

SPARKY MATEJKA

Taylor High School grad earns international fame as rock guitarist for Lynyrd Skynyrd

Written by Shetye Cypher | Photography Courtesy of Lee Ann Burgess

In a world of hopes and dreams, Katy homegrown musician Mark “Sparky” Matejka, 45, has made his mark as a guitarist for the southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd. Matejka grew up in the Bear Creek area from 1975 to 1985, graduating from James E. Taylor High School in 1985. A member of the school choir and Expressions pop choir, he wrote his class’ graduation song entitled *1985* and performed it during the graduation ceremony. “I always knew I wanted to play music from a young age,” Matejka recalls. “I played with my local garage bands - in particular AWOL and Fanfare - all through high school anywhere and everywhere we could. We played at one of the Taylor High School dances if I remember correctly.”

A Musical Journey

After leaving THS, Matejka then embarked on his musical journey at the University of North Texas in Denton, where he graduated cum laude. While there, he studied music and jazz guitar performance and played in the 1 O’Clock Lab Band his senior year. “I graduated from North Texas State University in 1990, and then worked and resided around Dallas playing in clubs with bands and teaching music at Brookhaven College until I moved to Nashville, TN in 1995,” says Matejka.

Moving to the country music capital led Matejka to a host of musical opportunities where he could grow his style. Over the years, he performed with famed country artists like Chely Wright, the Kinleys, and, from 2000 to 2005, the well-known Charlie Daniels Band. He also recorded with his own American country band, Hot Apple Pie, which charted the single *Hillbillies* at 23.

Big Break

In 2006, he took the next step in his career after being called to audition for Lynyrd Skynyrd. “I had already sang and played on a Lynyrd Skynyrd record prior to that,” Matejka shares. “It was on their *Christmas Time Again* album. The Charlie Daniels Band had a song on it - a rock version of “Santa Clause Is Coming to Town.”

Stealing the Show

Despite stepping into the spotlight as a southern rock guitarist, Matejka appreciates a variety of different musical styles. “I’ve always played every style, of course having my degree in jazz and playing in rock bands to country bands,” he says. “I believe there are only two kinds of music; good and bad.”

When he isn’t busy touring across the globe with Lynyrd Skynyrd, he can be found working with a rock group called Triple Shot. He has traveled the world performing and will be making stops throughout the U.S. and Europe this summer during Lynyrd Skynyrd’s upcoming concert tour.

“There are so many favorite moments; it’s hard to pick one,” Matejka says. “I guess one of my favorite performances was playing at the famous Madison Square Garden in New York, probably because when I was in high school watching Led Zeppelin’s *The Song Remains the Same* live performance at Madison Square Garden, [performing there] was something I never dreamed I would eventually do.”

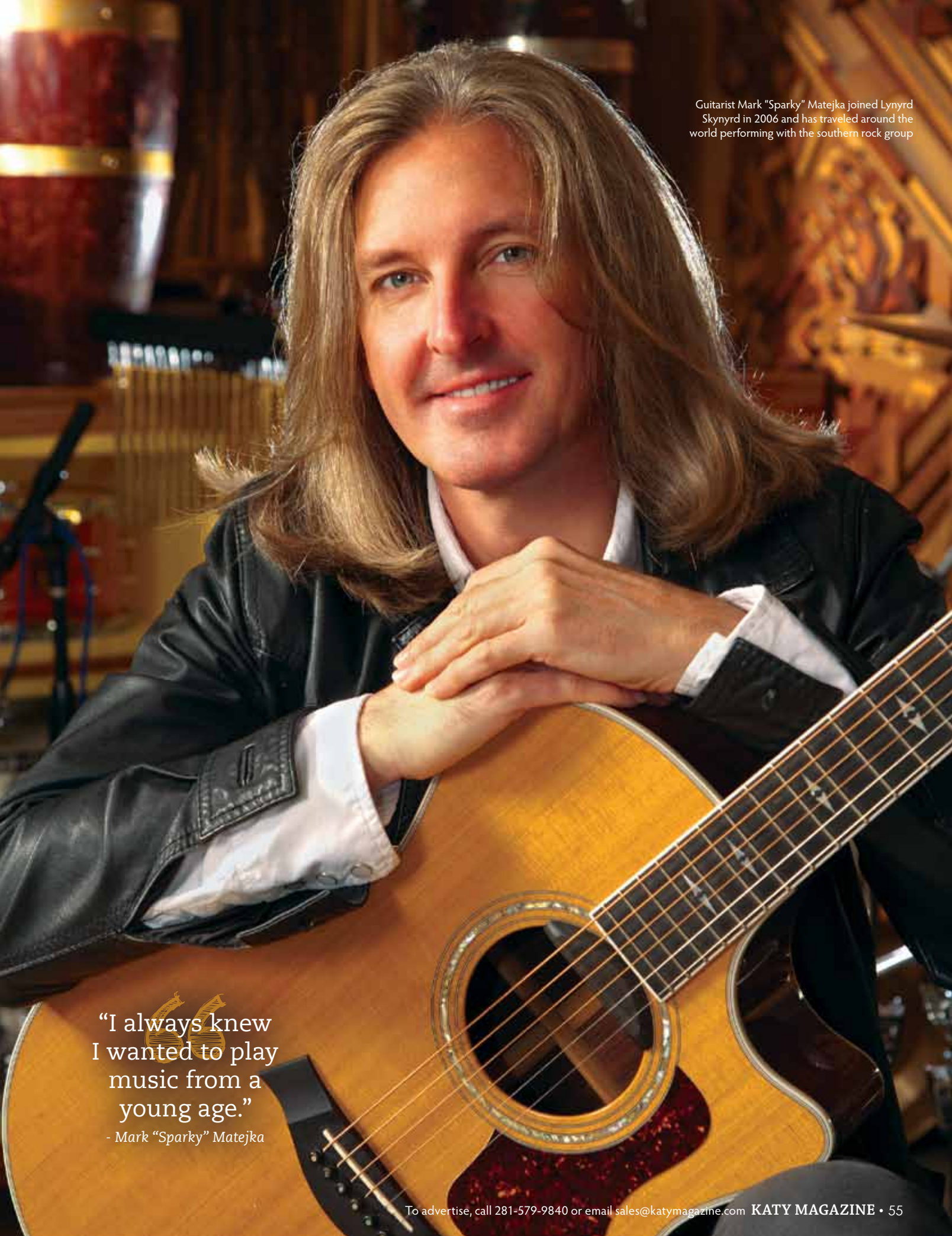
Grateful for His Success

Musically, he considers himself very fortunate in the opportunities and success he has enjoyed. “Lynyrd Skynyrd just finished our new record, and it will be out in August,” he says, adding, “And, we are currently on tour right now.”


He knew from a young age that he wanted to make a career out of music, and he is proud of having persevered with his dream. “As simple as that sounds, it’s a pretty tough ‘row to hoe’ so to speak, so just doing what I love every day is something I’m very proud of.”

Matejka currently lives in Nashville, but visits as often as possible. His parents and brother still reside in the area, as well as his girlfriend Amanda. **KM**

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