

VoyageAustin

Today we'd like to introduce you to Greg Whitfield.

**Hi Greg, so excited to have you with us today.
What can you tell us about your story?**



I grew up in Dallas, and my first musical memories involve listening to and singing along with the Everly Brothers. My mom was a pretty good harmony singer, and listening to her I learned to hear the third above the melody. I got my first guitar when I was six (a Silvertone from Sears – I still have it and still play it). My first paying gig was at age nine with my band The Untamed (\$10.00 split 3 ways – big time!).. More bands followed through the years with solo ventures in between. When I was in my late teens I moved to Austin. I gotta say, I spent more time at the Armadillo and Mother Earth than I did in my UT classes. It was around this time that I began writing songs.

I transferred to what was then called North Texas State University and moved to Denton (Little D), finally graduating with a communications degree in 1979. I got a job as a camera operator for a Dallas area production company, shot footage during the day and played solo coffeehouse gigs in the evenings. I moved back to Austin in the mid 80's, playing solo gigs and doing session work and earned a second bachelors degree (from UT) in teaching, and in the early 90's began a career as an elementary classroom teacher. I spent 24 years there, 22 of those years in a kindergarten classroom where I discovered I had a passion for teaching kids to read (*who knew!*) My schedule allowed me to play gigs a couple of nights a week. I also wrote and recorded an album for children called AlphaSongs – 26 songs (one for each alphabet letter), and this became my most useful tool in my language arts instruction.

Through the years I've recorded 4 more full length albums of my own material (*grownup stuff*) and have played on records as guitarist and vocalist for Kevin Fowler, Pauline Reese, Bonnie Bishop, George Ensle and others. The Austin music and songwriting communities have been welcoming and supportive of me, and I am very much dug in to this town.

I'm sure it wasn't obstacle-free, but would you say the journey has been fairly smooth so far?

I wouldn't say that my musical road has been free of bumps and potholes, but who among us has a smooth ride, eh? The people I've had the pleasure to play with have made the road worth traveling, and the kids I've had the pleasure to teach have brought me a lot of joy.

Thanks – so what else should our readers know about your work and what you're currently focused on?

How fun! A chance to toot my own horn!

I do believe that my guitar work is solid, and what I might lack in terms of lightning speed I make up for with taste, accurate touch, good tone and good judgement. I was once working on a project produced by Walt Wilkins, and the only direction he gave me was to play what the song needed. I always strive to do that. As a writer I feel that my songs are strong in terms of melody and lyrics – I like melodic changes that catch the listener off guard without being jarring, and I like lyrics that feel relaxed and conversational.

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