. There's a warm, self-assured quality to his voice, and the songs give voice to the hopes, fears and dreams of today's Americans.

"When You're Single" is an unflinching look at a solitary life and the desire to be in love. The song boasts a warm, lilting tone reminiscent of James Taylor at his best. On the flip side, "She's Gonna Hurt Somebody" is an up-tempo ode to a woman who has been done wrong and is looking for revenge. "Man of the House," Wicks' newest single, is a tender ballad about a young boy trying to help take care of his family while his father is away serving in the war. "Mine All Mine" showcases Wicks' penchant for R&B and the soulful edge in his voice.

The first single, "Stealing Cinderella," is about a guy asking his girlfriend's dad for her hand in marriage and seeing all the photos of her growing up. It's obvious she's the apple of her dad's eye, but to him, the young man is "just some fella, riding in and stealing Cinderella." "There are a lot of great songs that I can't wait to get to, but as far as coming out of the box as a new artist, we wanted something that would stand out," says Wicks of the song, which was inspired by a girlfriend whose job was playing Cinderella at Disney World. "Just the title alone, 'Stealing Cinderella,' makes you want to listen to it, and when you listen to it, it's such a great story. We knew it was the right choice."

It's just the latest in a long line of right choices for Chuck Wicks. He's a talented young artist, unafraid of hard work, and with a strong sense of his own musical identity. "This record reflects who I am as a person. I hope people will hear that and want to be a part of what I sing and write about," says Wicks, who took his songs on the road in 2008, opening for Brad Paisley. "I don't think I'm like anybody else, and it translates through my music and the album that I made."

It may have taken a few years to get to this point, but Wicks wouldn't change a thing. "I'm a much better artist now," he says. "I wasn't ready before, and now I am. I'm glad I parked cars for five years. It makes me appreciate everything that I've had to work for to get to this point."