

A MAN WITH A VOICE

How Taylor John Williams got his break on a reality show



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Rapid-Fire Responses

reality shows: **IRONIC**
youtube: **SATURATED**
music: **EVERYWHERE**
gwen: **GRACE**
adam: **EVE**
blake: **HUGE**
pharrell: **CHILD**
portland: **HOME**

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ONLY WEEKS AFTER SEEING HIM APPEAR ON *THE VOICE*, I applauded Taylor John Williams like a fangirl in the balcony of his sold-out show in Lake Oswego, Ore. The guy has some pipes – soulful, I’d say, if I used words like “soulful.”

Williams, 23, of Portland, Ore., looks even taller in person, singing blues and folk songs about murder and bullies and taking risks on covers like “Come Together” and “Proud Mary.”

“If I’m going to cover somebody’s song, 90% of the time I want it to catch people a bit off guard,” he said.

Williams competed on the seventh season of *The Voice* and brought Adam Levine (and all his tattoos) to his feet during the audition: “I’m going to cry like a baby if you don’t choose me,” Levine campaigned. Williams, however, chose Gwen Stefani as his coach, placed as a finalist on the show, and scored a single in the Top 10 on iTunes with his cover of “Royals.” It’s a break most young musicians dream about.

Williams’ love of music developed early. “I was always a musical kid,” he said. “During the latter portion of high school, I developed a love for writing. ... After picking up a guitar and self-teaching for a year or so, I decided to try writing songs and eventually had enough material to make my first EP, ‘Proverbial Elephant.’”

As for *The Voice*? “*The Voice* just ... happened. I had always had my reservations about reality singing competitions and swore that would never be me, but there was a shift in my thinking,” he said. “I attended the open call auditions in LA and had low expectations. ... Lo and behold, I ended up doing pretty well.” (He’s skilled at guitar and understatements, people.)

Now off camera, Williams is focusing on writing. “During my time on the show, I was required to put all of my concentration and energy into the ‘next’ performance [instead of writing]. I’ve also been recording new material for a demo and booking shows locally,” he said.

Williams can reflect on how the show affected his career now that it’s wrapped.

“*The Voice* is a platform that gives its contestants the ability to go from zero to a million miles per hour in a matter of one performance,” he said. “Anything that comes that quickly seems to be prone to disappearing at the same rate. The show can only really help those individuals who are willing to put in the work afterward to stay relevant. ... That’s not to say that I haven’t opened certain doors that didn’t exist before or met some wonderful people who can help guide me. It just means that the real work starts once you’re back to reality.”

Williams advises young artists to do what works for them, whether it’s YouTube, reality shows, or street performances.

“Whatever avenue you choose to pursue a career in music, make sure you love it (music) with all of your heart,” he said. “Also, be patient. Put thought and care and attention to detail in everything that you put out there. If those steps are taken, it doesn’t really matter what avenue you choose.” 💰