

Luke Combs on Learning to Play Guitar at 21 and the Moment that Led Him to Music

The Joe Rogan experience in my brain I'm thinking ok well I only thought the only option was to be a music teacher in my head I'm going well that's the only option is to be a music teacher And I I don't want to be a music teacher because I'm really bad Like I I can't read music I I like I'm like I can't do math Like I I have some sort of like I just can't you can't read music not at all And like I like it's probably some sort of form of like dyslexia probably to to the truest extent like barely pass math Have you tried to read music Oh yeah I mean I I was in um so her so her husband was actually the band teacher He taught advanced placement music theory which was a new class in my senior year I took that class and got like ad because it was like all these the kids that were the best at band and the best at chorus where who was in that There was only like eight students in the class and all it is was advanced Like here's the notes here's this I tried out for Allstate chorus three years in high school and didn't make it because you had to be able to read you had to do a sight singing audition which is where they would hand you a piece of sheet music and you had to sing it just by reading the notes on there Right So it was a combination of what your voice sounded like and your ability to keep up with the Allstate choir teacher whoever that was picked out to be And I never made it because I couldn't read the music I just couldn't do it II I don't know why you get coaching on it Did you get like yeah I mean I I try I mean I busted to to try to it's just something about it doesn't doesn't make sense to me like to my brain like I get it like if I sit there and like plank it out really really slow I mean I could figure it out Right But it just doesn't it's just such to me it's such an instinctual thing you know And so I was in an a cappella group my freshman year at college for a year Um I en I enjoyed that but again it was just like an after school kind of activity thing with other people in college you know excuse to have people to drink with really you know people with common ground or whatever and gave that up my beginning of my sophomore year Really Um and then didn't do music I played rugby I got into playing rugby in college I did that Loved that And I was just the guy that would like sing at parties or whatever Like my buddies that played rugby with knew I sang they'd be like dude sing for these chicks or whatever you know It was kind of like I was like party trick guy you know And then after my junior year I moved home to Asheville and

I we I'd always moved home every summer up to that point And then my mom goes because I was sulking because all my buddies that year they all stayed in their college town for the summer I was the only guy that moved back So all my friends are gone They're in Raleigh they're in Charlotte they're in Chapel Hill they're in Boone they're in you know col at all these different schools So I'm working at the same job I had when I was 16 at a go kart place with a bunch of high school kids I'm 21 years old I got nobody to hang out with I'm living in my parents' house I'm not doing well in school I don't know what I want to do with my life at all And I'm sitting on the porch I remember sitting on my parents' car porch and it was like my mom come out and she was like what's wrong with you Like what's what's I'm an only child too So she's like what's what's going on And I was like I don't know mom I was like do I have any friends here Like I'm working at fucking Go Karts you know like what am I doing And she's like well you know you know what Luke Kenny Chesney and Tim mcgraw they didn't even learn to play guitar till they were 21 years old and I was 21 Right And so my parents had bought me a guitar in seventh grade that I never played I did two guitar lessons and hated it because my parents wanted me to do it You know what I mean Like anything your parents want you to do you don't want to do really And so I went in the closet and I got this old like an Ibanez like \$50 acoustic guitar you know just horrendous condition But I didn't know that didn't know anything about guitar didn't know what a good guitar was didn't know nice guitars even existed So I taught myself all summer I just sat on the porch when I wasn't at work playing playing playing because I knew I loved to sing and I was like well I'll just learn how to play and then I can sing at like parties for my buddies or whatever and taught myself all year And then just kind of became obsessed with like learning how to play And by the time I was 22 I'm back in school I'm in Boone hanging out with my buddies I'm starting to dabble around with like writing my own songs because I was like well I could you know this would be cool I like this And then I wrote my first two or three songs and I booked a gig down the street just like at this bar my rugby team always hung out at because I figured that guy would you know he was like cokehead like wild card Like he'd give me a show or whatever You know the guy was awesome You know I was like this guy will give me a show if I wanna do a show So I borrowed my neighbor's guitar because mine wasn't even acoustic electric It was just a straight up acoustic and sat on a stool My other buddy let me borrow his P A speakers and 200 of my friends came out and paid a dollar to see me I made 200 bucks that night

That was more than I made at both of my jobs that week And I was hooked man I was like dude this is awesome Like I love doing this first off Yeah I'm like I love doing this anyways and I'm having a great time I'm like having drinks with my friends Everybody psyched to see me here and stuff And I was like it just made sense man It wasn't it wasn't one ounce of hard work in my mind After that point it was just always fun man And I always loved it So it's like a door opened up you walk through it and your life changed forever It just made sense dude Yeah it was like a true like aha moment right Like you hear about those from people Oh I think I'm gonna I gotta flip the top and you hear about those things but it truly was that it was truly an aha moment man And it was life it was a life changing man I don't know what I'd be doing if I hadn't done that That's so awesome I love those kind of stories I really do