

SESSIONS | Harrington sings, keeps his day job

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performance bug while casually singing covers with friends at Irish bars in San Francisco in the early part of this decade, Harrington began applying himself to songwriting.

"What's the point in doing this ... if you're not going to write your own stuff and create something new?" he asks. "It's like getting someone's book, someone's novel, and then copying it down on paper. There's nothing to that. Your style of handwriting might be different, but you're just copying the content."

He got up to speed quickly, and by 2003, he was winning awards from the West Coast Songwriters organization. By 2005, one of his songs was featured on KFOG's "Local Scene" CD, and that same year he opened for Alanis Morissette and Switchfoot for a KLLC-FM "Alice" show at Bimbo's, with a set that he recorded for a live album.

Harrington's immediately accessible sound — comparable to Jason Mraz or Jack Johnson — explains why his music has already been embraced by radio. But his commercial appeal isn't hurt by his appreciable charm, rich Irish accent and piercing blue eyes (his publicist describes him as "Jonathan Rhys-Myers meets Colin Farrell").

Many women in the Bay Area have already noticed.

"A fair few birds will stop along, generally," he says nonchalantly of his performances around San Francisco.

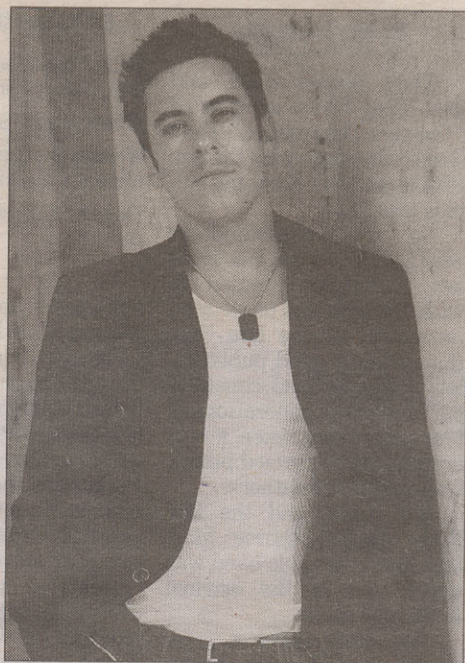
KFOG morning show co-host Renee Richardson, who now considers herself a good friend of Harrington's, recalls his first visit to the station in an e-mail.

"He was wide-eyed and enthusiastic (and was wearing a little too much cologne), but he charmed us enough to give his music a listen," she writes. "Eventually I saw him live and was sold. He toned down the cologne and now rolls with some killer players."

When it came time to record his formal debut, on his own dime, Harrington proceeded with his usual savvy, booking the bare minimum of professional studio time for drum tracks and the like, then recording the quieter stuff, like vocals and acoustic guitar tracks, at home or on the road around his day job.

Harrington spent eight months at the new Genentech plant. He would pack a bag full of recording equipment as he flew down at the beginning of the week, and then cart everything back to San Francisco, where he did the bulk of the recording in the basement of his rental house in Twin Peaks.

Though some would be daunted to dive in with a new CD at a time when the music industry is undergoing a massive meltdown, Harrington sounds enthused as he releases "Story" to the world.



ROSS PELTON

It's like there's a puzzle, and if the words and the music and the syllables and the timing and the space, if it all comes together and works nicely, there's no better feeling than doing that."

EOIN HARRINGTON ON THE ART OF SONGWRITING

"I like challenges, and this whole market right now is a big challenge," he says. "Trying to understand what it's going to take to make this work and figure out a way to beat the myriad people out there who are all trying to do the same thing is a fun challenge. The business side intrigues me an awful lot."

He says his corporate experience at Genentech has been useful in the musical world, but he also admits it's hard to get to work after a late club show, as on this day in his office after a sold-out gig at Cafe du Nord. With a wealth of opportunities on the table, he says he has considered cutting loose the day job, but engineering has a pull as well.

"I'm going to be interested to see what happens if I go and do music full time," he says. "I'm going to be interested to see if the other part of me head is content with not being utilized. Know what I'm saying? We'll see how it goes."

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