

Buddy Greene Biography

A songwriter who has written one of the most recognizable songs in the world might be tempted to rest on his laurels. A performer who has played before 250,000 people in New York's Central Park might consider curtailing his busy tour schedule. However, as he celebrates his 30th anniversary as a recording artist, Buddy Greene is still making music, and sharing it with audiences across the country.

In fact, the Dove-award winning singer/songwriter's newest album, *Someday*, is being embraced as one of his most musically adventurous and lyrically potent collections to date. And while *Someday* is delighting audiences, Greene is also jumping into another recording project that will be somewhat of a retrospective of the past 30-plus years.

"The thing I'm most joyful about in my music career is to have met so many wonderfully talented people and to be able to make some music with them along the way," Greene says. "A lot of people I've worked with over the years are not well-known, just hard-working studio musicians, but you realize they have a special talent and wonderful personalities. You appreciate what they do and to be able to know them and make music with them and work on some projects together, it's just been a huge privilege."

In addition to being in the creative trenches with some of the industry's unsung heroes, Greene has also worked with the most celebrated names in the music industry, among them Bill & Gloria Gaither, the late Jerry Reed, and Mark Lowry, with whom he wrote the Christmas classic "Mary, Did You Know?" The song has been recorded numerous times, including covers by Kenny Rogers, Wynonna, Natalie Cole, Glen Campbell, Kathy Mattea, CeeLo Green, Clay Aiken and Pentatonix. Greene has performed for more than a quarter of a million people in New York's Central Park as part of a Billy Graham Crusade. He has been a part of Praise Gatherings for more than two decades and toured all over the world.

Greene knew at an early age that he wanted to connect with people through music. "My earliest memories are singing. When I was four or five-years-old, I remember singing 'you ain't nothing but a hound dog'" the Macon, GA native says referencing Elvis Presley's early hit. "When I got older, I was finding neighborhood musicians and starting my own little

band. I played all through high school, and even before I got out of college, I was moonlighting and trying to figure out how to make a living with it.”

After making a name for himself around Macon, Greene graduated to the national stage when he landed a gig playing guitar and harmonica for country entertainer Jerry Reed and serving as his opening act. After four years performing with Reed, Greene was ready to fly solo. “I remember when I was leaving for Nashville as a newly married young man, going to chase my dream, and my mother looked at me and said, ‘What are you going to do when you turn 50?’” Greene recalls with a chuckle. “Well the Lord’s been looking out for me.”

Indeed he has. Since taking up residence in Nashville, Greene has developed a reputation as an insightful songwriter, compelling vocalist and musician of considerable skill. To put it simply, Greene is just a born communicator and music is the language he uses to share the gospel. “Working with people like Bill and Gloria [Gaither] has shown me a level of responsibility with what we do as gospel artists that is very important,” Greene shares. “It’s a high calling to be able to carry the gospel in a song or sermon or whatever it is, but it’s something that we should approach with as much fear and trembling as we can because there’s a lot at stake. I don’t take lightly the fact that I get to carry the gospel to an audience.”

Greene’s commitment to sharing the gospel with passion and professionalism is evident in everything he does, and his latest project, *Someday*, is a prime example. A Celtic-flavored collection filled with engaging songs brought to life with Greene’s warm, evocative voice, *Someday* is the latest chapter in the award-winning artist’s creative vision. “These are songs that have been part of my repertoire in worship services and retreats over the last 10 years,” he says. “These are songs that I like to do in those types of settings and yet I’m aware that they are probably not the songs that are on the Praise and Worship hit parade. They are songs that get overlooked for whatever reason, or people just aren’t aware of them. To me, they are great songs and really speak to me and help me to worship. They help me to hear the gospel, so I want to champion songs like these and the people who write them.”

In recording *Someday*, Greene collaborated with Jeff Taylor. “Jeff was such an integral part of the team as we recorded these songs. He’s a brilliant piano player and he’s a real master with the accordion. I just love what he

does. It's a very organic sound. He's a good whistle player, so if there's a part in there for his whistle to blow, we'll turn him loose. I'm going to have to blame him for a lot of the Celtic stuff," Greene says with a laugh.

On Someday Greene puts his own unique stamp on such tunes as Chris Rice's "Hallelujahs," The Getty's "Creation Sings," and Fernando Ortega's "Children of the Living God." The project also includes Greene's bluesy original "God is a Giver." "I wrote it a couple of years ago when I was guesting at a church and the pastor told me he was going to be preaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and asked did I have any material," Greene recalls. "I didn't have anything that spoke specifically to what he was preaching, so I just went and read Ephesians and some other passages and kind of got inspired to write this song. It was one of those churches where they had a great band in place, so we worked it up and there were horns and everything, so by the time I left I thought you know one of these days I'm going to have to figure out how to get that on a record."

Another standout on the album is the Stuart Townend song "Vagabonds." "It's such a great song. It's kind of like the church goes to the pub," he says with a mischievous grin. "So often, whether we mean to do it or not, we don't make our gatherings the welcoming place that Jesus says they are to be. For whatever reason, whether it's our traditions, buildings, rules or regulations, a lot of times we're really not throwing out the welcome mat---at least not the way you would see it thrown out in some of Jesus' parables. It was those parables that really fueled this song. That's a message that the church never needs to lose sight of---that we are to throw a big welcome mat out to the world to come in and hear this gospel and be a part of this feast. God is calling all humanity to come. I just love that song. I really wasn't thinking about it being the opening song, but once we had them all recorded, I thought, 'Gosh what better way to launch into this collection of tunes than through a big invitation, a come to the party kind of song!'"

As Greene was putting the finishing touches on Someday, he was also working on a new bluegrass album with acclaimed guitarist Bryan Sutton and some of the other legendary pickers in the bluegrass community. "He's a monster guitar player. I've known Bryan since he first came to town back in the '90's," says Greene. "He helped me put together an incredible band of bluegrass musicians---Sam Bush, who is a legend with the mandolin, and Ron Block, who is an incredible banjo player, and Aubrey Haynie on fiddle, and Mark Fain on bass. During the sessions, I was holding on for dear life and trying to keep up with the big boys."

It's that spirit of camaraderie and musical invention that has always been a part of Buddy Greene's musical journey, and he's enjoyed every minute. "When I saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan, I just wanted to be famous and hear girls screaming every time I got on stage. Well it didn't work out like that at all," he grins, "but I can't believe here I am three decades plus into this solo career and able to be married, live in a great community, raise two wonderful daughters, make a lot of good friends and make the music I want to make. It really it hasn't worked out the way I would have dreamed it would work out, but the way it has worked out is so much better. God has really looked out for me and given me opportunities that were such a better fit for me. He knew so much better what I needed than I knew."

These days, Greene can be found sharing his gifts in a variety of different venues. When he's not writing and recording, he is often leading worship at various churches, participating in Gaither events or leading songwriting retreats and worship music workshops. "I might be a song leader in a worship service or might be doing a workshop on anything from harmonica playing to Christianity and the arts. I like the variety," he says. "I'm just really grateful that I've been able to do what I love to do and realize my dream of playing music."