

Stevens Seeks To Inspire Others Through Song



Photo courtesy of Sonny and Allison Photography

Kevin Stevens produces music about hope and redemption.

By Zach Sparks
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Kevin Stevens doesn't have a record label — yet — and he doesn't depend on labels to define his music, opting instead for whatever style suits his lyrics.

"It ends up being an Americana, rock, folk, pop amalgamation. That's what I see it as," said Stevens, who sings and plays guitar, drums and about eight other instruments. "Someone else might see something different, so musically, it's whatever lends itself best to the lyrics and those lyrical themes."

On "Locust," Stevens' six-song debut EP released

in September 2016, listeners will find remnants from each of those genres: gospel undertones and the sharp-tongued, eloquent lyricism of folk in "Reasons;" catchy pop hooks in "Storm Front;" soaring rock choruses in "Battle Cry;" and ballad-esque, heartfelt declarations in "Worst of Me."

But regardless of genre, each song contains a unifying, positive message. "When it comes to the lyrics — hope and things that are uplifting — I cling to songs and poetry that deal with some of the deeper struggles of life but have these great redemptive themes to them,"

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Stevens said. “Really redemptive qualities, that hope isn’t lost and the world isn’t full of these Hollywood hot-pink bubblegum love stories that you want to believe in, but sometimes they’re better because they’re deeper and richer and more tangible — the stories that we end up actually living.”

To tell those stories adequately, Stevens honed his songwriting with lectures from Berklee College of Music professor Pat Pattison. With a better understanding of lyricism at Stevens’ disposal, the songs on “Locust” pay ode to the songwriters who came before him: the emotive Jeff Buckley, faith-based crooner John Mark McMillan and narrative folk singer Sufjan Stevens. That style gained the Anne Arundel musician recognition when he earned third place in the CCVM Fast Forward Scholarship Contest, which was sponsored by Cari Cole Voice & Music Company.

“It was good because I beat dozens of artists who were signed, who have record labels, who have been making records for years and years,” Stevens admitted. “So that was a good self-esteem boost, and that happened right before we went into the studio to start recording the record. And that was good to say, ‘OK, you definitely have to do this, it’s something worth pursuing.’”

Steve Taylor, the Pasadena-based owner of Revelation Drums, met Stevens through

church and helped him create “Locust.” It was at Taylor’s relatives’ historic farm in Earville, Maryland that the duo recorded the song “Reasons.” Taylor said that he is most impressed by his friend’s drive to improve, especially on drums.

“He’s always pushing himself, growing, learning, studying other drummers, and incorporating new styles and techniques in his drumming,” Taylor said. “He is an incredibly talented guy and a lot of fun to work with and create with.”

Stevens is also putting those talents to use for another opportunity: composition of the soundtrack for “Nyx the Chameleon,” a strategic video game under development.

“They gave me carte blanche over the whole project as far as music goes,” he explained. “I met with the creative director and art director a lot, and we have weekly meetings still as we’re working on the game. It’s still evolving and changing, so we work together to decide the environment and the world

that this game is going to take place in.”

With 2017 underway, Stevens plans to book some local performances, finish the soundtrack for “Nyx the Chameleon” and write songs for his next release. He has three songs prepared and has scrapped seven others, but ultimately, the goal is the same with all of his music: to reach and influence listeners.

“I’m not out for the lip service or empty praise, but when someone comes to you and they’re truly impacted by something that you’ve written and something that you poured your heart and soul into and especially one lyric or one phrase ... it’s an incredible connection that musicians and artists get to have with other people,” Stevens said. “That’s been huge for me. It’s been such an incredible blessing to share these songs with people, see their reactions, hear their responses and share that intimacy with total strangers.”

For updates, check the “Kevin Stevens Music” Facebook page or visit www.kevinstevensmusic.com.