

# Alum wins awards for songwriting

## MUSICIAN CREDITS CCC FOR INSPIRATION



Former Clackamas Community College student, Kit Taylor, plays piano in a bar.

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Kit Taylor is a musician who has won multiple awards, the newest being the grand prize in the instrument category in the 20th Great American Song Contest. He previously went to Clackamas Community College, and he still lives in the Oregon City area. The Clackamas Print interviewed the musically talented alum.

### The Clackamas Print: How did you begin your music career?

**Taylor:** I started taking piano lessons when I was 5 or 6. It was kind of like “Survivor” piano. All your friends are playing piano and then they gradually drop out, and eventually I was 16-17 and I was the only one left, and at that point I had already won like two or three song competitions. At my church, I met a gentleman named Mark Jeleniewski, and he was a professional pianist. He had me start subbing for him around town, at jazz clubs, hotels, and things like that. I then graduated from high school in ‘99 and went here [Clackamas

Community College] as a music major, and I still was contemplating if I wanted to do it for a living, but here is where I am at, like some of the most talented musicians ever from my class, from Lonnie Cline who was our conductor, he’s out of this world talented. I learnt so much from him, he was so dedicated to perfection but he did it in a kind way. Still to this day, the lead singer of my band, one of the best singers I’ve heard my entire life, his name is Paul Creighton. He sings like Stevie Wonder, he’s a white dude. We had our band “Intervision”, all members of choir of the music department, and before long, we were selling out the Aladdin Theater. We’ve toured the country, we opened for Lifehouse, The Neville Brothers, front page of the Oregonian, and it was to that point, I don’t think there have ever been a group to come primarily from here [CCC] to achieve that level of success. We came close to getting signed by Blue Note [Records] for two jazz labels.

### TCP: What other awards have you received?

**Taylor:** I have won or been named a finalist for 8 different pretty major ones, like worldwide competitions, 2 with Intervision for a song we wrote called “Live Out Loud” We won the Independent Music Award and finalists for the John Lennon Songwriting Competition. And then on my own, since the band broke up, I wanna say six wins, 1 finalists, 5 wins, one of the finalists in USA Songwriting Competition, Mid-Atlantic Songwriting Competition, and three Great American Songwriting Connoisseur, including most recently the Grand Prize in Instrumental category.

### TCP: What did you study at CCC?

**Taylor:** I actually didn’t finish my degree here, I have always been a talented songwriter, and the band, you know, the guys are amazing musicians, but we eventually just decided to go on tour, and I left. I’m actually one math class away from finishing, and I tried three different

times, I just don’t seem to have the math skills that I use to have when I was younger, which is weird because music and math goes hand in hand. While I was here, it really was just music. I mean, it was a breath of fresh air to be surrounded by people who were as dedicated to music as I was, and it was weird at the time because we were in Randall, and they put us above the jocks, so it was like reliving high school all over again, we would go to choir practice and pass the basketball guys. They weren’t as much of bullies compared to high school. After I left, of course, they created a new music building.

### TCP: Do you remember a teacher who taught at CCC that made a significant impact to you?

**Taylor:** Lonnie Cline. He was a massive influence in my life. I was kind of a knucklehead and I had missed like four choir classes in a row, just to drive around town with my friends and went to whatever Wendy’s and the gym, and I was embarrassed to go back because I had missed so many classes and I didn’t want to piss Lonnie off. He was not mean but he was just a perfectionist. He didn’t really tolerate showing up late all of the time. He took me aside one day, he found me just wandering around, and he was like, “Hey kid, you’re really talented. You’re a great singer, but I can’t have you missing class. I’m not mad at you, I’m not yelling. Just come back tomorrow and pretend it never happened, and don’t let it happen again.” And I did, I went back the next day, and every time I missed one since, I gave a good reason. I took it seriously from that point on. He was just really phenomenal. He really knew music, and still to this day, we still talk. We just talked the other day. He’s just inspiring. He was just a perfectionist, though. There were times where he would be teaching and would start to tear up if we didn’t have a part finished. I really respected that, because that’s how I feel now, like when I put the band together, I made the album that I put out that won all of these awards and it has Jennifer Batton, Michael Jackson’s guitar player, David Tourn, who wrote songs for Madonna and plays for John Legend. I’m just always looking for, it’s just never good enough, so just be the best you can get and be the best that you can be, and will still never be satisfied.