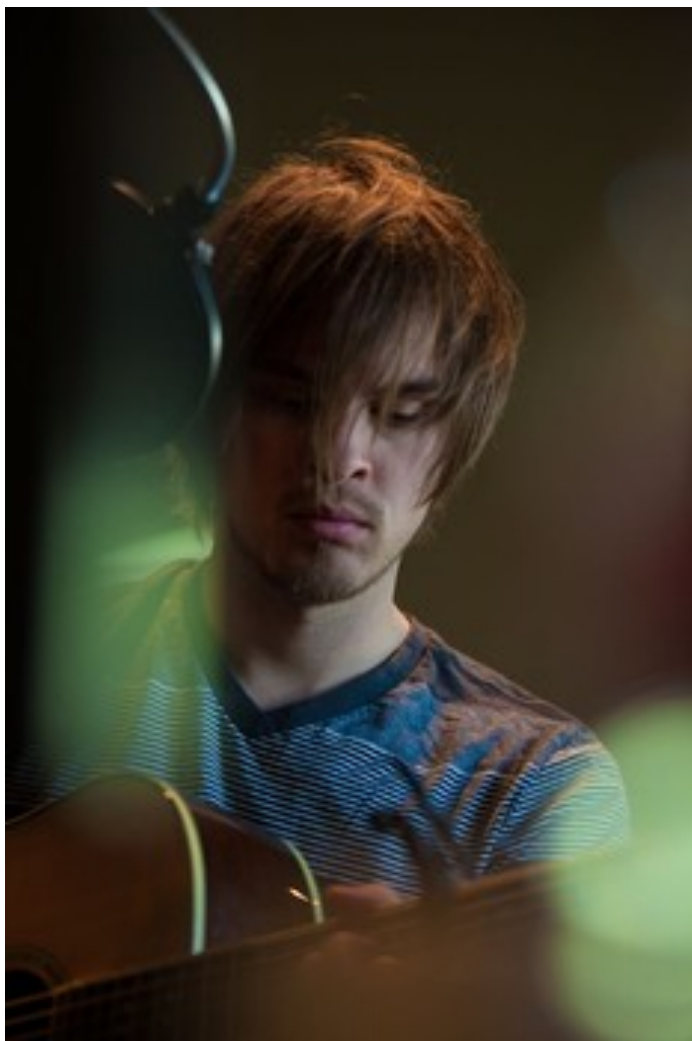


Michael Jackson hologram performs at the **Billboard Music Awards**

# Interview: Joey Hendrickson on the Grow Music Project and what comes next

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*Grow Music Project/Workman Group*

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Singer/songwriter **Joey Hendrickson** has a lot going for him. He was part of the first round of artists asked to participate in producer Chris Tyng's **Grow Music Project**, and is the second artist to be featured in the project's "**Session Diaries**" series.

As part of the Grow Music Project, Hendrickson had the opportunity to record a song in a state of the art studio with Tyng, all for free. What resulted was Hendrickson's latest single, "**Astral Planes**," released in early March.

Hendrickson has previously released a five song EP, titled 'Grow,' which was recorded on his iPhone in the subways of Chicago. Much of the profits from the EP's sale went



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to helping homeless youths in Columbus, Ohio. He plans on releasing another iPhone album later this year.

I had the opportunity to correspond with Hendrickson via email to discuss how he got into music, songwriting, the Grow Music Project, and what comes next.

### **When did you know you wanted to play music professionally?**

There were many times growing up that I knew. I was four years old and I'd get **Alan Jackson** and **George Strait** songs stuck in my head. I swear I'd hear them exactly as they sounded on the radio. I'd be singing them all day, and got my first girlfriend singing "**Check Yes Or No**". Yeah, I was like 4 years old, but I knew then. But then I knew again when I was sitting in front of my Windows 4.0, at 9 years old, and had just finished writing my song through loops on "**Hip Hop EJay**" by **Voyetra**. I ripped the song to a CD, and carried a mobile stereo around all day, singing it. I knew then too.

But the turning point happened when I called my Dad during my freshman year in college. I told him I didn't love business school, and that I loved music. I remember being very afraid because I imagined a future of poverty and loneliness, some sort of starving artist lifestyle just because I knew what I loved. I moved back home to Columbus, and starting turning my parent's basement into a recording studio. Somewhere during the nights of hanging drywall and painting walls, I realized I was actually going to be a professional musician. I was dedicated to it. The next two years, and about 400 shows, were defining.

### **What is your songwriting process like?**

I'm not a pro when it comes to process. I like to keep things spontaneous as much as possible. But I think my songwriting process goes like this:

First, circle in on what I'm really thinking, feeling, what's happening inside of me. Then, I let my ideas spill out. I group them into common themes, usually following title words or phrases.

I position the group around a simple verse-chorus format that I'm comfortable with, and then mold the lyrics around a melody. I create the initial "shape" of the song after that, stretching it around to find the edges I'm looking for, and then kind of start trimming it back from there. I should add-- I think it's always better to go way beyond the emotion than not quite get up to it. Much harder to try to recreate the feeling and words from something you don't have than it is to overwrite it and refine the idea later.

I was paying attention in logistics class one day, and learned about value stream maps. I think my process is kind of like that, where the sum of the whole process is only as great as the weakest part. I'm always striving to improve each step of the process, purposefully, or naturally.

Purposed example: I used to practice writing 10 songs in a three hour period. I'd just turn this lever in my mind, and let ideas freely flow, as quickly as possible. When I forced my creativity, I didn't write good songs, but I did learn how to strengthen the idea generation process by turning the creative lever "on" and "off" to sort of control bursts of imagination.

Natural example: When I say natural, I don't mean its random inspiration. It's actually more effortful. I go out, seek experiences, and things that bring out more of me. Whether that's taking the bus around at 2AM, climbing a random ladder to a rooftop, busking in some subways, or hopping a freight car and taking a taxi back home-- doing what it takes to feel completely natural and alive helps me write.

### **How did you find out about the Grow Music Project?**

Well, I started the Grow Music Project ... Sort of.

In 2011, I recorded a live, five-song album in the Chicago subways. The experience moved me. The people who live in the subways taught me so much. I named the album "GROW" and began to use the sales to support homeless youth in Columbus, Ohio through an incredible place called the "Star House". I wasn't even making a dent in the support I wanted to raise, so I began asking other local musicians to donate their album sales to the Star House too. "GROW" became more of a music project than an EP, so I bought the domain name

“GrowMusicProject.org” to promote it.

About two years after launching GrowMusicProject.org, I went back to check on it, but accidentally navigated to GrowMusicProject.com. It was like 2AM and I was kinda curious about this GMP thing. Albeit, I’m not one to submit to online contests, but I was half-asleep, so I just did it. Weeks after, I kept getting these phone calls from some telemarketer named “Christopher Tyng”. I marked the number, and when he called I was snarling at him like, “Listen dude. Don’t ever call me again. I don’t have any money and I’m not stupid enough to get scammed, so...” He started laughing, which got me confused, and then he was all like, “Joey, You won! Really, you won!”

So, I really found about the Grow Music Project from that first phone call. I still can’t believe that coincidence and how interconnected everything always seems to be. Needless to say, I’m incredibly humbled and blessed to be a GMP artist.

### **Why did you choose to record “Astral Planes” for Grow Music?**

I wrote “Astral Planes” just a few weeks prior to GMP, so the core of it was still very raw to me. When I got off the plane and met Chris, we started talking, and I immediately felt completely understood as an artist. When I met Ryan, I knew I could trust these guys with something truly unrefined.

### **What was the process like working with Chris Tyng?**

Chris is known as a composer. But in the week that I was in Santa Barbara, Chris proved to be not only a master composer/arranger, but also a brilliant songwriter, world-class drummer, producer, recording engineer, mixing engineer, mastering engineer, publishing guru, music businessman, gear-head, tech-geek, mentor, brother, and friend to me. I’ve never met someone so multi-faceted. Remember the last time your mind was truly blown? ... I’m still picking up the pieces.

### **What do you think you took away from the Grow Music Project experience?**

It does exist ... The dream. The fairytale that making a career in music works is actually true. There is a land of milk and honey, and it is as amazing as it seems. It is what you're working towards, and it does matter and pay off in the end. Like a kid discovering a theme park for the first time, the Grow Music Project helped me get through another semester of classes. And I'll take that experience with me for the rest of my life, because just knowing that it's real makes all the difference in the world.

### **What kinds of opportunities have you gotten since Grow Music Project?**

Since the Grow Music Project, I've been more passionate than ever about co-writing and performing alongside songwriters in my hometown, Columbus, Ohio. Through **Columbus Songwriters Association**, I helped to host a pitch for a publisher's event there, and performed alongside songwriters who blew the minds of music publishers from Nashville. The songwriting culture in Columbus is incredible.

Since GMP, I also had the opportunity to go back out to Los Angeles and interview music publishers about how music publishing really works today. My friends and I will be releasing a documentary through Kickstarter called "Music Publishing In The Wild West" that will teach musicians about music publishing, as explained by music industry experts.

Also, Joey Hendrickson and The Sleepless nights will be performing in Columbus, Ohio's first annual, **Fashion Meets Music Festival**, which is sort of like a 3-day "South By Southwest" for the Midwest. It'll be huge, with 6 outdoor stages, all free for the 125,000 people who will be supporting local music and national bands this summer 2014 in downtown Columbus.

### **Do you have any plans to release an album any time soon?**

Yes - I just released my single, "Astral Planes" on **iTunes**. Look for it! I plan to release an album recorded entirely with my iPhone this summer. It's a daunting task. I'm determined to make it sound high-quality, despite limitations. I'll video tape the production process, release through iTunes, and for other songwriters out there, I'll share some iPhone recording techniques on **www.iPhoneRecording.com**

“Astral Planes” is available on iTunes **now**. Check out “GMP: The Diaries Series” episode two **here**. For more information about Joey Hendrickson, visit his **Facebook page**.