

Rachel Purcell

New Centricity recording artist Rachel Purcell grew up right down the road from FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Yet, she had no idea she would one day follow in the footsteps of many of the iconic musicians who have recorded there. Regardless, she ended up cultivating a genuine passion for music that evolved into a professional calling.

Purcell, who started writing songs as a teen and played in the high school marching band, always loved a good pop melody, but her aspirations were only as big as her church choir. The small-town Alabama native didn't know to dream beyond Sunday morning solos. So, she relegated music to a hobby — nothing more than something that brought her immense joy in her free time.

With an interest in grammar and linguistics, she headed to the University of North Alabama (UNA), majored in English, and helped pay for her tuition by competing in pageants, even earning a spot on the Miss Alabama stage after being crowned Miss UNA in 2015.

But it was her time at UNA that really grew her faith and her musical gifts. “I came to know God in a real way in the middle of college,” Purcell shares. College was also where she began to seriously hone her craft — writing and performing her original music around town.

“I also had my heart broken a few times,” she adds, “and those heartbreak songs were the songs that ended up helping me get my first record deal.”

When she was just 17, an executive from a major record label approached Purcell and expressed interest in her voice as she was performing cover songs by her idols like Carole King, Sara Bareilles and Adele in the corner of a high-end steakhouse in Florence, Alabama. Upon graduation four years later, she got back in touch with the executive, who invited her to Nashville to play for the label's A&R team. A little over a year after moving to Music City, Purcell inked her first recording contract.

The label had fallen in love with Purcell's big pop-vocal, but signed her to a country deal thanks to her penchant for lyrical storytelling and her bubbly, definitively southern personality. “I feel like country found me,” she explains, adding that she wrestled with guilt over scoring a record deal so quickly, without intentionally chasing it. She was living out the dream so many of her peers had been working toward for more than a decade.

“I had a lot of imposter syndrome,” she admits. “I would hear these stories of people who were here for 10 years and just getting their big break, and I wouldn't even want to tell my story because I was embarrassed about how quickly and easily it had happened for me. But I had to slowly let go of that. I paid my dues back home; and my story is my story. I don't need to be ashamed of it. It's the way God intended for it to unfold.”

Recording under her maiden name, Rachel Wammack, Purcell had the opportunity to work with award-winning producer Dann Huff (Faith Hill, Lady A, Thomas Rhett) and play the Grand Ole Opry.

When Purcell's time with the major label ended, she was already feeling the pull of an impending new season. As an independent artist, she began writing songs about her faith. “This first song idea about my relationship with God came to my mind, and I wrote it all by myself. It was the first song I'd done 100 percent by myself in years, but it just started flowing.

Then, more songs started coming,” recalls Purcell, who’s collaborated with numerous acts ranging from Rascal Flatts to Blessing Offor. “It felt very divine. It was like the songs would finish themselves before I could even get it all out.”

Purcell knew if she was going to switch gears musically, she needed a strong extended team around her. “I feel like I’m finally learning my value as an artist,” she says, despite having released her country debut in 2018. “And I felt like if I was going to partner with a label again, it had to be the right thing for me. Especially when, creatively, I feel like I’m really writing what I want to write, and I am singing how I want to sing. I’m not holding back the soul at all.”

Both things are apparent in the new relationship she’s formed with Centricity Music. Her initial Christian demos sparked the label’s interest, and they invited her to attend their coveted independent artist retreat. Shortly thereafter, they offered her a recording contract. Now, Purcell is poised to open her next chapter, fully stepping into Christian music as her most authentic self.

She’s leading the charge with “Show Up,” a soulful pop selection she co-wrote with Trannie Anderson (Lainey Wilson, Anne Wilson) and Jeff Pardo (Matthew West, Anne Wilson, Katy Nichole), who also produced the track. Her debut radio single showcases a vibrant retro flavor reminiscent of the sounds that originated in Muscle Shoals and are further reflected in her ’70s-inspired aesthetic — regularly accented by her favorite flowery boho blouse and a pair of flared denim jeans.

The hopeful, energetic “Show Up” speaks to our constant need for God to make Himself known in the midst of the ordinary. “God has shown up for me in times when I had no idea what to do or how to pick myself up or even when I didn’t want to get out of bed,” she says. “Sometimes you write something you think you’re writing for other people, only to later realize you needed it. I feel like I wrote this song for ‘future me’ as much as I wrote it for ‘present me.’ I’m just praying this song will be helpful for a lot of people. I hope it will really meet people where they’re at, like it met me.”

As she prepares new music, Purcell keeps the faces of her closest friends in the back of her mind. They are the ultimate inspiration. When she walks into a write, she simply thinks about the women who make up her inner circle — wives, mothers, sisters, friends, doctors, dreamers, entrepreneurs, stay-at-home moms.

“When I’m writing, I think about the working mom. I think of my girlfriends, who are juggling work and kids and home. They need something to lift them up. They need something to remind them how God feels about them,” she says. “They’re balancing their own family issues, traumas and just daily identity and value. And so I often ask myself, ‘What is the little bit of hope I can give a woman like that?’”

Her advice — in musical form — continues to pour out like water from a fire hydrant. Basking in the creative overflow of the moment, she says, “I feel like this is what I was born to do. Every time I’ve tried to quit or give up, God’s like, ‘No, I’m keeping you in music.’ I feel like God had bigger plans for me than I had for myself.

“I don’t know why God has given me the opportunities He has or the platform He has,” she continues, “but I really want to honor Him and do my best to be faithful to the calling He’s placed on my life in this season to write and record Christian music.”