



# JAREDEMERSON

By Josh Overstreet

**With a dream that focused on basketball as a career, Jared Emerson has traveled full circle, finding himself—and his purpose—in front of a canvas. And in front of a crowd.**

Right before the music starts, Jared Emerson stares at the blank canvas with an intense nervousness. But the minute his paint-coated fingers touch the canvas it all evaporates.

“I love the pressure and anxiety of a performance. I still get nervous right before I start. When I start, it vanishes. I love that moment,” said Emerson.

While Emerson has painted for most of his life, it wasn't what he had planned for his life when he was younger.

He grew up in Michigan and had dreams of being a professional basketball player and eventually playing at the Palace of Auburn Hills.

“I wanted to get some scholarship and make some money playing basketball, but I hurt my knee by the end of the first season in college,” Emerson said, “God just kind of changed my path.”

Looking back, he said the purpose behind his passion was inherently self-motivated.

He spent the next several years trying to find a path in life, moving to West Palm Beach and then coming to Greenville around 2004 for surgery on his damaged knee. There, he connected with people in Greenville who helped him find a path for himself through painting, which he had rekindled seriously in West Palm Beach.

“I did drawings since I was little,” Emerson said, “My first real painting was when I was 16.”

It was of a lighthouse, which hangs in his studio to this day—among other works.

The Upstate community provided an outlet for artists like Emerson early on—when Art Crossing at RiverPlace was developed, Emerson was one of the first group of artists to move into a studio. Now, he does all kinds of work and various styles from custom one-offs, to abstracts, to realism, oil, acrylic and charcoal, but perhaps what he is most widely known for is his performance art.

Emerson gives credit to Alan Etheridge and the Metropolitan Arts Council and the city of Greenville for encouraging and supporting the local arts community and give them the opportunity to do art.

“We are here just to create art and impact people and bring the community together.”

But even though he was creating art for the outside world, when he was approached about live speed painting, he was scared. His fear: doing art while being watched by hundreds—if not thousands—of people.

“For me, art and creativity was my own little world,” he says. With a laugh, he adds, “The truth is, I screw up every time I paint, I just hope nobody notices.”

Today, Emerson travels all over the world doing performance paintings. Churches, charities, weddings and—most recently—the halftime show of the Detroit Pistons and Chicago Bulls at the Palace of Auburn Hills.

“I always thought I would play basketball at the Palace of Auburn Hills, but God changed my plan,” he says. “But how cool was it being able to paint there?”

Emerson wants to be able to impact people, not only through his testimony, but to have a positive impact on the next generation by teaching kids to be creative, pursue their passions and find a good purpose to live for. Fewer than 10 percent of artists have the opportunity to make a living from their art, so for Emerson, artists also have to also be entrepreneurs.

Still, reaching out to everyone and making relationships is what Emerson wants to continue to strive towards. Under the brand concept E3, which stands for Performance, Products and People, he hopes to expand his brand and take a few other artists under his wing.

“I would love to be more involved here in Greenville and be involved in projects,” says Emerson. While there is only one Jared Emerson, “I can have guys available who can do what I do and have it part of my brand.”

Emerson also makes a point to have a wider availability for his work. From a custom, one-off kind of piece to smaller prints, Emerson tries to provide something for all walks of life and all incomes.

Because at the end of the day, he says, “Art needs to reach everyone.”



**Did you know?** Emerson has painted and met many celebrities including Tim Tebow, George Hincapie, Jerry Rice and Connor Shaw.