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## Songs for Obama

The life of Microsoft software engineer Jon Bergevin, a pianist and composer, turned into a thrilling musical journey this year after Barack Obama's campaign used a song he and his brother wrote for the candidate.

By Jennifer Warnick  
November 13, 2008

The wildest months of software engineer and musician Jon Bergevin's life were triggered by a spontaneous battle cry, and later a rambunctious toddler.

First came the battle cry. At a small gathering of Barack Obama supporters in Greenwood, South Carolina, in June 2007, the visibly exhausted presidential candidate was shaking hands when Edith Childs, a 59-year-old city councilwoman and nurse, suddenly gave an energetic shout.

"Fired up, ready to go!" Childs yelled, momentarily startling Obama and the others in the room. But her words heartened the candidate, who adopted not only her phrase, but the story of that day and how "one voice can change the world" as a campaign signature.

Months later, the rambunctious toddler came along. In December 2007, Bergevin's brother and musical collaborator Joe took his young daughter to an Obama event at the Showbox Sodo night club "before he was a 25,000-person stadium guy," Bergevin said. "Joe's little daughter ran under the rope line and right up to Barack Obama. Joe stayed back, because he didn't want to get tackled by security, but then [Obama] leads Joe's daughter back to him and says, 'This is my sidekick.'" His brother shook Obama's hand and told him, "I think you're going to get the job done." Obama looked Joe Bergevin straight in the eye, and said, "With your help, I will."

To the brothers, Obama's words were a creative call to action. Ten days after that exchange, the brothers had written and recorded a song called "[Fired Up, Ready To Go](#)." The brothers had help on the song from Seattle musical mainstays, including the Reverend Pat Wright and her Total Experience Gospel Choir and Pearl Jam drummer Matt Cameron.



Jon Bergevin, his daughter, Joy, and his wife, Julie, meet Edith Childs at the Democratic National Convention in Denver. Childs originated a key Barack



Joe Bergevin, the Rev. Patrinell Wright, Matt Cameron, Jake Bergevin, and Jon Bergevin gather at Key Arena for an Obama rally.

Obama they posted a video of the song's recording session on YouTube, which has now garnered almost 270,000 views. A week after the brothers put their song on the Internet, they were contacted by Obama campaign headquarters in Chicago, which used the song and its music video in several campaign pieces.

"Then one day they called and said, 'Hey, Barack is going to be at Key Arena. We were wondering if you could come and introduce your song,'" Bergevin said. "Next thing I know, I found myself in front of 24,000 people standing on stage waving at the crowd."

The rally at Key Arena only fueled the brothers' creative fire, and soon they'd decided to write and record a whole album dedicated to Obama. They finished it under the wire and were able to take 5,000

Obama campaign rally cry, "Fired up, ready to go!"

copies of their CD, "Seven Songs for America and One for the World," to the Democratic National Convention in Denver. There, Bergevin was able to meet a number of politicians and celebrities, and, in what he describes as one of the highlights of his busy year, he also met Edith Childs, the inspiration for the first song.

The release of their CD, along with the relationships they formed at the convention, generated a number of appearances as well as a phone call from a documentary maker in Texas. The filmmaker wanted to use music from the CD for a documentary set for release in Blockbuster stores nationwide called "Barack Obama: Who Is This Guy?" The brothers agreed, and three weeks later, the filmmaker called back to say Universal Pictures would be distributing the documentary worldwide in an extended form and calling it "Barack Obama: The Man and His Journey."

The documentary crew asked the brothers to record one more song for the film. The catch? They had only 10 days to finish the recording. Bergevin worked around the clock writing, orchestrating, and recording all of the instrumentation. That left just one last part to record before finishing the song—the choir.

The only available night for the singers to record the new piece named "I Am an American" was November 4. It was only fitting that Bergevin's months of sleepless nights, creative and political action, and unexpected new friendships came full circle on election night, with him standing on a conductor's podium before a 75-member choir.

In the studio, a nine-foot American flag hung on the wall behind the choir. The flag was the one presented to Bergevin's wife at her father's military funeral when she was nine years old. "It's a beautiful flag. She keeps it in a wooden box and never takes it out," Bergevin said. "She took it out that night."

The Reverend Pat Wright and her Total Experience Gospel Choir and friends sang their hearts out, he said, and midsession, someone came into the room and announced, "McCain just conceded."

"I thought I was dreaming. It was only eight o'clock," Bergevin said. "This group of people went absolutely bonkers."

The musicians took a break from recording to watch Obama's speech. "There were tears. It was very emotional," Bergevin said. Pat Wright "comes from pre-civil rights Texas, where African Americans had their own side of town. It was really meaningful for her especially. She said a group prayer with all 80 of us, our hands joined, and said, 'I never in a million years thought this would happen.'"

Bergevin said when they were finished recording, every single person gave him a hug on the way out. "It was almost right up there with a wedding or a child being born kind of experience, as far as emotions go," he said.

Though the election is over, life remains busy for the brothers. Sales of their CD are picking up online, which thrills Bergevin, because all profits from the album go to support the Reverend Wright's Seattle Artists foundation to help victims of Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi and Louisiana rebuild their homes.



"It's changed my life immensely. It's been an honor to work on something that we really believed in, and I personally have learned for myself that I have a lot more capability than I ever thought I had musically," Bergevin said. "My Microsoft work ethic has certainly helped me put my rump in the chair at 5:30 a.m. to finish string parts in my underwear."

Bergevin is a different person than he was a year ago. He's met governors, senators, and actors. He's recorded music that people all over the world are listening to. He's made unlikely friends and become



Jon Bergevin spent a memorable election night in the recording studio with a gospel choir recording a song called "I Am an American" for a Universal Pictures documentary on Barack Obama. When the election was called in Obama's favor, the room went "absolutely bonkers."

Jon Bergevin and Pearl Jam's Matt Cameron present their song, "Fired up, Ready To Go" at a Barack Obama speech at Key Arena.

politically active locally and nationally. The experiences of this election year have completely changed the landscape of his life, and Bergevin says there's no going back. "I feel like I've kind of expanded my life from being just a Microsoft software engineer who plays jazz every few months to someone who has gotten completely involved in the community," he said. "It's a different way of being now."

Visit the [Bergevin brothers' site](#).

See pictures of the brothers' election year adventures.

Watch "Fired Up, Ready To Go" the [music video](#) and the [making of the video](#).

Visit the Bergevin brothers' [MySpace page](#) and [YouTube page](#).

Read an [ABC news story](#) about the origin of Barak Obama's campaign battle cry, "Fired up, ready to go!"

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Anonymous Nov 13, 2008 / 3:49 PM

exciting that so many people supported our president elect... There were many songs made for Obama and all of them were great to hear... its even better to know someone from our company Microsoft contributed and made a song...

Anonymous Nov 13, 2008 / 3:39 PM

These are great songs and music. It's not easy to juggle a family and a work which demands hard deadlines and create music and share the enthusiasm among communities.

Fantastic job Jon, Keep the Fire up

Suzanne Hernandez Nov 13, 2008 / 3:38 PM

I am really excited that we have world renowned creativity in our company. Congratulations Jon! " Young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled, Americans have sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of red states and blue states, we have been and always will be the United States of America. - President-elect Barack Obama

Anonymous

Nov 13, 2008 / 3:28 PM

Great job Bergevin brothers! I am thrilled to see your involvement regardless of party affiliation. It is great to see people being inspired and involved.

Anonymous

Nov 13, 2008 / 3:27 PM

I'm sure there will be a human interest story in an upcoming MSW about someone who worked for the McCain campaign, and whose life and family was changed immensely by their involvement.

Anonymous

Nov 13, 2008 / 3:25 PM

Great Job, Jon. I wroked with you and glad to see the same enthusiasm in your work and in the outside world. Keep going !!!

Anonymous

Nov 13, 2008 / 2:48 PM

I dont see any Microsoft's political bias at all. It's all about what Jon did. I'm very proud to have Jon as Microsoft's employee I believe Jon did good job for America and World

Anonymous

Nov 13, 2008 / 2:14 PM

Gee, glad to see there is no bias, did the guys at MSNBS write this?

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3\\_95F5e-Ac](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3_95F5e-Ac)

Anonymous

Nov 13, 2008 / 2:08 PM

I initially looked at this article and the post with mixed thoughts. On one hand I am happy for the folks that had the opportunity to get recognized in their support of a political candidate and now President elect. On the other hand I don't support the Democratic Party and am against any support of them by the company I am a stockholder in. I also don't think it is good for a company to support the election of any candidate or a political position internally that would try and sway my positron. We should be neutral other then business related as another post states.

To the other Anonymous on this thread:

- 1) I am not sure this post represents a political stand on the part of MS for any party publically. It's an internal site so that addresses that point.
- 2) I think it's good that this article was posted after the election, so I don't think it affected a vote for or against anyone.

I do think we need to be careful about how we position political preference internally and externally. But I think the timing of this article (after the election) and the fact that it is internal only makes it ok for me.

So let just be happy for the folks on their day. Congrats to you!

Anonymous

Nov 13, 2008 / 12:04 PM

Anon @ 1015am...

Couldn't agree more!

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