

JASON BLAINE AT HOME

By Sean Chase of The Daily Observer
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*Photos of August 8, 2009 concert at the
Pembroke Waterfront Festival by
Jane Hebert, Algonquin College in the Ottawa
Valley*



PEMBROKE, ONTARIO - Jason Blaine wants to make it pretty clear to his family and friends that he's not going "southern" anytime soon.

When the Pembroke native arrived in his current home of Nashville, Tennessee about four years ago, he was turning heads not with his music but that distinct "Canadian/Ottawa Valley accent." "You don't realize you have one until you move away," the singer/songwriter acknowledges proud of those roots. The trick for him has been not adopting a distinct Southern U. S. accent.

The other benefit of living in the home of the Grand Ole Opry and the capital of country music, Mr. Blaine has discovered, is the weather. "I don't miss the snow but in the summertime it's way too hot for a boy from Pembroke," he laughs.

Well, the boy from Pembroke will be home in a couple of weeks and many are hoping he brings summer with him when Mr. Blaine takes to the stage at the Pembroke Waterfront Festival on the night of Saturday, Aug. 8.

Speaking from Nashville where he's in the middle of recording his third album, the 29-year-old Fellowes High School graduate can hardly contain his excitement at the prospect of performing in front of family and childhood friends once more. It's been three years since he's made a waterfront festival appearance.



"It will really be a homecoming concert for us," admits Mr. Blaine, who does get back here a few times a year but it's only to visit with family. His roots remain deep in Pembroke. He grew up Jason McEwen and raised in a musical family. His father, Blaine McEwen, played bass in Brian Hebert's band for 25 years.

Following his dad, Jason began playing guitar at age nine. In high school, he joined a band and played his first gig at the air force club in Pembroke. Mr. Blaine has never forgotten those high school days hanging out with his friends at the drive-in or spending time camping and fishing on the Ottawa River.

The song "My First Car", and a single off his current CD "Make My Move", was dedicated to those cherished memories. "It was about growing up around the area with friends and that first taste of freedom," he explains, then asks if the drive-in on Forest Lea Road is still open. "It's cool that Pembroke still has one of the few drive-ins in the country."

After graduating from Fellowes in 1998, Mr. Blaine studied business at Algonquin College, where he began to write songs. In 2001, he and his wife, Amy, moved to Kitchener/ Waterloo where he was employed by a well-known country music industry producer. At night, he played in local clubs. The next year he entered and won Project Discovery, a talent search sponsored by Country Music Television (CMT).

The prize was the production of one song and video to be aired on CMT. The release of his first single "That's What I Do" followed. Then in 2005, the talented musician released his first independent l y -produced album, "While We Were Waiting." In addition to the title song, the album spawned three top 20 singles and Top 10 CMT videos including "Heartache Like Mine" and "What I Can't Forget."

He recently moved his family to Nashville where he secured a deal with New Millennium Music/Anchor Down Publishing. With veteran producers Phil O'Donnell and Noah Gordon, he recorded "Make My Move", a work he has dubbed personal and introspective.

Since its release in May, 2008, "Make My Move" has enjoyed national success with several CMT Top 20 hits. His single "Give It To Me" has been in the number three spot on the CMT Top for the last four weeks. (His new album should be coming out this fall).

Mr. Blaine is still overwhelmed by the doors that have been opened to him thanks to this initial success. He has recently spent time on the road opening for George Strait, Tim McGraw, Paul Brandt and Emerson Drive. He's also spent time writing music with American singer/songwriter and guitarist Steve Wariner, who has charted 50 songs on Billboard and is credited with writing top-charting singles for Keith Urban, Clint Black and Garth Brooks.

"It's been an amazing experience hanging out with Steve," says Mr. Blaine. "I've been really blessed to meet one of my heroes and he's one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet."

However, home has not been far from his thoughts. So much so that Mr. Blaine is using his craft to boost his old alma mater, Algonquin College, as it endeavours to build a new campus on the waterfront. He's recorded a new theme song for the [Renaissance Square campaign which will debut during his waterfront festival concert.](#)

"I am really, really proud and honoured to help out with Renaissance Square," he says, adding he was thrilled when Jamie Bramburger, the college's community affairs manager, approached him about the project. The song is not strictly a country song but infuses it with some traditional Ottawa Valley fiddling music. "The song we've come up with is perfect. I'm really excited with how it turned out. It's just right," he adds.

Mr. Blaine believes he owes his career to his music being played on local country stations across the nation, including Pembroke's Star 96. Being from a small town also didn't deter him from following his dreams.

"Sometimes it can be hard holding onto a dream but I'm living proof that if you pursue it or work hard at it, that dream can come true," concludes the musician who is making that dream a reality. *From an original article ID# 1670853 in the Pembroke Daily Observer.*

