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## Broussard brings grunge back to Seattle

Inside Mariners first baseman lies a rock soldier  
By Doug Miller / MLB.com

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• Ben Broussard performs his song 'Deep'

Twenty-thousand fans were screaming in the hot Louisiana sun as Ben Broussard walked up and assumed the spotlight, but he didn't have a baseball bat in his hands.

Nope, this was a long way from the World Series, the All-Star Game or even a split-squad Spring Training exhibition pitting Broussard's Seattle Mariners against the Milwaukee Brewers on a Tuesday afternoon in Peoria, Ariz.

This, of course, explains why he was so nervous.

Broussard is not just a first baseman, designated hitter and occasional outfielder. He's a singer, songwriter and guitar player who has released a well-received debut CD, *Ben Broussard*, on Seattle's Lazy Bones Recordings ([www.lazybones.com](http://www.lazybones.com)). His songs also have been placed on popular television shows such as "Dog the Bounty Hunter," "South of Nowhere," "Cheyenne" and "The Real World."

But singing songs to teammates on late-night flights or jamming in the hotel room hours before a game is one thing. Being called on stage at a huge country music festival called "Swampstock" is entirely another.

"I was hanging out backstage with the Warren Brothers, and they were opening for Tim McGraw, and before I knew it, they asked me to come up and jam with them on 'Sweet Home Alabama,'" Broussard says. "It was insane."

Luckily, for Broussard, he was just playing rhythm guitar, which allowed him to linger toward the back of the stage and just concentrate on laying down the relatively simple chord structure of Lynyrd Skynyrd's staple of classic-rock radio.

"But it didn't matter," he says with a smile. "I was still doing whatever I could not to screw it up."

Broussard hasn't done much screwing up in his music career so far.

The proud resident and native of Beaumont, Texas, started playing at the age of 15, taking his guitar skills to a local youth group. While in college at McNeese State in Louisiana, he banged out grunge covers with a local band "for a little extra money."

The band would do an original song or two every now and then, and while Broussard's musical chops were improving daily, his natural baseball talent couldn't be ignored.

He was selected by the Cincinnati Reds in the second round of the June 1999 first-year player draft and has



Mariners Ben Broussard releases stress off the diamond with his six-string. (Doug Miller/MLB.com)

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been a fixture in the Majors since making his big-league debut for the Cleveland Indians in 2002.

But he always carried an acoustic guitar with him and still can be found in a maintenance room at Safeco Field about an hour before the first pitch, with his songbook open and his eyes closed as he pounds out his new material.

Broussard makes a point of saying that he's a serious professional baseball player first and foremost and that, for now, music is his hobby and nothing more.

"You don't want to give off the impression that you want to be a rock star," he says. "If the team's losing and you're not playing well, all of a sudden it's because you write music. I just let everybody know that it's an outlet. It's something that goes along with me. It's part of me.

"As a player, I never let it get in the way. I'm not going to run off and play concerts after games. I'm going to be smart. At the same time, I'm not going to stop playing. Music definitely helps me play (baseball) better. I think I play (baseball) better when I'm able to let loose and play my guitar when I have a bad night. I can write a song about it and just let it go."

Broussard will spend time this offseason working on his second album and is considering doing a two-CD set in which he'll have his regular studio recordings on one side but a more stripped-down, acoustic bonus disc that will give his fans the live, café feel they've been yearning for.

The one thing that's always been present in Broussard's music is his own style, a hybrid of alternative, Pearl Jam-inspired rock and kick-back melodies in the tradition of modern troubadours such as Jack Johnson, Ben Harper and Dave Matthews.

The subject matter? Anything and everything that goes through the mind of a man who's constantly on the road and always being hit with inspiration, no matter where he might be.

"I never get ideas for songs during a game, but I do all the time when I'm driving in my car or I wake up in the middle of the night," Broussard says. "I'll wake up in the morning and can't get an idea out of my head."

Broussard tracks his ideas in his cell phone, texting to himself whatever he might be thinking.

"There's times when I've been stuck in bad traffic and I've written a whole song," he says. "Two verses and a chorus. And a lot of times, I'll get a melody and then I'll get the words, and I'll keep writing the words around that melody, but I haven't really played my guitar yet.

"And then I'll go home and get my guitar, and I'm trying to find that melody on the guitar, and I'm like, 'I don't even know what chord this is,' and that's why I think, I get a different, original sound."

That sound figures to get more different and significantly more original as Broussard matures as a songwriter. He says he's been getting more and more into hip-hop and has considered bringing some of those influences into his mix.

He also is quite an accomplished beat-boxer and just might throw in a few of those riffs while he's strumming an otherwise-plaintive mid-tempo rocker. The lyrical content, however, will always center on the same topics.

"I like to write about everything that people think about," Broussard says. "Relationships, love, breaking up, struggles, high times, low times, just basic life stuff. You write about those things and people remember your songs.

"They connect with you that way."

*Doug Miller is Senior Writer for MLBAM Entertainment. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball of its clubs.*

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