

# Heart Strings

Texas-music legacy Warren Hood is a fiddler on the move

| By Tara Seetharam | Photography by Paul Cisneros |

It happens a lot. Some giggling older women approach musician Warren Hood after his show to say they've made a bet about him. But before he hears the wager, the boyishly handsome singer flashes a grin and says, "I'm 27." The fans shriek, giggle some more and admit sheepishly they thought he was 12. "They always want to take me home and feed me," Hood says.

With a quiet but youthful demeanor and slight frame—he has his boutique-owner pal put aside any unusually small vintage button-down shirts for him—the Austin-born Americana crooner and fiddler may look young. But his *soul* is old. "I've been an old man since I was five. It's kind of a curse," says Hood—who, along with his band, the Goods, performs at Mucky Duck (2425 Norfolk St., 713.528.5999) Sept. 17. "My heroes sounded better when they were older," he adds. "I like a little bit of rasp in there, a little age."

Hood's throwback style as a performer nods to a range of classic artists like jazz great Django Reinhardt and Texas swing legend Bob Wills. But it's

his crafty blend of blues, country and rock with a dash of pop that made him a fixture on Austin's music scene.

Not that his emergence as a noteworthy Texas talent happened recently. He's played in multiple critically lauded bands throughout the past decade and has been in the eye of ATX's music community his entire life. His dad is the late Champ Hood, a Texas Music Hall of Fame guitar and fiddle player, who before his death from cancer in 2001, had performed with many Austin regulars, from Lyle Lovett to Lucinda Williams.

Young Hood not only is okay with the legacy—"I've never felt that there's something I have to live up to"—but he takes full advantage of it. His live shows incorporate tracks from his 2008 album, *Warren Hood*—which oozes a laid-back Southern charm that's folksy in some parts and Cajun swampy in others—and songs from his dad's catalogue, particularly tracks that were written but never recorded. "I'm just trying to make it so the music doesn't die. It's kind of like he left me half of a career."

But growing up, Hood's dad kept his career separate from his son, spending more time tossing a football with him than talking music. That was until sixth grade, when young Warren—forced by public school to play an instrument—fell in love with the violin.

The Berklee School of Music grad spends free time studying his 6,000-song iTunes library and his father's vintage vinyl collection—ranging from Muddy Waters to Ween and The Beatles—and sifting through YouTube discoveries such as a *Sesame Street* clip with Ray Charles putting a soulful spin on the "Alphabet Song." He also hangs with girlfriend Alison, and his mom and 16-year-old brother in Dripping Springs, and likes listening to the cicadas on the deck of his home in south Austin.

Hood hopes to release an album next year that will capture the energy of his live shows and put an upbeat "party" spin on his sound. Rebellious against his old soul? Not a chance. "Even when I'm singing a rock 'n' roll song, in my head I'm hearing a little bit of Ray Charles." ■

**SOUL PROVIDER**  
Throwback-style  
music man Hood  
plays Mucky Duck  
on Sept. 17.

