

BJ Barham Coming Home for Final Show on His Solo Tour!

Reidsville native BJ Barham, front man for the band *American Aquarium*, will be making his way back home for one of the final shows of his solo tour, *Rockingham*, on Saturday, October 1st, at 7 p.m. at Market Square.

BJ and *American Aquarium* are no strangers to playing Reidsville, having performed here in 2012. BJ thought it would be a great way to end his tour since his solo debut is based on his life in Reidsville and Rockingham County.

Barham's solo album, *Rockingham*, was released in August and is based on some very intense personal experiences. On November 13, 2015, the singer-songwriter was in the middle of his fourth European tour with *American Aquarium*, the rising alternative-country act he'd led for nearly a decade. They were in Belgium, less than two hours from Paris, when bad news began to arrive: a series of terrorist attacks, including one in a rock club, had left more than 100 dead. Family members, friends, and the fans *American Aquarium* has amassed from so many years on the road immediately reached out, making sure the band was okay.

"The onslaught of text messages, voicemails and everything that came in the next day sparked something in me," Barham remembers. "In the next two days, the entire record was written."

Not long after the wave of well wishes had passed, Barham found himself piecing together composites of people he'd known since childhood, of those folks and places who had impacted his life in fundamental ways. He sang into his cell phone and scribbled in notebooks, stealing away for quiet moments in order to put the melodies and characters floating through his mind into song. The shock of the moment and the distance from home seemed to give Barham a crucial perspective on the moments and

circumstances that had helped shape him. These new songs took the next step, allowing Barham to share stories about those around him.

“This is the first record I’ve ever made that’s not autobiographical — it’s fictional narrative in a very real place,” Barham says. “These songs are human condition stories set in my hometown, Reidsville.”

Barham made these songs his new priority. The whirlwind of limited time kept the songs simple and the recordings human, reflecting a reality much bigger and less perfect than the vacuum of a recording studio. These tunes, after all, didn’t need much tampering. *Rockingham* puts its scenes and scenarios front and center, the beautiful grain and twang of Barham’s voice bringing it all to life.

With its acoustic guitars and peeling organs, ragged vocals and rugged characters, *Rockingham* is a stunning, personal portrait of small-town America, easily identifiable and familiar. For the album’s sole autobiographical moment, Barham, now happily married and sober, penned a letter of sound advice and Southern attitude to his daughter-to-be, “Madeline.” It’s too personal to fall under a roots-rock purview, too singular to be swallowed by a larger situation. Like all of *Rockingham*, it’s not the sound of Barham stepping *away* from *American Aquarium* but instead stepping confidently into the thoughts, stories, and feelings of his own thirty years.

“This is just an outlet for a songwriter. It’s me being able to do something different. This is like people who love their jobs, picking up hobbies,” says Barham, “This is an exercise for myself.

According to Judy Yarbrough, City Marketer, “We are so excited that BJ is coming home to share this incredible solo debut with us. Reidsville is a beautiful place to live, work and play and what better way to tribute BJ’s life growing up here than to perform it for his hometown! The concert is free and open to all, Saturday, Oct. 1, at Market Square in downtown Reidsville. Remember your chair!!”