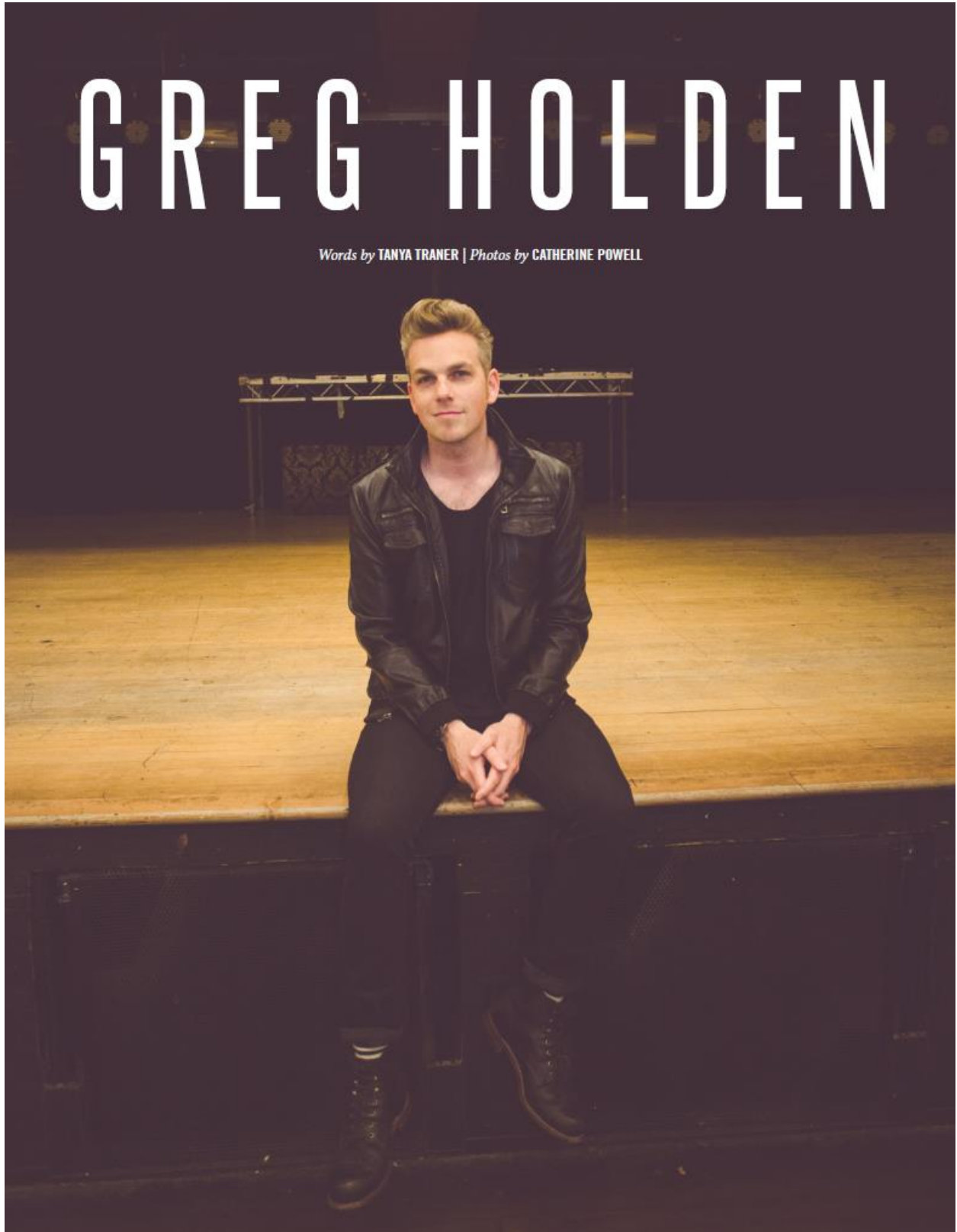


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GREG HOLDEN

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FOR THE FIRST 18 YEARS OF HIS life, singer-songwriter, Greg Holden had absolutely no interest in music — but how times have changed.

Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, Greg says his family moved when he was a child to an area northwest of England near Manchester. Music was not a passion for him, but he says he was looking for a release out of his hard life. “I had a lot of trouble with bullies at school,” he says. “And I was kind of looking for an escape, a way to kind of vent. And I didn’t have a great time at home either, so I was always looking for a way out.”

“I saw a friend of mine playing guitar in a local bar,” he says. “And he was singing his own songs, and for some reason that kind of struck a chord with me — no pun intended.” He approached his friend, who taught him a couple of songs and also helped him learn to write music.

Up until this point, Greg says he had no idea he could sing; he never even tried. “When I first started, I would sing really low because I was scared to really project,” he recalls.

After working hard and developing a voice, he decided to move to New York City and pursue music professionally. “The reason I did that is because I wanted to scare the crap out of myself.” He felt like if he stayed in the U.K., he wouldn’t have the same drive. He sold all of his worldly possessions, packed his bags and made the big move across the pond.

Luckily for Greg, the pieces just sort of fit together upon his arrival to the United States. “I was really lucky. I fell into a really good scene of people at Rockwood Music Hall in the Lower East Side,” he says. He was able to obtain a work visa about six months in and signed a publishing deal right away. He made two albums independently during his time here as well. “In between that I would be touring as much as I could, which never made any money, still doesn’t,” he laughs.

He made a living from his publish-

ing deal, with some of his tracks appear on popular television shows. But Greg was also co-writing for other musicians with this deal. Most notably, he co-wrote the popular single “Home,” eventually sung by Phillip Phillips, the *American Idol* season 11 winner.

But Greg says he isn’t the biggest fan of co-writing. “They would put me in a room with other people, to write songs for other people, and I didn’t like it,” he says. “For me, music’s so personal. I want to keep doing this and writing for me.” He says occasionally he will write for other people, but it’s definitely not a passion. Of musicians who exclusively have their music written for them, Greg thinks to each his own. “Some people are amazing performers but don’t write,” he shares. “I’ve definitely got no criticism over those people.”

Despite his successes in the United States, Greg hit a wall and didn’t release new music for about three years. “Basically I was jumping in and out of bed with companies that were saying they were going to release my music and then it wouldn’t work out,” he explains. Because of this, he re-released the same album two or three times, which drove him crazy. “I had all this new music that I wanted to get out there,” he comments. He spent as much time as he could trying to promote the old stuff, but finally said “screw it” and decided to write a third album.

He hit that turning point of continuing with music, or giving up, and he decided to take a trip to India “My last records were very negative, very self-indulgent I would say,” he says. “That really shifted my perspective on my life and what I was trying to say.” He traveled to the poorest state of the country and was amazed at what he found in the people there. “Nobody had anything, but everybody was smiling.” He says he began to see how lucky he is to be doing what he’s doing. “I realized that I had a responsibility to say something positive with my

music.”

Upon returning from his trip, he knew he wanted to create an album with the music he wanted to make, without people telling him what to do. When it was finished, he tried to find the right home for his music. “Warner Brothers was the one company who I just felt really understood what I was trying to do and weren’t about to push me in the wrong direction,” he shares. He signed to the major label in 2014.

Since signing, Greg’s life has been a whirlwind. He released the new, more positive album, *Chase the Sun* in February of this year. He also just wrapped up a major U.S. tour, opening for Delta Rae, a group known for their hard-hitting harmonies, energy and eclectic music. “They’re great, they make me feel like a terrible singer,” he jokes. “They’ve got good energy. They’re good people. And that’s all you can ask for when you’re touring.” He says when you’re opening for a band, you want to feel like you’re accepted into their family, and Delta Rae has welcomed him.

Greg has headlined his own tours many times, but he says that opening for a band is still his favorite thing to do because of the pressure of headlining. “You have to sell tickets. You have to make sure you’re playing for a good hour, hour and a half, which is a struggle every night.” He says he likes how you play for a shorter time, opening, and really get to craft your set. “And you’re playing in front of a whole new bunch of people.” He says this also comes with its cons, as some fans don’t care about the opener, but he’s been lucky to open up to a lot of acts who have great fans who show up early and are energetic about his music.

Despite his success, Greg knows that the music industry is an uphill battle. “You are constantly fighting to stay relevant.” But he plans to stay relevant by “touring my ass off,” he laughs. He says he will be traveling and supporting his album all year. “Hopefully this is just the beginning.” ❦