

On a quest for wholeness

Musician heals through song

By Joyce Davis

The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — Christopher Paul's journey of the soul works on two levels.

On a musical note, Paul's original instrumentals speak to the passion of the journey of life, the enchantment of filling the heart through inspiration.

On a personal basis, his path has taken him on a new odyssey, one in which he searches to make his body whole again. Thus, Paul's new CD, "Journey of the Soul," speaks to the listener in stair steps of emotion.

The instrumentals are hauntingly beautiful, evoking images of birds soaring against a blue sky, wind turning leaves into chimes and mountain-top vistas of breathtaking beauty.

Now in a wheelchair after an accident left him with a spinal cord injury, Paul literally picks up the pieces of a promising musical career in a day-by-day mission of physical and spiritual growth. Determined to walk again, Paul performs daily exercises to strengthen his body while nourishing his mind through song-writing and playing acoustic guitar, keyboards and percussion.

Paul and his wife, Renee, moved to Boulder from Nashville in early 2000 after she accepted a transfer here. Having grown up near Cleveland, then living 20 years in Nashville, Paul looked forward to living in Colorado.

"I thought it would be cool to write music in the Rockies," he says. "We'd been in Colorado before on vacation, skiing and backpacking, so it seemed perfect. I was pretty athletic — I ran and sailing was a passion — so Colorado and Boulder seemed a great place."

Paul had tired of traveling with well-known entertainers such as Lee Greenwood, Paul Overton and Ty Herndon. "I wanted to spend more time at home, writing," he says. "I'd done my first project, a CD called 'Higher Ground' in 1997. I was promoting that and in the process of writing for 'Journey of the Soul' when we moved."

While in their mountain



Musician Christopher Paul plays his guitar at Roger's Grove. Paul will perform Saturday at the Izaak Walton Center in Longmont.

home near Boulder, Paul worked through the spring and summer on the new CD, then returned to Nashville in August to finish some recording. "I had such a network there of people who knew me and I had family to stay with, so it made sense," he says. "I pretty much finished the tracking and mixing before I left. I was kind of

fried by the time I came back to Colorado. I wanted to let the dust settle, then go back at Christmas.

"Just one month later I got slammed in an accident that delayed the album for four years."

Paul was enjoying a beautiful Sunday morning on that fateful day, taking a bike ride. "It

was a routine ride and I was on a road a half-mile from my home," he says. "There's a story about the accident that I like to tell people. You know when you hear this voice in your head telling you something? Well, you have to listen to it. That morning, I was almost home and this little voice said, 'Paul, you need to add

five more minutes to y and go down this other was being prompted ir strong and great way. to turn down Antler Rd road I always ran on, I rode on — and I had the debris on my bike return.

"Then I changed my and went on ahead because folks were visiting and plans for the afternoon needed to get home."

Around the next corner was hit head-on by a car that broke on the road cracked ribs, a fractured scapula, fractured neck back and a punctured carotid artery. "I was blood like crazy," he says. "Oddly enough, I blew premonition, took the and bang. But the guy me ran to the nearest help and it turned out guy in the house was an EMT and still had all equipment."

"He had the skills to alive because it was 3 before the rescue team there. I was in bad shape they helicoptered me brother had come look me and when he saw me and the rescue crews, it was bad. They told me ly where I was taken they'd better hurry."

Paul was in a coma days. "I awoke to a whole existence," he says. "I thrown into a new place. There were the same the same faces, but I lived a different life."

The spinal cord injury him in a wheelchair months at Denver's Children's Hospital for rehabilitation were a lot of dark mornings in that wheelchair says. "I questioned whether I was still alive. From a spiritual point, I didn't see the light, grandma and Jesus done hypnotherapy to back and find out why here, but I really didn't know. I did come out a desire to finish 'Journey of the Soul' and that has been going."

Paul says playing guitar allows him to be detached being paralyzed. "Music this energy and I try music that is soothing so is writing music for album that will complete."

■ See MUSICIAN/5

Times-Call photo by Lewis Geyer

The production, drawn from

Stockwell as Lt. Joe Cable,

Niwot Road.

MUSICIAN: New album out

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ogy. It, like "Higher Ground" and "Journey of the Soul," will be an instrumental. "What I like about the instrumental is its ability to touch people in certain ways. People can use their imagination and decide what they see and feel when they listen. If I add lyrics to the song it takes that freedom away. In essence it tells the listener, 'This what this song means,' and I don't want that."

Aside from writing music, Paul continues his therapy every day on exercise equipment. He is also involved in a clinical study for a new drug being used for scoliosis (which Paul also has). "They think maybe it may also benefit my spinal cord injury," he says. "I firmly believe that this injury can be cured and that's why I'm involved in everything I can. For the past four years I have turned over every stone. I can't afford not to."

IF YOU GO

What: Taste of Wellness with Christopher Paul

When: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday

Where: Izaak Walton Center, 18 S. Sunset St., Longmont

Paul says the death of Christopher Reeve last month was a "big blow. He had such a big voice for the spinal cord injury community. I know from what I have to overcome every day how hard that man had to work. I'm blessed to have my arms."

Paul plows full-steam into discussions of stem cell therapy. "I follow it with a microscope," he says. "I'm upset with the misinformation out there. When I talk to people about it and bring them up to speed about its good, they learn more and usually change their minds."

The musician says that finding a cure for spinal cord injuries is important for not only him, but for future victims. "You know we all have that possibility. That card is in everybody's body and you never know when that card is going to be drawn," he says. "Every 43 minutes someone in the United States suffers a spinal cord injury. It doesn't matter how healthy you are, how rich you are, what age you are or even if you've not taken care of yourself."

Paul says funding is the only thing standing between a cure and spinal cord victims. "It takes \$9.4 billion a year to take care of those with injuries like mine. Scientists say if they had \$10 billion in funding, there would already be a cure. That's amazing."

Paul says his music will keep him going until that cure is found.

"I know that if I live long enough, I will recover from this. I really believe that," he says.

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