

DAN FRECHETTE

Long Bio

Dan Frechette is a musical force. Just 29 years old, the Winnipeg-based singer/songwriter is a wealth of musical knowledge and experience. He's written more 1,300 songs. He's been signed to a major songwriting contract and he's busked on street corners and in subways all over North America and Europe. He's toured with a First Nations rock band, played solo at the Winnipeg Folk Festival and he's the man who penned the first hit for modern bluegrass upstarts The Duhks.

Now, with *Lucky Day*, his first full-length solo recording, Frechette is just coming into his own, bringing his talent into sharp focus on an album that brims with tuneful energy and crackles with the sound of a songwriter at the top of his game.

Greg Quill of the *Toronto Star* calls *Lucky Day*, produced by Canadian folk legend Bill Bourne, “an album that will surely find an exalted place in the canon,” and the exalted folk music periodical *Sing Out!* describes Dan as “one of the most talented singer/songwriters I've heard in a long time.”

It's been a long ramble — but Dan Frechette's music journey is now gaining notice.

Frechette's fascination with music began early. When he was four or five, he recalls, he sat for hours in his room playing his uncle's Johnny Horton, Buck Owens and Chubby Checker records over and over and over again.

“I had a cheap-looking, little-piece-of-junk record player,” Frechette says. “I used to put North to Alaska on 45 so I could sing in the same key.”

Frechette grew up on the working-class side of Pinawa, Manitoba, 60 miles east of Winnipeg. The big city's oldies station was all he could pick up on the radio, so young Dan schooled himself in the hit sounds of the '60s and '70s and read voraciously about the era.

“I had Rolling Stone's book, *The Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*, and I must have read it 50 times when I was eight or nine,” he says. “I knew what number *Just Like a Woman* (by Bob Dylan) was in 1966, all that kind of thing.”

By the time he was 11, Frechette had filled scrapbooks with lyrics to the songs he heard on the radio — “Cheesy things like *One Tin Soldier* or *One Fine Morning*.” — making the words up when he couldn't make them out. His teachers noticed his poetic talents and pushed him to keep writing. At about this time, Frechette acquired his first guitar and began exploring his Beatles influences.

“I recorded those Beatles documentaries that were on TV in the late '80s and I memorized them,” he says. (Ask to hear his George Martin imitation some time.)

“My songwriting was influenced by mimicking their structure. For instance, they'd start a lot of their songs with the chorus — and when I was 13 or 14 I wrote songs that started with the chorus. I was writing around their models.”

When a next-door neighbour loaned Frechette a few of Bob Dylan albums, the 13-year-old's eyes were opened wide.

"The first time I heard Desolation Row I was blown away. I thought it was the most amazing saga I had ever listened to," Frechette says. "It changed my whole life, hearing that song. It was apocalyptic madness and I'd listen to it and I wouldn't always understand what he said but I loved the way he said it. Now it reminds me of the stuff that Kerouac or Ginsberg wrote, it's like a Beat poem.

"I've never heard a song that affected me so much. When I was 14 or 15, nobody understood me because I was going on about Desolation Row or Visions of Joanna or whatever. Naturally, that's about the time someone says to you 'Have you ever heard Neil Young?'" Frechette says. "And I discovered Springsteen, too."

By this time, young Dan was heavily immersed in his music. He wore a black hat "like Stevie Ray Vaughan's," grew his hair out and began writing his own material in earnest and jamming with other musicians at his high school, Pinawa Secondary. His songs gained some notoriety locally and he began attracting attention from music biz types in Winnipeg — and beyond.

At 17, Frechette found himself in the unlikely position — for a high-school kid — of being offered a development deal by EMI Music Publishing, who loved the unadorned lyricism and melodies of his early material. After shuffling back and forth between Pinawa and the EMI studios in Toronto, Frechette moved to Toronto at 19 to write full-time for the company. Although he released an album, under the unwieldy name of Post '76, he was soured on the music business by the experience.

"I kept on playing my 12-string," he explains. "They'd bring me into the studio and I'd sit there and play my acoustic and then afterwards they'd put it through some crazy tube amp thing and add drums and turn it into some bit sort of rock song.

"I was pissed in that I thought I was misled. They loved me 'til they signed me and then after that nothing I did was good enough. The songs that they liked — I thought were shit. It was a real shaping process for me, for sure."

Fed up with being asked to write No. 1 hits for other people, Frechette left his Toronto apartment and moved back to Manitoba, this time to Winnipeg, where he found like-minded friends and began playing solo gigs around town. He worked intermittently at various day jobs, but soon found he could make up to \$70 a day busking in the city streets and in its underground walkway system. He even put together a band called Motel 75 (named after a real place, this time).

By early 2001, the band project had fizzled, as so many do, so Frechette lit out for warmer climes in the midst of a harsh Manitoba winter. Armed with a \$10 guitar and a little Fender Ampcan, he busked his way from Texas to California and up the Pacific Coast, honing his chops, become ever-more street savvy and, most importantly, opening himself up to all sorts of musical experiences.

"I even played funk in San Francisco at Mission and Fifth," he smiles. "I was playing guitar on the street and this guy started breakdancing in front of me. People were saying, 'Man! You got

the shit!' And then this guy came along with a mini drumkit in his backpack and we started to jam and my amp was running out of juice so it was real distorted — and we had 40 or 50 people going. That was one of my best memories, done on a \$10 guitar with a broken G-string tuning peg!"

A year later, Frechette made a similar trek through Europe. He busked his way through Germany and the U.K., making nearly \$100 in an hour at Trafalgar Square in London. These musical rambles, he believes, helped cleanse him of his EMI sojourn.

"I started thinking in my own terms about songs, what a song should do," Frechette says. To me, songs are powerful, they should have a meaning and they should last a long time. I had to imagine a thousand people on a hilltop singing the lyrics that I was writing. So, I started listening back to myself, with a 'Who the hell is this prick?' attitude. Busking really helped me with that — looking at my songs from a very cold perspective."

With self-examination came self-assurance and focus. Frechette also began focusing on his craft by reading books about songwriting and by writing little stories that he wanted to tell. His songs, he knew, were getting stronger, and he began writing the material that characterizes — and became — Lucky Day.

Now, with his album earning plaudits, praise and airplay across North America, Frechette is poised and ready to share his songs on tour — and he means it when he says 'share.'

"If I was playing guitar by myself in my room, just sat there alone, I'd exhaust my satisfaction level pretty quickly because something would be missing," he says. "The people in front of me would be missing and so would the interaction. The feeling that I get when I hear something that movies is 'man, I wish that artist was next to me so I could tell him how that affected me — so I could share the feeling."

"To share and to have something be shared, musically, is the ultimate."

- John Kendle

Questions?

Please feel free to contact The Walnut Street Music Company 1-866-925-6889

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