



**For Immediate Release**

**BLB 10-001**

February 17, 2010

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**Op-Ed Story** (Music/Performance Review)

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## **14 Year Old Bronson Bush Slays Nashville's Bluebird**

Remember this date: February 14, 2010.

That's when 14 year old Kentuckian Bronson Bush captured - no, CONQUERED - the audience's attention at Nashville's legendary Bluebird Café and proved beyond all doubt that his future could become Nashville history. I know. I was there!

February nights in Nashville are notoriously cold and the threat of snow gave this one an unusually sore sting. The show didn't start until 7 p.m., but by 5:30 a line had formed outside the Bluebird Café, made up mostly of people who had come to see their friends play at Sunday Writer's Night. Bronson won the affection of strangers before he ever got inside the Bluebird. With the precision of a skilled politician, he worked the crowd waiting outside. His boyish charm engaged grown men and women while the fiery red locks that frame his almost cherub face warmed the winter air and took some chill out of the approaching snow storm.

But it was inside – on stage – that Bronson dealt the kind of musical blow that has launched legends. Two lines into three songs, and people were already whispering about the boy-wonder before them.

The Bluebird Café is a songwriter's venue and performers may only sing original songs they have written or co-written. Chances are, few if any audience members expected a 14 year old to have much to say in a song. After all, many adults audition dozens of times for a chance to perform on the Bluebird stage and while Bronson made the cut on his first try, even I wondered what life experience he had from which to craft a country song.

Plenty, it turns out. "I'm not your typical teenager," Bronson explained to me two days before his Bluebird debut. "I like to write about what other people do."

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The “other people” to whom he refers must be his adolescent peers back home in Raceland, Kentucky because, while his songs echo the same sentiments as grown-up country tunes – loneliness; despair; break-ups - they are absolutely age appropriate. For generations, songwriting experts have encouraged “wannabe” writers to write what they know. Bronson does. For example, he weaves a story of loneliness and the hope for new love around a picture taped inside the door of a high school girl’s locker. “That’s Who I Want to Be,” he writes.

Another song, “Next Time,” vividly tells the story of a break-up and subsequent heartache from a teenager’s perspective. In the song, after the break-up he runs into the girl at, of all places, the mall.

His rhymes are unpredictable. His meter is unorthodox. His lyrics are uninhibited and delivered with memorable melodies that melt your ears. It seems like I read somewhere that those are the makings of a great song.

To boot, Bronson’s budding baritone voice has a strength and resonance that punctuates his songs with personality. And he’s an accomplished musician. “I’m *good* at guitar, trumpet, piano and bass,” he says. “I’m *pretty good* at the dulcimer and trombone.”

Bronson manufactures his own brand of boyish charm and personality that combined with his grown-up wit and mental acumen, makes most adults forget they’re talking to a teen. He boasts a 4.25 GPA despite his hectic school activities schedule. Add to that, his often unpredictable calendar of performances and treks to Nashville and you might wonder how he keeps it all together. “It’s a family thing,” Bronson says as his mother nods with approval. “I don’t do it by myself.”

Even with Mom and Dad at his side, Bronson is clearly at the helm. He is a consummate professional who takes every aspect of his sprouting career to heart. “My music is my career,” he grins with cheeks so rosy they compete with his red hair for attention.

“This is a business,” Mom, Lori chimes in. “His name is the bottom line.”

Bronson arrived for his big night at the Bluebird to learn that he was sixth on a list of nine songwriters set to perform. That might have rattled the nerve of a lesser confident up-and-comer but not Bronson. He watched and listened to the performers ahead of him, hanging on every lyric of their original songs. He was eager to learn; hungry to gain new insight into their mutual craft. He sat patiently through their performances and politely applauded them.

But sitting patiently does not come easily or naturally to Bronson Bush. His body language suggests an inner restlessness when on the sideline.

“On stage with my guitar is where I feel most at home.”

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