

One year ago, **Phillip Phillips** was named the season 11 winner of “American Idol.” Since then, his first single, “Home,” has hit the top of the charts and was the soundtrack of the Summer Olympics as well as countless commercials and TV promos. When Phillips headlined the 11th Annual Lighting of America’s Tallest Fresh-Cut Christmas Tree at the Outlets at Anthem this winter, AFM sat down with the 22-year-old Georgia native.



AFM: *How long have you been singing and songwriting?*

PP: I started playing guitar at 14- or 15-years-old. Singing and songwriting shortly followed that when I was about 17.

AFM: *When was music more than just a hobby of yours?*

PP: It started as a hobby. I loved playing and the feeling I got from it. As soon as I started playing gigs with friends, I realized my passion could be a career as well.

AFM: *Who encouraged you to audition for “American Idol”?*

PP: Casey Abrams from season 10 brought a lot of jazz to the show, and I really appreciated that change. He gave me the incentive to try out for the show—as well as my family and friends.

AFM: *How was the experience on “American Idol”?*

PP: It was a great experience. We all try to stay in touch by sending a text or tweet every now and then, but it's hard because we are all so busy. With everyone's schedule, including my own, I barely know what day it is!

AFM: *Just last year you were singing in your room. Now you have accumulated a fan base, and “Home” launched to No. 1 on the iTunes pop charts. How does that feel?*

PP: It's crazy. Radio representatives tell me “Home” is hitting the top of the charts, and every time I hear that the feeling is so surreal. I'm so glad that people enjoy my music.

AFM: *What inspires your writing? Do you have a specific place that really gets your creative juices flowing?*

PP: No, there isn't a specific place that helps me write. I guess my creative juices flow the most when I try to put myself in someone else's shoes and write [about] how I would handle the situation. A lot of the record is from not only my personal experiences but other's as well. Sometimes, I'll write about other people, the world, life experiences that may or may not be my own, anything really. It just depends on how I feel that day.

AFM: *Can you tell me about your debut album, *The World From the Side of The Moon*?*

PP: The album is very eclectic. It has everything from jazz, funk (not nasty funk) and acoustic songs. I tried to be artistic with my first album, and I hope I achieved that lyrically and musically.

AFM: *What piece of advice would you give to aspiring musicians?*

PP: Just go for it. Don't be scared. Knowing what artist you want to be is the biggest part. Don't give in to what people want to make you. Know who you are and stick with that.

AFM: *What artist/band gives you inspiration?*

PP: There are a lot. Tool, Eric Clapton, Mumford & Sons—a whole bunch of people.

AFM: *If it weren't music, what would you be pursuing?*

PP: I was trying to figure that out before this happened. I love helping kids. I'm awkward with people my age, and kids are easy to get along with because all they want to do is have fun. I would love to be a music teacher and have fun teaching what I love. I guess I'm a little kid at heart.

AFM: *What are you looking most forward to as this journey of yours begins?*

PP: Keep music out there and keep writing music. Tour and live life to the fullest.