

## **Song of Rylei — with a good woman and heartfelt lyrics, can success be far away?**



With the flair of a modern day troubadour, Rylei Franks plays a few original tunes for the photographer one sunny afternoon at the PAC fountain.

By Susan Lagsdin

Like love or happiness, success can only be measured accurately by the person experiencing it.

Rylei Franks — not boasting, just grateful — thinks he may be approaching it.

The Wenatchee singer/songwriter is one of the more humble on-stage performers you'll probably ever meet. For him, success isn't the glitter and glam of jet set world tours but an assurance that he's made wise decisions and he's on the right track.

His confidence comes from two parallel phenomena.

First, one year ago he married a woman who knows he's very talented and who told him if he doesn't take himself seriously, no one else will. Besides being his fondest fan, wife Brianna also brought order to the business side of his one-man enterprise; promotion and social media are her forte.

Second, and subsequently, this year he's at that tipping point in his music career — like the actor who needn't audition or the novelist whose editor wants one more book — where his local performance calendar is filling up gradually from requests, without his constant queries. Folks who've enjoyed his acoustic guitar and solo voice are inviting him back.

"For about three years, after I first started singing and playing guitar here," he said, "I'd send out 30 emails to bars, restaurants, wineries and other music venues and get maybe 10 responses. Eight of those might be rejections... now, I can do my music without reaching out."

He's also pleased to no longer play for a burger and beers. He said, "I tell them how much I charge... and they always say yes. It's really nice."

Rylei, 30, grew up in Soap Lake in a big ranching family and as a teen joined his brother and friends in a rock 'n roll band that played in central Washington for three years. It was a '90s grunge sound, with synthesizers and electric guitars. "I didn't really like the music," he admitted, "But at least I knew enough not to ruin my voice."

Earlier piano and saxophone lessons helped him when he started playing acoustic guitar on his own.

He has a good ear and a sense of rhythm, he said, so he took two lessons and learned 1) the major chords 2) what blues progression is. Rylei also learned that his quiet personality makes it much more pleasant to compose and practice in solitude.

That background and hundreds of hours with the guitar created a flexible repertoire that's a mix of soft rock, easy listening favorites, country and ballads.

He's learned to read events and audiences: he can disappear into the background as musical wallpaper or engage his listeners with backstories, patter and a smile.

Rylei has adopted a strategy for songwriters who sing: "I cover mostly standard favorites, and I never announce one of my own tunes coming up. I'll play it — and if they applaud, then I'll let them know it's an original."

The emotional impact of the music is what matters to Rylei, and his soft voice and stronger heartfelt punctuation adds new meaning to well-known songs. His slow and languorous version of Willy Nelson's *On the Road Again* is a good example.

Songs like *Weight in Gold*, a tribute to his wife, which he sang at their wedding, and *Good Night Sweet Princes*, both on his newest album *The Mrs.* are intensely personal without cloying. The man's heart is in them, but they don't tug unduly on the listener's heartstrings.

Rylei has played dozens of varied venues from Pybus to a cigar bar and from Big Bend College's annual auction to wedding receptions, creating an audience base that helped him a few years ago win Washington's # 1 acoustic artist and top five in the U.S. in Van's Warped Tour Battle of the Bands.

He's opened for a few American Idol auditions and big-name underground groups, and music great Bonnie Guitar helped him produce his first album, Paper Poetry.

As if the love of a good woman and growing popularity as a singer weren't enough to make a guy feel good about himself, here's another.

After seven years as activities director at the Quincy Hospital, he realized he needed to make mature strides in his career (he actually said, "get a big boy job") so this year Rylei is working and studying at Wenatchee Valley College, preparing to enter the nursing program.

With that schedule, he's still able to write music, produce albums and do a few shows every weekend.

So, how about success on the macro level? Glitter and glam, jet set world tours? Handlers and groupies?

Rylei's not averse to dreaming, but cautiously. "I'd settle for a tour across the U.S. and a few stops in Ireland with my current album. And I'd keep musicians and writers around me all the time to help me better my craft."

That's the future. He doesn't have to go far to be content. The move from Soap Lake to Wenatchee was a heady enough experience; for now, he'll settle for making lots of music in the center of the state.

[Find out more about Rylei Franks and hear his songs from albums on Facebook, Spotify, Instagram and his website \[www.ryleifranks.com\]\(http://www.ryleifranks.com\).](#)