

Local Songwriter Releases Song to Commemorate 9/11 and Community

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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BETHALTO - A local songwriter is polishing off a 25-year-old song to commemorate the anniversary of 9/11.

[Charlie Brown, a teacher at Civic Memorial High School](#), has always written and produced music in his free time. His upcoming album “Parking Lot Prayers” will pay homage to his hometown and the Riverbend. But his most recent song, titled “9/12,” speaks to a larger tragedy and sense of community that people felt after the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

“We all remember where we were and how crazy it was,” Brown said. “I just remember writing down the title ‘9/12’ the day after because I couldn’t help but notice how obviously devastated we were, but people were just extremely kind and compassionate, and it just struck me. As bad as everything was, I just remember the kindness the day after everything happened.”

In the days following 9/11, Brown processed the tragedy by writing this song with his friend Dan Schidler. The pair were living and pursuing music in Nashville at the time.

While the song was therapeutic to write, Brown wasn’t ready to release it. He set it aside for 25 years and continued his work as a teacher and songwriter, eventually moving back to the Riverbend region and releasing five albums.

His current project has been in the making for several months now. Songs like [“Parking Lot Prayers”](#) and [“Wood River Sunsets”](#) are personal, locally-inspired pieces, and they will be released with the “Parking Lot Prayers” album as soon as Brown finishes the recordings.

As he tightens the album, Schidler suggested he could include the song “9/12.” He pointed out that the United States is celebrating its 250th anniversary and commemorating the 25th anniversary of 9/11. It seemed like an important time to revisit the piece.

Schidler and Brown tightened the lyrics and music, and Brown recorded the song and released it as a single. The experience was just as intense as when they first wrote it.

“When we brought it back out, it brought me right back to that time, and I remembered the day,” Brown said. “I remember the weather. I remember people letting you in when you’re trying to cross traffic or get into traffic. I just remember people at the grocery stores. It’s almost like everybody moved a little bit slower, like life wasn’t such a big rush, a hectic thing. Everybody slowed down and thought about what really mattered, which is each other and taking care of each other.”

While “9/12” speaks to a nationwide event, the throughline of the album remains focused on community. Brown said he wanted to “tip my hat to the small town people” because he is “proud” to be from a small town in the Riverbend.

His songs focus on these themes, but the album’s production is also highly localized. Civic Memorial graduate Aaron Kellum is producing the album, while CM students sang background vocals on a few of Brown’s songs. The album cover was designed by students in a CM art class.

“It’s not your typical Nashville recording,” Brown added. “It’s my friends, my friends from around here putting it all together for me.”

The project means a lot to him, and Brown is proud of the work they’re doing to share these songs. To listen to “9/12,” [click here](#). For more information about Charlie Brown or to follow his “Parking Lot Prayers” album progress, visit his [official website](#).