

Country music star spreads tale of hope

By Eric Johnson/Austin Daily Herald

Country recording artist Kevin Sharp had plenty of chances to steer the wrong way after the splash his debut album "Measure of a Man" made when it was released in 1996.

From it he received several award nominations, including New Male Vocalist from the Academy of Country Music and New Country Artist from the American Music Awards. His notable single "Nobody Knows" lit up the charts, holding the No. 1 spot on Billboard's Country Singles Chart for four weeks.

It would have been easy to let the fame go to his head, but Sharp's path was determined well before his music career by a variety of different elements. It took some hardship to point his ship in the right direction and assure him of the right way to do things.

Sharp was diagnosed with Ewings Sarcoma, a rare type of bone cancer when he was just a senior in high school in Sacramento, Calif. His prognosis left only a slim chance that he would make it past six months. But Sharp's life is an example of success. With the loving support of his parents and family, he fought through the illness and treatment to make it where he is now.

It would be easy to see that time in his life as a detriment, but Sharp quickly explains it as a moment in life to relish.

"I wouldn't change my illness," he said Thursday night before co-hosting with 99.9 KAUS FM's Scott Soderberg on the "Make Em' & Break Em' Hour." "Things that go wrong are the best things. Lessons are learned through adversity. Why we are on this earth is to learn."

Sharp has perhaps learned more than most, and since the days of his biggest success has learned to include other aspects of life with his music. Most notably is his adoption of motivational speaking. Sharp uses his own story to give others hope.

"I kind of stumbled into the motivational speaking," Sharp said. "People were curious about my story and I've turned it into something I've fallen in love with."

From the motivational speaking came writing, and his book "Tragedy's Gift" is designed to encourage others to stick with their dreams.

"Everybody who speaks has to have a book," Sharp said. "I thought I better have one."

He has also recently inked a recording contract with Cupit Records.

Admittedly its a lot to juggle, which most recording artists shy away from, but Sharp relishes the opportunities.

"I have learned that there is a lot of hard work and a lot of different things you have to do in this business to stay in it," he said. "I think the nice thing is that when things started to slow down I didn't let the success define me. I don't have an addiction to fame.

"The great thing about all I'm doing right now is they are interconnected," he later added. "Slowing

down the focus on one doesn't affect the other.”

Sharp will be performing tonight at Austin's own Bobee Jo's with the sold-out show starting at 10 p.m. It will complete a turn of southeastern Minnesota that included a meet and greet Thursday night at Bobee Jo's and a performance at Let it Ride in Owatonna today from 1 to 2 p.m.

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