

PG MUSICIAN INTERVIEW

Alli Barker

With a bubbly personality, catchy lyrics, and music that warms the soul, Alli Barker deserves a top spot on your favorite music playlist as you kick off a new year.

This month, we had the opportunity to sit down with Pleasant Grove resident and songwriter Alli Barker to hear about her experience growing up with music in her home, what inspired her to become a songwriter, and how she's giving back to the local community with her musical talents.

Where are you from, Alli?

Thanks for having me! I grew up right here in Pleasant Grove. This is my hometown, and I love it here!

What is your earliest memory of music?

My dad always has had music playing in our house and I honestly can't remember a time without it. In fact, my parents have some funny videos of me at three years old singing some old heartbreak songs. Music has had an impact on me since a very early age.

Growing up, I listened to a wide variety of music across many decades. I remember listening to 60s folk music, such as Simon and Garfunkel, 80s rock, and more. My dad taught me a great appreciation for music.

As for getting into music myself, I started playing piano when I was about 6 years old, which I unfortunately quit several years later. I later picked up ukulele and guitar when I was 15, which I have been playing ever since.

I was also heavily involved in theatre at Pleasant Grove Junior High and Pleasant Grove High School. I had incredible teachers and had some amazing experiences! Musical theatre was a big part of my life, and it helped shape my musical abilities today.



If you could go to a music concert for any artist or band (dead or alive), who would it be?

Oh my goodness, that is such a hard question. A huge influence for me has been Ingrid Michelson. She was my hero in Junior High, and I love her musical style. Jack Johnson is another of my favorite artists as well. Could we make it a concert where Ingrid Michelson opens for Jack Johnson?

What made you want to become a musician?

That's a great question. I started writing music in high school, and I loved it. But at the time it was very personal - I rarely shared my songs with anyone. I mostly kept it hidden as a hobby.

I later served an LDS mission in New Zealand, and I felt inspired to write more spiritual music. I shared my music throughout my mission experience with those around me, and I began to realize how much music was involved in my purpose. I also realized that music was taking on a deeper meaning for my life as a whole, and I wasn't entirely certain what that meant. I was passionate about music, and I felt that I had a decision to make - should this be a bigger part of my life? Or should it continue as a hobby?

After my mission, I moved to New York for a job opportunity. As one of the most musically creative places in the world, I was surrounded by incredible music and artists, and I realized that there was a big opportunity for myself. My experience being involved in music in NYC gave me clarity and acted as a springboard for my music. I knew what I wanted to do with my life and how music would influence my future.

I focused on writing and honed in on the craft of being a musician. I found my sound and worked with some very talented music producers on my first releases. It was amazing! This year, one of my songs won the John Lennon Songwriting Contest, and that has opened a lot of doors for me.

Most of all, I realized that you can't learn something until you do it. If I wanted to make a future in music, I needed to gain experience by doing. I committed myself to making music, because it puts me in the most creative place mentally that I can be. And it makes me happy. I owe it to my experiences in New York City!

What hobbies or interests do you have outside of music?

I love tennis. I actually competed in tennis back in high school on the varsity team, and I have coached young players. It's a big part of my life even today. When I'm not making music, you can usually catch me on the PG High School tennis courts.

I'm also studying Human Development at BYU, and I'm all set to graduate in 2023. People sometimes ask why I'm not a music major, as it's something that I love. Honestly, I love kids and family, and my focus in my field of study helps shape my music in many ways. I also feel both of these interests have a positive impact on one another in my life.

How would you describe the music that you create?

I write very folky, ethereal inspired music. I like lots of vocal harmonies, and I tend to lean to simple acoustic instrumentation. Most of my released music to date is on the softer side, with a

folk-pop sound. I have some new projects in the works, and I am getting deeper into some alternative pop vibes - it is really exciting! I can't wait for you to hear it.

What does your creative process look like?

At first, all my songs started on ukulele, as that's all that I knew how to play. Today, I often go to the guitar first to begin building a musical melody. Then, I build out a song structure and later write lyrics. I suppose it depends on where inspiration takes me in the moment.

I never sit down and say, "I'm going to write about this." I almost always write melody lines for vocals or music first, and later bring in lyrics. Almost all my writing is based on personal stories and experiences.

Some of my best songs come from monotony, as strange as that may sound. When I'm studying for school or bogged down in the mundane daily activities in life, when I'm in a rut, when I need a pickup - music is an escape where I can write about anything and pour my soul out. It feels healing and inspiring to me.

I am very much a bedroom songwriter. I write best sitting on my bed and I have to be alone - I can't do it if there are people around. Lots of fuzzy blankets and candles put me in a comfortable place, and it helps!

I've written my best work when I'm most vulnerable and in touch with my feelings. I wouldn't say that I'm dramatic, but I'm very sensitive. For me, writing music is about getting those feelings out in the form of a song that others can relate to.

Which of your songs is your absolute favorite?

That's a really hard question! Honestly, whatever I most recently wrote becomes my favorite song. Whatever I have written most recently feels closest to my heart at the time. It's what I relate to most at the moment.

Something that I didn't expect was that songs - even my own songs - change meaning over time. As I grow as a person, a song that I wrote in the past takes on a whole new meaning. It's so weird. I may have written about a specific experience in the past, and today the song connects with me in an entirely different way.

A beautiful thing about being a songwriter is that you get to give a song to listeners, and it means something different to everyone. We all connect with words and music in a personal way, and music can take on so many different meanings.



What's next for you with your music?

I am so excited! I have a new music release coming out soon. This is a song that I often play at my concerts, and so many people come up to me and ask, "Where can I find this song? When does it come out on Spotify?"

It's had such a response from people that I realized I needed to record and release this song! I'd love for you to hear it! The new song is called "I Don't Know How to Break Up," and you can find it on all streaming platforms wherever you listen to music. I have more music lined up for later releases. It's going to be an exciting year!

What advice would you give to anyone in our community that is interested in songwriting or making music?

If I've learned anything about my journey, it's that I had a lot of fear around people not supporting my music or being critical. But the joy of doing it greatly outweighs anything that people say. Beginning songwriters tend to hold back... the truth is, writing music can be a personal thing that benefits you. Some people will love it, and it may not resonate with others. But if you can touch someone with your music, it's worth it!

And you don't have to go all-in with music either. It doesn't have to consume your life or be the ONLY thing you do. You can be well-rounded and do many things that you are interested in, while making music a part of your life as well. Don't put that much pressure on yourself, especially when starting.

There is so much more talent in Utah than people realize. It's so amazing to be in an artsy community. I love being a part of this community and I look forward to being involved for years to come.

MUSIC LINKS

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