

# HEARTLAND

Craig Anderson: Rhythm Guitar/ Vocals

Keith West: Bass Guitar/ Vocals

Jason Albert: Lead Vocals/ Guitar

Charles Crawford: Fiddle/Guitar/Vocals

Todd Anderson: Drums

Mike Myerson: Lead guitar

All it takes for a popular regional act to be catapulted into the national spotlight is one special song. Suddenly hometown heroes find themselves climbing the charts and enjoying that first brush of stardom. That is exactly what's happening to Heartland, a talented band of Alabama musicians who have rapidly become one of the most talked about new acts in country music today.



The catalyst for the group's current success is the poignant ballad "**I Loved Her First**," which became one of the fastest rising singles of 2006, reaching the #1 spot at *Billboard* and *R&R* in only 16 weeks, a rare feat for a debut release. Heartland's debut album, released in October of 2006, debuted at #3 on the *Billboard Country* chart behind only Jimmy Buffet and George Strait and reached # 11 on the *Billboard Top 200* all genres chart. The video became a Top 10 hit and helped to further bring them in the country music mainstream. Though one hit song can serve as a launch pad, it takes talent, hard work and an arsenal of solid material to build a career. Heartland has those things in abundance.

Collectively, Heartland encompasses a variety of musical influences including Johnny Cash, Alabama, Van Halen, Elvis Presley, AC/DC, Lynyrd Skynyrd, and Sam Cooke just to name a few. Each member of the band grew up absorbing a rather diverse musical diet and those varied influences have helped shape the full-bodied, robust sound that defines Heartland's musical persona.

Like all young bands Heartland practiced, performed and dreamed of stardom. However in 1997, they got their first taste of that dream becoming a reality when they performed at the final June Jam, the annual concert held in Ft. Payne each year by country music legends Alabama. When they took the stage in front of more than 20,000 screaming fans, they were surprised and elated to see people holding up Heartland signs and shouting their name.

It was an especially poignant moment for Todd Anderson. "Alabama had been such a huge influence," he says. "Alabama was the first concert I went to when I was six-years-old and they are the greatest band in country music history. When we were fortunate enough to play the June Jam, that really summed it up for us. There were no other career options after that."

Jason agrees. "We always knew we wanted to do it," he says of pursuing a music career. "We dreamed about it, but that was one of the defining moments. We've played some big shows. We've played with a lot of big people. When you actually get up there and get a taste of it, it tastes GOOD!"

"There are six guys in the band and we like to give everybody six different things to look at," says Jason. "Everybody has their own little thing and everybody is very good at what they do. And as opposed to having one focal point, we have six. There are a lot of different things going on. When we get up there, we like to really give people something for their money. It's not like they are just listening to the CD, they are getting the whole package."

Seeing that whole package has earned the band an enthusiastic legion of fans. In addition to headlining their own shows, the guys have been touring almost nonstop, playing dates coast to coast with Brad Paisley, Montgomery Gentry, Blake Shelton, and others, while continuing to build their ever-growing fan base. Working with Producer/Songwriter Walt Aldridge in Muscle Shoals' Fame Studios, the band put together a potent collection of songs defined by the inimitable Heartland sound and immediately took their high-octane show on the road. The guys take pride in the fact that there's no one else that sounds quite like they do when they get together. It's a unique sound forged from years under hot spotlights in sweaty clubs with audiences on their feet screaming for more.

It also comes from years of friendship, camaraderie and a shared musical vision. When one spends any amount of time around these guys, their respect for each other and their friendship is obvious. After all, they've been through a lot together. "There's a lot of stuff that we have on each other and you kind of get that when you've known someone since the 5th grade." says Craig.

Currently Heartland is in the studio recording with famed Producer Mark Bright (Rascal Flatts, Carrie Underwood) on the follow up to "I Loved Her First" with the new single release date tentatively scheduled for early June 2007 on the Country Thunder Records label. The guys have had the pleasure of performing on such national television shows as *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson* and *Fox & Friends*, co-hosted the pre-televised portion of the **2006 CMA Awards Show** along with Julie Roberts, and have recently been bestowed perhaps their greatest honor; garnering nominations for both *Best New Group or Duo* and *Single Record of the Year* by **The Academy of Country Music**. To quote guitarist Mike Myerson, "Just when ya think it can't get any better for six rednecks from Alabama, something like this seems to come along and totally floors us!"

Talent, drive and a great sense of humor-country music fans are connecting to those qualities and so much more with Heartland. Like the image their name evokes, this group of young men personifies the best of America's country lifestyle, and they connect with audiences because their music reflects the hopes, challenges and dreams of everyone out there in the heartland and beyond. "The reason we want to do this is the genuine love and respect we have for each other," says Todd. "If the good Lord blesses us enough to allow us to make a living out of it, that's wonderful. If we start playing arenas with 20,000 people each night, that's great, but no matter where we are or what we're doing, this is a true brotherhood."

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