

NOVEMBER 2025

CrossCountry USA

magazine



The Living Legacy of
PEGGY INKS
Still Singing Just Over the Next Hill

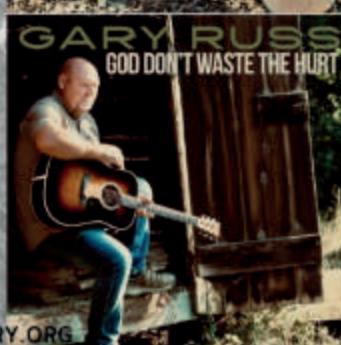
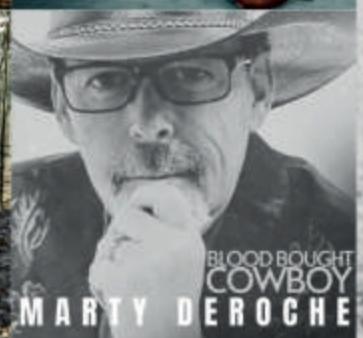
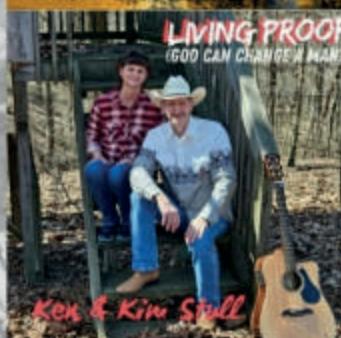
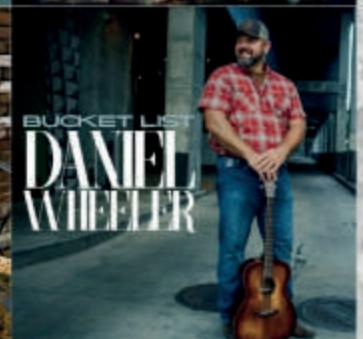
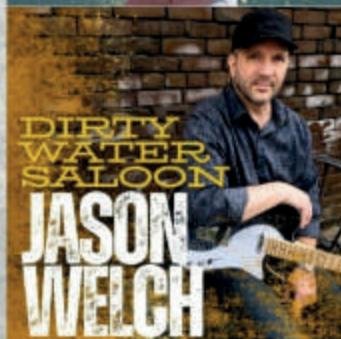
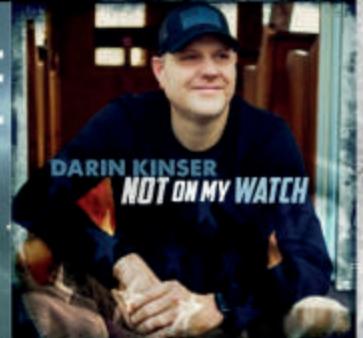
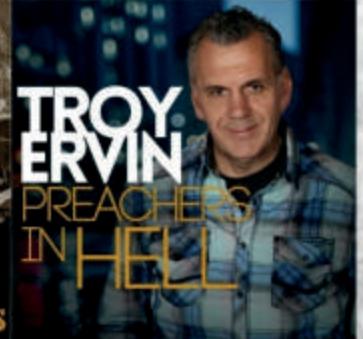
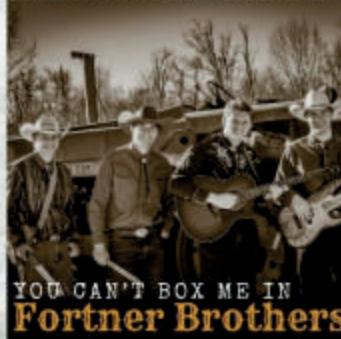
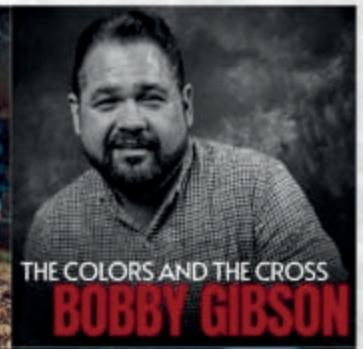
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NOVEMBER 2025

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From the Editor

November is upon us, bringing cooler weather and the celebration of Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving. I know in the last several weeks it has been a difficult time in our Country with so much division and tragedies. But there has also been a renewed spirit of revival as more people come to the realization that they need to draw closer to God.

Be thankful in all things no matter how big or small, through tragedies and triumphs, happy and sad times that we've endured throughout our daily lives. God has a purpose through all things, and He has seen everything we go through.

What are you thankful for? Our faith in God, family and friends, our life and our freedom. As the old song says, *Count Your Blessings*, but they are too numerous to count. We have so much to thank God for. There is a chorus to an old Gospel song that I have loved for decades but it's very true. *"I've got so much to thank Him for, so much to praise Him for, you see, He has been so good to me. And when I think of all He's done and where He's brought me from, I got so much to thank Him for."*

In this issue, we remember those who left a lasting impact in ministry and through their examples. We honor Country Gospel singer and minister David House who has been in this publication many times. David was a great friend to everyone in our genre and an encourager to many. Charlie Kirk's impact on the world was marked by his fervent advocacy for conservative and Christian values and youth engagement. His legacy continues to shape many lives worldwide.

The Grand Ole Opry turns 100 years old. We join the celebration by honoring "The Show That Made Country Music Famous."

We appreciate all our Veterans as we honor all the men and women who served and continue to serve. Thank you for your service. We wish you all a very blessed and Happy Thanksgiving. We are thankful for you all!

Robin

Robin Tanner, Managing Editor

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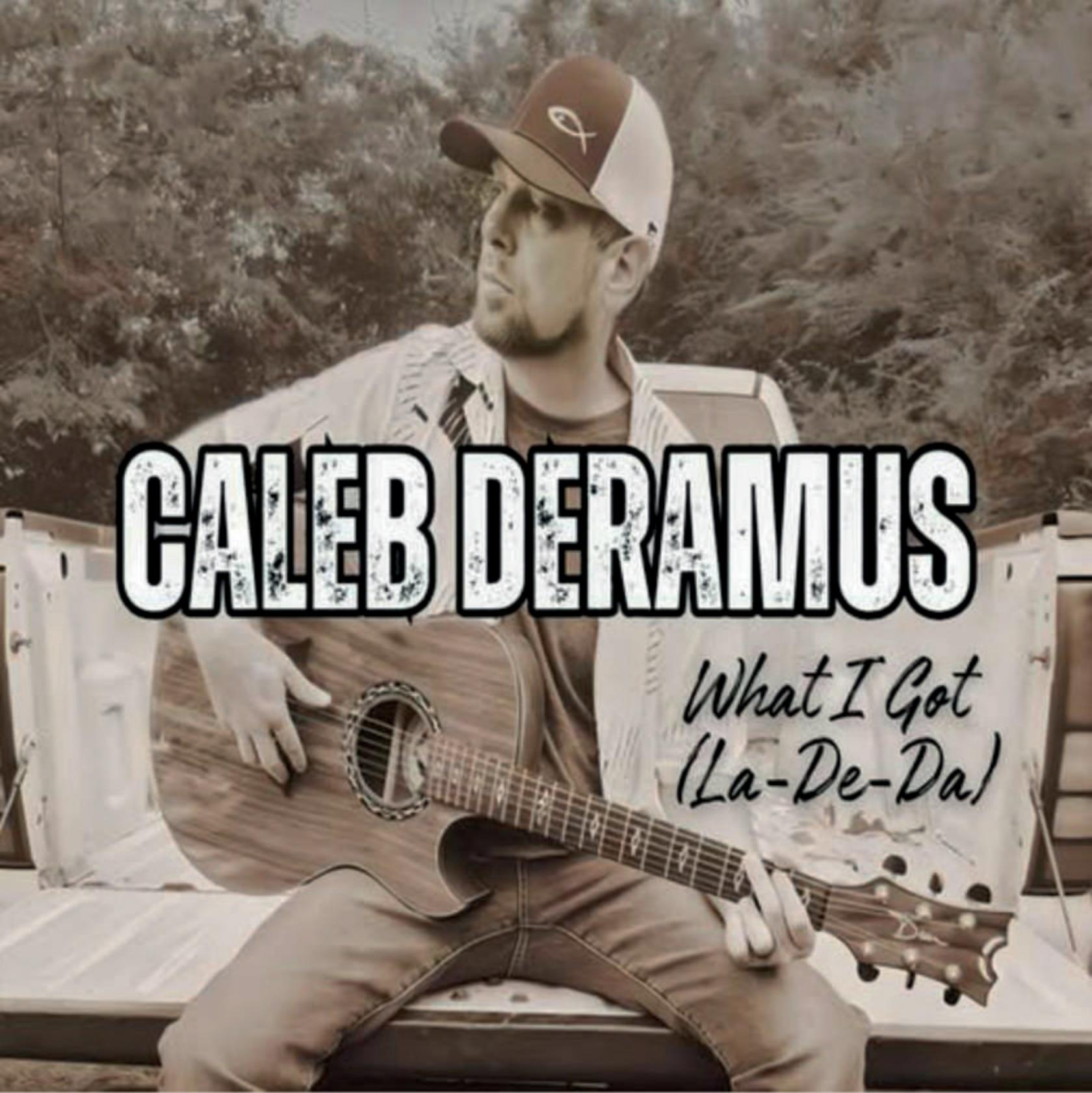
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I would like to thank all the pastors that have allowed me to minister and sing in their churches over the past 20+ years. I am available to minister through music and the Word. Ladies, men's or couple retreats. God has blessed me and I am so grateful for the gifts and talents he has bestowed on me.

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By Robin Tanner

COLTON HARRIS

Colton Harris has always known he had a calling on his life. God has been at the center of his life from the beginning. Born prematurely, Colton faced many obstacles especially in the NICU. Other than being very small, he thrived and overcame the odds against him. As he matured in his youth, Colton would grow into his God given talent and the call on his life that he always longed for. Even though he is young, his voice is seasoned with experience and maturity.

Growing up in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Colton has always shown interest in music, even at a young age. He says, "I would sing in front of church when I could, then I began showing interest in writing my own songs. I started taking guitar and voice lessons with Krystal and Brandon Jackson. We wrote some songs together and I had the opportunity to work with Cody McCarver, which has been amazing."

Colton had many artists and friends that shaped him as a young artist, including Morgan Wallen, Zach Williams, Mark Hall, John Schneider and Ernest. "Ernest is a great songwriter. Cody McCarver has really helped bring out my true sound, so I give him a lot of credit. We are close family friends with Sawyer Brown, and going to their shows and learning their songs, and sound help influence me as well."

He was born thirteen weeks early and spent several weeks in the NICU. Around the age of five, Colton asked his mom if she remembered him living in a box. Colton had never been told about his time in the NICU or seen photos of his time there. It was in the NICU where Colton had a vivid experience with God. "I was never told that I was born early or in the NICU. At a young age I told my parents that God came to me in that box when I had all those wires and tubes attached to me. I told them that God spoke to me and told me not to be afraid, I was gonna be ok. He told me that he had big plans for me. He wants me to use my voice for Him, and I stand firm on that." Colton told his parents that he knew that God wanted to use him to spread the Gospel but wasn't sure what that meant. At age twelve, he wanted to use his voice to lead people to Jesus.

There was something more he wanted. His parents got him to a studio to record a couple of songs, and he knew this was what he was called to do. Colton continued his lessons and songwriting with help from his music instructors and did some more recording. The family prayed for God to guide his



steps to where his message could be heard by many. Colton was led to an open door at Studio Dunlap and Cody McCarver, not only as a producer but a mentor.

Colton released his debut single, *Come On In*. He wrote the song with his instructors Brandon and Krystal Jackson. It was produced by Cody McCarver. Colton's music video for *Come On In* was produced and directed at Studio Dunlap in Dunlap Tennessee.

Now fifteen years old, Colton has experienced some highlights and he is thrilled at upcoming opportunities and events headed his way. Colton mentions, "Getting to compete in the Sound Of Small Town America Tour. I performed in Leitchfield Kentucky. Then I will get to perform on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry house in 2026, possibly twice. I am just getting started, but I'm hoping to work hard enough and earn an ICMA award this coming year."

This young artist's mission in music and ministry is reaching the lost and loving people like Jesus, one song at a time. "I want to continue to write music, travel where God takes me and spread God's word. I'm willing to work with all different artists and reach as many people as I can," shares Colton.

Be sure to experience a concert with Colton Harris. "What fans can expect at a concert with me is church. We are gonna play music, but we are gonna have fun and give all the glory to God."

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The Wounded Blue

Never Forgotten, Never Alone

Staff, Cross Country USA

We stand with the badge. We back the blue. And this month, we shine the spotlight on the men and women who wear the uniform - not just in moments of triumph, but in seasons of sacrifice. We honor those who've been wounded in the line of duty, those who've laid down their lives, and those who continue to serve with courage and conviction.

At the heart of this tribute is The Wounded Blue, America's only national organization dedicated to supporting law enforcement officers injured or disabled - physically, mentally, or emotionally - while serving their communities. Their mission is clear: Never Forgotten. Never Alone.

Since its founding, The Wounded Blue has impacted more than 16,000 officers nationwide through its peer support program, connecting wounded officers with fellow law enforcement professionals who understand their journey. From emergency aid to advocacy, from resilience training to emotional recovery, The Wounded Blue stands in the gap for those who stood the watch.

Their flagship event, the National Law Enforcement Survival Summit, held this September in Las Vegas, equipped officers and families with tools for healing and hope. And now, the momentum continues.

On November 5, 2025, The Wounded Blue will host Never Forgotten, Never Alone - A Night for The Wounded Blue at The Nashville Palace. This benefit concert will unite artists, fans, and community partners in support of officers injured in the line of duty.

The evening will feature performances by Mark Wills, John Conlee, Ronnie McDowell, Daryl Worley, John Berry, and more, paired with powerful testimonies from the front lines. It's more than music. It's ministry.

To extend the impact beyond one night, The Wounded Blue is launching a \$9.11 monthly giving tier, aiming to recruit 1,000+ supporters by year's end. The symbolic pledge fuels peer-advocate support, critical assistance, and advocacy for officers coping with trauma.

"This night is about standing shoulder-to-shoulder with those who stood the watch for us," said Lt. Randy Sutton (Ret.), Founder & Chairman. "And a \$9.11 monthly pledge lets every American say, 'I've got your six,' all year long."



Honorees Issiah Astorga and Araceli Hernandez hold their Citizen's Award for Valor plaques alongside The Wounded Blue Founder & Chairman Lt. Randy Sutton (Ret.) and Las Cruces Police personnel following the Oct. 8 ceremony at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum (Las Cruces, N.M.).

Photo courtesy of The Wounded Blue & LCPD.

Lt. Randy Sutton is no stranger to sacrifice. A 34-year law enforcement veteran, he served with the Princeton (NJ) Police Department and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, retiring as one of LVMPD's most decorated officers. Through The Wounded Blue, he leads a national mission to ensure no injured or disabled officer - or their family - is ever left behind.

On October 8, 2025, The Wounded Blue presented its highest civilian honor: The Citizen's Award for Valor, to Issiah Astorga and Araceli Hernandez at a banquet held at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum.

The couple's heroism unfolded on February 11, 2024, when they witnessed a violent attack on Las Cruces Police Department Officer Jonah Hernandez. Without hesitation, Astorga neutralized the assailant and attempted life-saving measures on Jonah. Though the officer's injuries proved fatal, their actions embodied the highest ideals of courage, compassion, and community.

"Issiah and Araceli demonstrated the kind of selfless courage that defines true American heroism," said Lt. Sutton. "Their bravery will forever stand as a beacon of hope for law enforcement and the communities we serve."

The Las Cruces Police Department joined The Wounded Blue in honoring the couple. In a statement, LCPD said: "Issiah and Araceli are worthy of this award - and much more. They went above and beyond what ordinary citizens might have done to defend and save a peace officer. For that, they have gained the genuine approbation of the men and women of the Las Cruces Police Department, and law enforcement personnel nationwide. Thank you, Issiah and Araceli."

The Wounded Blue's mission is not just about recovery, it's about remembrance. It's about ensuring that every wounded officer knows they are seen, valued, and supported. It's about honoring heroes and equipping communities to stand with those who serve.

Learn more or join the mission at TheWoundedBlue.org.

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POLLY HOLLIDAY • DAVID LEE SMITH CHARLIE KIRK • BRETT JAMES CORNELIUS



Polly Holliday

July 2, 1937 – September 9, 2025

Born July 2, 1937, in Jasper, Alabama, Polly Holliday studied music at what is now the University of Montevallo and pursued graduate work at Florida State University. She taught school and honed her craft in repertory theaters before arriving on Broadway in 1974.

Holliday joined "Alice" in 1976 as Florence Jean "Flo" Castleberry, a brassy, big-hearted waitress with perfect timing. Her flirtatious character became a fan favorite and led to a spinoff, the two-season sitcom "Flo." She won Golden Globes in 1979 and 1980 for the role and earned four Primetime Emmy nominations, three for "Alice" and one for "Flo."

Her TV work ranged far beyond Mel's Diner. She played Rose Nylund's sister Lily on "The Golden Girls"



Polly Holliday as 'Flo' on the 1970s hit sitcom, Alice

and recurred as Jill Taylor's mother, Lillian, on "Home Improvement." She later co-starred in the legal drama "The Client."

On film, Holliday was unforgettable as ruthless mogul Ruby Deagle in "Gremlins," winning the Saturn Award for 'Best Supporting Actress' in 1985. Other credits included "All the President's Men," "Mrs. Doubtfire," and "The Parent Trap" (1998).

She returned often to the stage. Holliday starred on Broadway in "Arsenic and Old Lace" and earned a Tony nomination as Big Mama in the 1990 revival of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

Despite her fame, she led a private life. She was deeply involved with Grace Church in Greenwich Village, helping support its choral society and a chamber series, and she never married.

Polly Holliday, the Emmy-nominated, Golden Globe-winning actress who turned the waitress Flo's sassy saying, "Kiss my grits!" into a national catchphrase on CBS's "Alice," died September 9, 2025, at her home in New York City. She was 88.



David Lee House

January 10, 1946 - September 9, 2025

David House's legacy echoes through every chord he strummed, every soul he touched, and every story he told. His life was a Gospel in motion - faithful, fearless, and full of grace.

David Lee House wasn't just a Country Gospel singer - he was a vessel of truth wrapped in melody. Born on January 10, 1946, in Whitesboro, Texas, David's music was never about performance, it was about presence. Whether singing in a church pew, a prison yard, or a remote African village, his voice carried the same message: Jesus saves, and grace is real.

He was honored as the ICGMA 'Male Vocalist of the Year' in 2022, a recognition that barely scratched the surface of his impact. His songs weren't just sung, they were lived. They bore the fingerprints of a man who walked with the broken, wept with the weary, and rejoiced with the redeemed.

David's guitar wasn't just an instrument, it was a pulpit. Through it, he preached sermons of mercy and hope. His songwriting blended humor, humility, and holiness, drawing listeners into stories that felt like home. He was a gifted storyteller, known for weaving laughter into lament and turning everyday moments into eternal truths.

David's ministry was as expansive as his heart. He served faithfully in the KAIROS Prison Ministry, bringing light into the darkest places. In February 1997, fellow minister William Ketchem recalled David's presence in the prison as "a touch of heaven in a place that desperately needed it".

His evangelistic reach extended to Africa, where he shared the Gospel in villages untouched by modernity but deeply moved by his authenticity. He didn't just preach, he listened, loved, and lingered.

Married to Barbara House for 61 years, David was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. His family was his first congregation, and his home was a sanctuary of joy and reverence. He leaves behind a legacy not only of music but of generational faithfulness.

Ross Sims, representing New Horizon Walk #48, posted a tribute shortly after David's passing, honoring his role in spiritual formation and community outreach.

He was described as a man whose "passion for life and unwavering faith touched the hearts of many, creating lasting memories that will be cherished by all who knew him".

David Lee House passed into glory on September 9, 2025. His funeral was held at Grace Church of Ovilla on September 16, where friends and family gathered not to mourn a loss, but to celebrate a life poured out for the Gospel.

His story doesn't end - it multiplies. In every prison chapel, every African village, every living room where his music plays, David's legacy lives on. He was a watchman, a worshiper, and a witness. And now, he sings in the presence of the One he loved most.



Charlie Kirk

October 14, 1993 - September 10, 2025

Born Charles James Kirk on October 14, 1993, in Arlington Heights, Illinois, he attended Wheeling High School and later studied at Harper College before leaving to pursue activism.

Kirk co-founded Turning Point USA in 2012 at the age of 18, launching the conservative advocacy group as a shoestring campus effort and building it into a well-funded national organization. He later spun it off into affiliated groups, including Turning Point Action and Turning Point Faith.

As Kirk's profile rose, he became a widely known media figure. He hosted "The Charlie Kirk Show" on talk radio, appeared regularly on conservative outlets, and addressed such major political conferences as the 2024 Republican National Convention and the 2022 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). His books include "Campus Battlefield" (2018), "The MAGA Doctrine" (2020), and "Right Wing Revolution" (2024).

A prominent ally of President Donald Trump, Kirk focused on campus activism, youth engagement, and faith-based organizing. He credited early mentorship from the late Bill Montgomery, who helped him launch Turning Point USA.

Charlie Kirk died September 10, 2025, after being shot while speaking to a crowd at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. He was 31. Kirk married Erika Frantzve in 2021. He is survived by his wife and their two children.

Charlie Kirk's passing sent shockwaves through political and faith communities nationwide, but his legacy continues to resonate deeply. As the founder of Turning Point USA, Kirk empowered a generation of young Americans to embrace conservative values, faith, and personal responsibility.

His bold witness for Christ and unapologetic defense of family and freedom sparked a revival of church attendance, Bible reading, and spiritual reflection across the country. Even in grief, his widow Erika Kirk's message, "Go to church," became a viral call to faith, echoing Charlie's lifelong mission to bring people closer to God.





Brett James Cornelius

June 5, 1968 – September 18, 2025

Born in Columbia, Missouri, James grew up in the Oklahoma City area. His early life was on a trajectory toward medicine, not music. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Baylor University in 1991. Following his father, who was a physician, James enrolled in medical school at the University of Oklahoma. After about a year, however, his intense passion for music led him to drop out and move to Nashville to pursue a career as a recording artist. Though he initially signed a record deal and released a self-titled debut album in 1995, he quickly realized his true calling was in the writer's room.

James accumulated more than 27 No. 1 Country singles and was named ASCAP 'Country Songwriter of the Year' in both 2006 and 2010. He was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2020.

Brett James built an extraordinary legacy as one of Country music's most consistent and versatile hitmakers, penning an incredible 27 number-one singles throughout his career. His breakthrough began in 2000 when Jessica Andrews took his song *Who I Am* to the top of the charts, followed quickly by Martina McBride's inspirational hit *Blessed*. His career reached a major turning point with Carrie Underwood's debut single *Jesus, Take the Wheel*, which not only topped the Country charts but earned him the Grammy Award for 'Best Country Song' in 2006, and became a defining Christian crossover anthem.

James was a frequent and successful collaborator with Kenny Chesney, co-writing a string of No. 1 songs including the signature vacation tune *When the Sun Goes Down* (with Uncle Kracker), *Out Last Night*, and *Reality*. Other chart-toppers that defined the sound of 21st-century Country music include Jason Aldean's emotional hit *The Truth*, Dierks Bentley's deeply personal *I Hold On*, Rodney Atkins' patriotic anthem *It's America*, and Scotty McCreery's debut single *I Love You This Big*. His versatility allowed his compositions to cross genres, landing major cuts with Pop artists like Kelly Clarkson with *Mr. Know It All* and Bon Jovi with *Till We Ain't Strangers Anymore*.

In addition to songwriting, James worked as a respected record producer for artists including Josh Gracin and Kip Moore. He was also a passionate advocate for songwriters' rights, serving on the boards of organizations like the Country Music Association and The Recording Academy.

The Country music songwriter Brett James sadly passed away on September 18, 2025, at the age of 57, in a tragic plane crash. He was killed alongside his wife, Melody Carole Wilson, and her daughter, Meryl Maxwell Wilson, when the small aircraft went down near Franklin, North Carolina. He is survived by his adult children from his first marriage.



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THE HEALING POWER OF MUSIC

Songs Honoring Charlie Kirk's Life and Legacy

Staff, Cross Country USA

Lyrics set to music have a way of reaching into the soul of the brokenhearted, grief-stricken and through difficult times. Songs can give us hope, increase our faith and give us purpose to continue our daily walk through our life. Naturally, after the passing of Christian and conservative activist Charlie Kirk, many musicians were compelled to write songs that conveyed their emotions, and those songs are resonating with listeners everywhere.

Charlie Kirk was a prominent conservative activist who stated that his Christian faith was the most important thing in his life. While he was professionally known for founding Turning Point USA, he later emphasized his faith more, increasingly viewing his purpose as driving a God-centered revival and encouraging Christians to stand for "biblical truth." His personal goal, as he stated, was to be remembered for his courage and his faith.

Former Dukes of Hazzard star John Schneider released a new song in tribute to the late Charlie Kirk, and in an interview, he says the song is a "battle cry" for conservatives. *Charlie's Words* was released a little more than a week after Kirk's death. The song is a testament to what Schneider sees as Kirk's legacy after his untimely death at the age of 31.

strength to people to get up on their feet / Speaking loud, speaking proud / With a voice God gave to them / I'll tell you now, before we're through / They've no idea what they've done / Or what we'll do / Me and you / With Charlie's words," he sings in the chorus.



John Schneider
Charlie's Words

"Charlie's words broke through the barricades / Charlie's words cut through the dark / Charlie's words gave silenced people a purpose and a spark / He spoke of me, he spoke of you / He spoke of them and us and we / Charlie's words gave



Cole Swindell
Make Heaven Crowded

During an interview with Fox News Digital, Schneider was asked if the song was a call to action. "I think we've already been called to action," he said. "I think this song is certainly a tribute to a wonderful guy. It's a song for those who've already been called to action. So now it's kind of a battle cry."

"It's a call to battle," he added. "But it's a battle of wits. It's a battle of intelligence. It's the battle of good versus evil. I mean, I truly do believe we've been involved in a battle of good versus evil in the last four or five years. And it amazes me how people can't see that."

Schneider says he will donate the money from the release to Turning Point USA. The song and an accompanying music video are publicly available on platforms like YouTube.

Cole Swindell, a Grammy-nominated multi-Platinum headlining superstar, but more importantly a new husband and dad, released *Make Heaven Crowded* on all digital service providers after enormous urging and requests from fans, fellow artists, songwriters and friends. *Make Heaven Crowded* was written by Swindell, Greylan James, Joel Hutsell, Blake Pendergrass and produced by James and Zach Abend.

"Being a new dad with a fresh perspective on the world, I was inspired by Erika's [Kirk] speech," recalls Swindell. "A phrase I had heard before, but I hadn't heard it in a moment like that. It literally stopped me in my tracks and ultimately moved me to write *Make Heaven Crowded*. The heartbreak I felt, and still feel, for her and their kids was so heavy thinking about my wife and baby girl. I knew I had to get those feelings out of my heart and head and down on paper. But when I released a social clip of performing a few of the lyrics, the response was unlike any reaction I've ever had to a song."

"It's truly amazing what music is able to do, especially when real life inspires it," he continues. "Writing songs has always been something that has helped me express thoughts and feelings and I don't know if folks know how much it helps me when it connects, and I know I am not alone in those same fears and feelings. This may be the most important song of my career, and I'm ok with that."

Country singer Jeff Bates has returned with his latest song in the Turning Point USA founder's honor. *Good Man Going Home - Charlie's Song* is available for streaming and also features a lyric video.

"The moment I heard about Charlie, I was heartbroken and sick to my stomach," Bates says. "Then I got angry enough to ask God, 'Why? How can you let this happen?' But my faith already leads me to believe that Charlie is being welcomed into his new heavenly home with much rejoicing, even as we who are left behind are still grieving with broken hearts at the death of a good man. I knew I had to get that into a song immediately!"



Jeff Bates
Good Man Going Home

Bates, whose hit songs include *The Love Song* and *Long Slow Kisses*, co-wrote the newly released tune with Jason Brownie, Nick Autry and Randall Fowler. "That day, I had a co-write with Nick, Randall and Jason," Bates explains. "We all felt the same. We had to put what we were feeling into a song and Nick mentioned he had a title, *Good Man Going Home*, and I knew that was it! I started spitting out lines and then everybody else joined in and the song practically wrote itself!"

Bates is donating a portion of the song's proceeds to the late Kirk's Turning Point USA. "I believe no human being should ever have their life taken because of what they think or believe," Bates continues. "This is not about left or right or politics at all. This is a long ongoing battle between good and evil."



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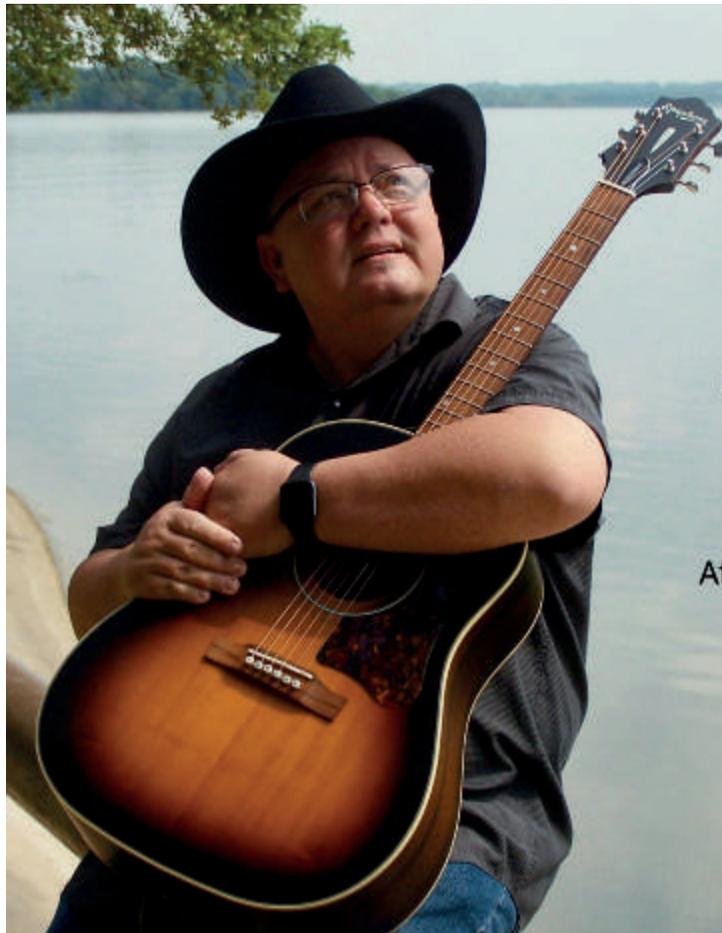
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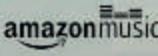


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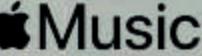
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The Story Behind the Song

Staff, Cross Country USA

I SAW A MIRACLE TODAY

Written and Recorded by Michael Ray Fain

Some people say we don't see miracles happening much anymore. Maybe they're just not looking hard enough. Miracles are happening every day! The greatest miracle is when someone accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. He took the stripes for healing over every miracle, spiritual, physical, emotional or financial. Michael Ray Fain's latest single, *I Saw A Miracle Today* is based on a true event about the miraculous healing of Jesus Christ.

Singer/Songwriter Michael Ray Fain tells us the amazing story and the inspiration for the song. "*I Saw A Miracle Today*, or *Lauren's song* as I often refer to it, is about Lauren's story and God's love," he says. "Lauren Worley, a sweet young lady from my hometown, a senior in high school, was just a few miles from home one evening when she was hit head on by a drunk driver and sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI). After being airlifted to Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital, she was only given a 1% chance of survival."



Michael says he wrote the song through the eyes of Lauren's father, Chris. "He would post daily on Facebook, giving updates and asking for prayers for his little girl. This went on for months, and I anticipated seeing those daily updates, and it was amazing to watch God's miracle unfold."

Michael saw his hometown come together in prayer and support for Lauren and her family. "This support and love spread throughout the town, Facebook community and beyond. There were thousands praying for a miracle. Lauren fought hard and it was a long journey, but God answered those prayers, and today, Lauren is a beautiful walking Miracle and Testimony!"

Lauren's story has also been televised on the Christian Broadcasting Network's, *The 700 Club*. Michael shares, "I pray this song encourages and reminds us all of the power of prayer and most importantly, the love that God has for each and every one!"

I Saw A Miracle Today

(V-1)

*Some have made the claim miracles don't exist.
Jesus was just a man, and heaven is a myth.
He didn't calm the storm on the Sea of Galilee,
and he didn't walk on water.
But let me tell you what I've seen.*

(Chorus)

*I saw a miracle today.
Ten hours in ICU,
Ten thousand hometown Angels praying
and I could feel them in that room.
I saw a miracle today.*

(V-2)

*I've heard unbelievers say
the Words in red aren't true;
That the Angel in Acts 5:19
didn't set the Apostles loose.
They don't want to hear Jesus healed
the deaf and mute.; That He raised his close friend Lazarus
from the dead, but I'm telling you.*

(Chorus)

*I saw a miracle today.
Ten days by her side,
an Angel came and whispered peace,
my baby opened her eyes.
I saw a miracle today.*

(Bridge)

*When you're down to your last prayer
and you don't know what to do.
Keep your faith, praise His Name,
Jesus will come through.*

(Chorus)

*I saw a miracle today, my little girl had a smile,
when she walked out of that hospital, all I could do was cry.
I saw a miracle today, God was there in every sign,
when we crossed that state line highway,
"Love Like Lauren" was seen for miles.
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today.*

Pastor *Jonathan*
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Texoma Gospel Music Association Hosts 2025 Fall Gathering

Staff, TGMA

The Texoma Gospel Music Association (TGMA) held its 2025 Fall Gathering on October 10 - 11 at The ROC in Sulphur Springs, Texas. This annual event brought together 30 singers, groups, and musicians from ten states - plus one international member from Mexico - reflecting TGMA's expanding reach beyond its original Texas-Oklahoma roots.

Founded in 1977 in Denison, Texas, TGMA began as part of the International Country Gospel Music Association (ICGMA), co-founded by the late Dr. Billy Wayne Holcomb. Dr. Holcomb also established TGMA, laying a foundation that continues to foster fellowship, worship, and musical excellence.

This year's Gathering was dedicated to the memory of Bro. David Lee House, a beloved board member and TGMA Praise & Worship Leader. His legacy was honored through heartfelt tributes and performances of his original songs. Artists such as John Penney (Georgia) and David Lemons (Texas) shared selections from David's catalog, while his daughter Traci Child deeply moved attendees by joining Lemons in a special rendition of *Come Sit With Me A While*.

The 2025 TGMA t-shirts featured David House's image alongside the title of a cherished TGMA anthem, "We Should Be Shouting." Several members of the House family were present, adding a poignant layer of remembrance to the weekend.

TGMA leadership includes President Mary Fay Jackson, Executive Vice President Bill Baker, and Vice President Randall Christy. Buddy and Ina Gore continue to serve faithfully as board members, alongside a dedicated team of volunteers and media personnel who help bring each Gathering to life.

www.TexomaGospel.com



John Penney, Dwayne Farrow, and David Lemons



Heart & Soul Quartet with Mary Fay Jackson (center)



**Ina & Buddy Gore
with Bill Baker**



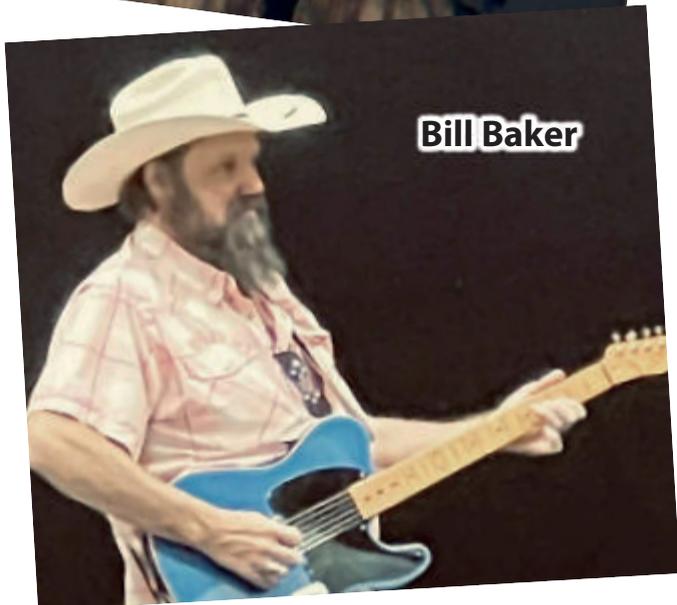
**Joy Roberts, Mary
Fay Jackson, Ina Gore**



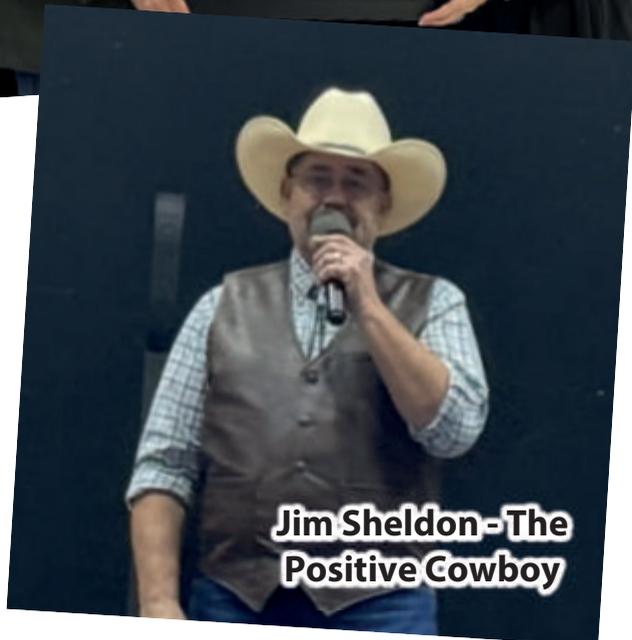
Marlene Pelt



**Johnathan Bond and
Mary Fay Jackson**



Bill Baker



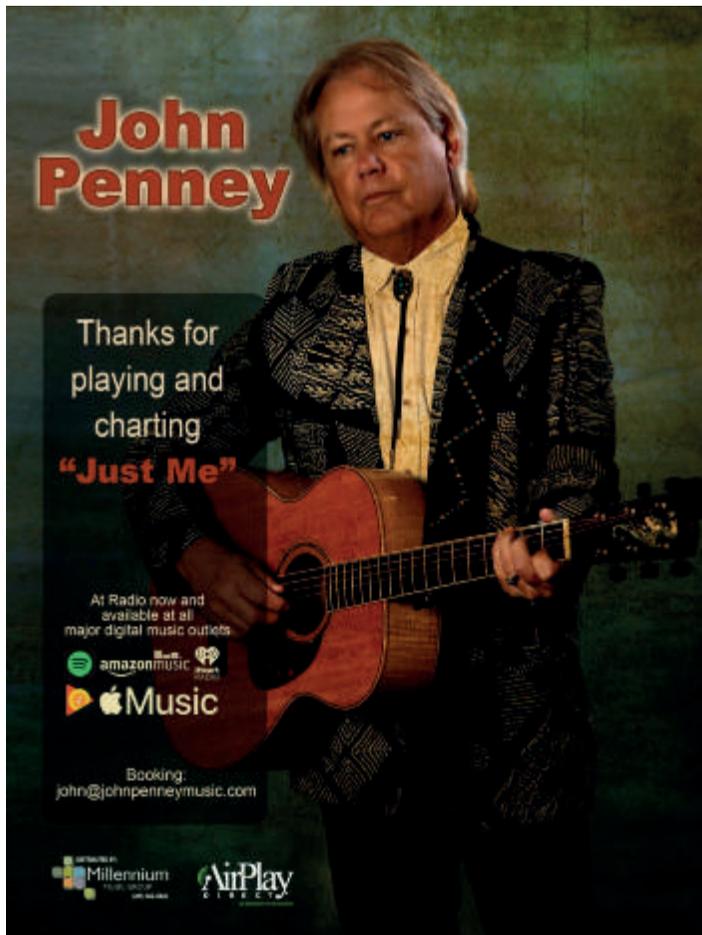
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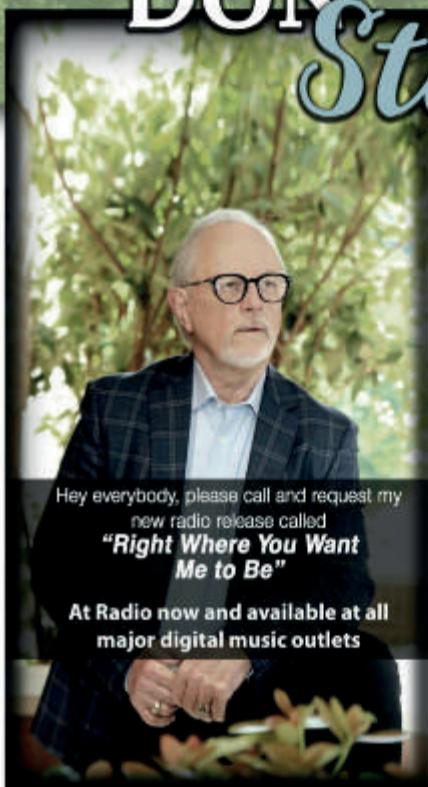
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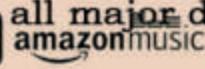
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The Living Legacy of
PEGGY INKS
Still Singing Just Over the Next Hill

By Robin Tanner

Photos by Keshia Ambergay

She's not just a Gospel singer. She's a living landmark.

At 94 years young, Mrs. Peggy Inks - affectionately known as the "Country Gospel Sweetheart" - continues to shine with the same radiant joy, downhome charm, and unwavering faith that have defined her more than four-decade journey in Christian music. Whether she's harmonizing with her sisters, playing piano at a Hall of Fame induction, or simply greeting friends with her signature wit and warmth, Peggy's presence is a ministry all its own.

From Coal Oil Lamps to Country Gospel Lights

Born Peggy Cooper in the hills of Sandy Flat, Whitley County, Kentucky, her story begins in a humble two-room wooden house lit by coal oil lamps. "My daddy was milking a cow one morning when he heard a baby crying," she recalls with a chuckle. "I guess he ran to the house because he knew mother was expecting!"

The first girl among three older brothers and two younger sisters, Jane and Mary Jo, Peggy grew up surrounded by music and faith. Her mother, Ethel Cooper, taught herself piano and encouraged the girls to sing. Together, they became The Cooper Sisters, harmonizing at church, school, and even on WNOX's Mid-Day Merry Go Round and Archie Campbell's TV and radio show.

After her sisters married and moved away, Peggy stepped into solo ministry in 1975, though she never imagined she'd be a soloist. Her voice, however, carried the conviction of someone who had walked with Jesus through every season. She balanced her music career with work as a lab and X-ray

technician, EMT, and devoted wife to Donald Inks, raising two daughters while singing the Gospel.

Her original songs - *Just Over The Next Hill*, *What Kind Of Games Do Children Play In Heaven*, *Jesus Is My Best Friend*, and *Ain't No Denominations In Heaven* - found radio success and resonated with audiences across the country. But it was *I Ain't No Spring Chicken Anymore* that became her most requested hit, opening the World Chicken Festival year after year.

Peggy's voice and style have drawn comparisons to Kitty Wells, Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton, and especially Loretta



Lynn. "I've always been compared to Loretta," she says. "It was an honor to record my favorite Loretta Lynn songs." That tribute album cemented her nickname: The Loretta Lynn of Gospel Music.

Candlelight in a Dark World

Among her many accolades, one stands out: the Candlelight Award from Music City Christian Fellowship, presented at the Grand Ole Opry House during the 39th Annual Sunday Mornin' Country show. Engraved with Matthew 5:16, "For letting your light shine in a dark world," the award honored Peggy's life not just as a singer, but as a beacon of faith.

She shared the stage with legends like Jeanie Seely, LuLu Roman, and Cowboy Joe Babcock, and has served faithfully on the Fellowship's board alongside her husband Don.

A Marriage Built on Ministry

Peggy and Don Inks recently celebrated 61 years of marriage - indeed a testament to enduring love and shared purpose. "Don is my biggest fan," Peggy says. "I couldn't do this without his support." Though health challenges have slowed their travels, the couple still surprises friends by showing up at churches and conventions, offering encouragement and joy wherever they go.

Their appearance at this year's Gospel Music Fanfair in Fayette, Alabama was a highlight for many. "Peggy has been part of Fanfair since the beginning," one attendee said. "Seeing her again was like seeing family."

A Hall of Fame Moment

This past May, at the North America Country Music Association International (NACMAI) event in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, Peggy was honored for over 25 years of membership. Though she wasn't singing, she played two songs on the piano, escorted on and off stage by none other than William Lee Golden and Chris Golden of the Oak Ridge Boys.

Still Singing for the Lord

Peggy recently re-released *Just Over The Next Hill*. The song, co-written with Junior Meadors from Williamsburg, Kentucky, originally played on radio in 1975. And at 94, she's still singing for the Lord. "My prayer is you will be blessed and get saved and go to Heaven," she says.

Her life is a melody of grace, grit, and Gospel truth. And as long as there's breath in her lungs, Peggy Inks will keep letting her light shine - just over the next hill.



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CrossCountry Report

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MUSIC NEWS & SCOOPS

Vince Gill Signs 'Lifetime' Record Contract With MCA Records



(L-R): MCA's Mike Harris and Rob Femia, Larry Fitzgerald, Vince Gill, MCA's Katie McCartney and Stephanie Wright

Photo Credit: Chris Hollo

Vince Gill has signed a lifetime recording deal with MCA, continuing the decades-long partnership between the two. As part of the deal, Gill will release an EP each month for the next year.

The EP series titled "50 Years From Home" will feature both new music and select catalog tracks that go along with the project's theme. The first EP, "50 Years From Home: I Gave You Everything I Had," was released on October 17. The project includes double-Platinum *Go Rest High on That Mountain*.

"Vince has been a major part of the MCA family for decades," says Mike Harris, President & CEO, MCA. "This lifetime agreement reflects our unwavering commitment to supporting his artistic vision and providing him artistic freedom while ensuring his legacy continues to grow."

"I'm feeling the most creative I've ever felt in my career these last few years," shares Gill. "I've collected a treasure trove of songs and with my friends and partners at MCA we've come up with a way to release all this new music. It's a partnership that's lasted 36 years and I'm grateful for it."

"MCA Records has been Vince's home since early in his career, and now he knows their partnership will endure into the future," adds Gill's longtime manager Larry Fitzgerald. "Vince's fans wanting his music won't have to look any further than MCA to find it. My relationship with Vince began 41 years ago and I'm thrilled to stand with him at this important moment."

Alan Jackson Announces His Final Show

Plans have been announced for Alan Jackson's last full-length concert of his touring career. In a show called "Last Call: One More for the Road – The Finale," the Country Music Hall of Fame member will perform for over 50,000 people on Saturday, June 27, 2026, at Nashville's Nissan Stadium, home of the Tennessee Titans.

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Photo: David McClister

An all-star lineup of artists is set to join Jackson to celebrate his career and legacy. Luke Bryan, Eric Church, Luke Combs, Riley Green, Cody Johnson, Miranda Lambert, Jon Pardi, Carrie Underwood, Keith Urban and Lee Ann Womack will all perform at the event, with more to be announced.

"We just felt like we had to end it all where it all started for me, and that's in Nashville - Music City - where Country music lives," Jackson says, echoing the sentiment he offered when announcing an end to his road career this past spring.

At a May concert in Milwaukee, Jackson announced the end of his touring career, surprising many when he told the sellout crowd, "This is my last road show."

"It's been a long, sweet ride. It started 40 years ago," he went on to explain. "I've really lived the American dream for sure - I'm so blessed."

Throughout his touring career, Jackson took his music from coast-to-coast countless times. He crossed Canada from sea-to-sea and even made his way to such places as Australia, Brazil and Europe. His "Last Call: One More for the Road Tour," which began in 2022 and continued through this past spring, found the Country legend playing to enthusiastic audiences at sellout and capacity concerts.



'Everything That Glitters (Is Not Gold)' - Luke Bryan Joins The Late Dan Seals for Duet of Indelible Classic

A new duets project from record label Melody Place launches with Country superstar Luke Bryan joining the late Dan Seals on his 1986 chart-topper *Everything That Glitters (Is Not Gold)*, co-written by Seals and Bob McDill. The song, produced by Seals' longtime producer Kyle Lehning pays homage to one of Country music's truest voices, sixteen years after his untimely passing.

"When I think of all time iconic songs, this one definitely comes top of mind," Luke Bryan said. "Dan was an artist I had on repeat and actually still do. I sang this song when I was back in Georgia and now to be here and paired with him on this new release is just unbelievable."

Respected music critic Robert K. Oermann summed it up best on MusicRow.com, saying, "The tender, classic story song scores again in this new duet. It's drawn from a collection of collaborations that aims to keep his memory alive. Amen to that."



Photo: Dan Seals Estate / Jim Wright

Dan Seals occupied a unique spot in music history, perhaps complicating how to properly tell his story. The Texas-native rose to fame with a series of Pop Rock hits as one half of the duo England Dan & John Ford Coley before settling in Nashville for a successful solo career yielding an astonishing nine consecutive and eleven total number one hits on the Country music charts. He was one of the most successful artists to cross-over to Country music, and that can likely be



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attributed to his ability to tell rural American stories through his songwriting while making them palatable to a wider audience.

Dan Seals' music has been described as "building bridges that led to what it would ultimately become in the golden age to come." – Country Universe. In 2024, this outlet also called this song "an astonishing feat of songwriting."

The LA Times called his sound a "blend of honky-tonk traditionalism, mild Country Rock and Pop slickness," delivered with an "easygoing" style.

Stay tuned for more information on the new project, coming soon.

Dolly Parton Reschedules Las Vegas Residency Due to Health Concerns

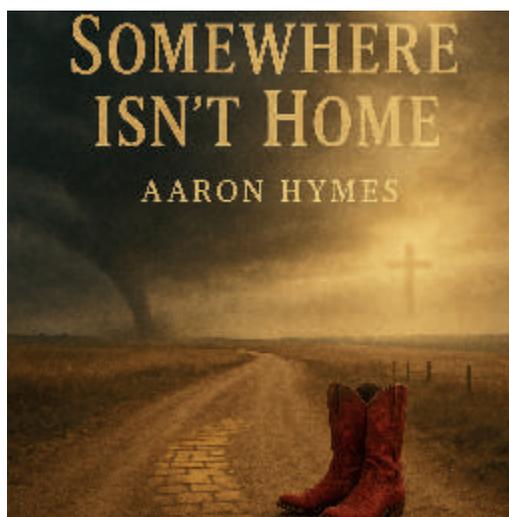
Dolly: Live in Las Vegas, a brand-new limited-run engagement at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace featuring six performances were scheduled from December 4 through 13, 2025. Unfortunately, the music icon has to reschedule her Vegas Residency.

Dolly shared the news first. "I want the fans and public to hear directly from me that, unfortunately, I will need to postpone my upcoming Las Vegas concerts. As many of you know, I have been dealing with some health challenges, and

my doctors tell me that I must have a few procedures. As I joked with them, it must be time for my 100,000-mile check-up, although it's not the usual trip to see my plastic surgeon! In all seriousness, given this, I am not going to be able to rehearse and put together the show that I want you to see, and the show that you deserve to see. You pay good money to see me perform, and I want to be at my best for you. While I'll still be able to work on all of my projects from here in Nashville, I just need a little time to get show ready, as they say. And don't worry about me quittin' the business because God hasn't said anything about stopping yet. But I believe He is telling me to slow down right now so I can be ready for more big adventures with all of you. I love you and thank you for understanding."

Tickets are valid for the new dates and refunds will be available. For more information visit [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).

Singer-Songwriter Aaron Hymes Releases, 'Somewhere Isn't Home'



Singer-songwriter Aaron Hymes just released his latest single, *Somewhere Isn't Home*, on October 3rd, delivering a heartfelt track born on the road and rooted in spiritual searching. It's a reflective journey through faith, longing, and the highways of Kansas - with a dash of Oz-inspired wit.

Cross Country Report continued on page 41 >>>



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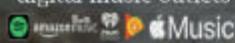
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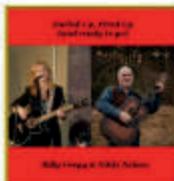


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Written aboard a tour bus rolling through Kansas, *Somewhere Isn't Home* captures the quiet, introspective moments that happen between shows - when the noise fades and deeper questions rise. Instead of chasing fame or fleeting comforts, the song reflects a longing for something eternal: a relationship with God.

"This wasn't a song about heartbreak or someone who left," says Hymes. "It's about waking up on the road and realizing I wasn't searching for a place or a person - I was searching for Jesus."

Blending sincerity with playful lyricism, the song also tips its hat to The Wizard of Oz, poking fun at the surreal and sometimes comical experience of being spiritually adrift in the middle of Kansas. But underneath the clever nods, the message is clear: you can be surrounded by people and still feel lost - until you find your way back to faith.

"Dorothy was trying to get home," Hymes says. "But what if home isn't on a map? What if home is found in God?"

With its warm Americana tones, acoustic layers, and raw lyrical honesty, *Somewhere Isn't Home* is both a confession and a celebration - a reminder that the journey to find God often starts right where we feel most alone.

Somewhere Isn't Home is available on all major streaming platforms.

Shenandoah Invited for Special Visit to the White House and U.S. Capitol

Multi-platinum Country band Shenandoah celebrated a major milestone recently and commemorated the occasion with a visit to the highest office in the land. In celebration of the GRAMMY® Award-winning band's 40th anniversary, lead singer Marty Raybon and drummer Mike McGuire - both original members - were invited to Washington D.C. for a special visit to the White House, as well as a tour of the U.S. Capitol.



Shenandoah's Mike McGuire (L) and Marty Raybon (R) in the White House Briefing Room.

Photo Courtesy of The White House

Raybon and McGuire were joined by fellow Country stars Darryl Worley and Jesse Keith Whitley for a day of bowling at the White House's historic Truman Bowling Alley and also enjoyed a private tour of the West Wing. Additionally, the band was treated to a private midnight tour of the U.S. Capitol, hosted by Congressman Barry Moore, who serves in Alabama's 2nd Congressional District.

"We had a total blast in Washington D.C. bowling at the White House, touring the West Wing, and also getting a guided tour through the Capitol," says Raybon. "It was a complete honor, and we are thankful to live in the greatest country on earth."

"The opportunity to do the things that we did in Washington D.C. was a complete blessing," adds McGuire. "We are so grateful we had the chance to visit the People's House and the iconic places that make this country great. God Bless America!"

Ahead of the White House visit, Shenandoah stopped by Good Day Washington for an in-studio visit where the band discussed its current 'The Extra Mile Tour' 2025, recent collabs with Jason Aldean, Luke Bryan and Luke Combs, and what's on the horizon.

Shenandoah originally formed in Muscle Shoals, Alabama in 1985. The band has charted 26 singles on the Billboard Hot Country charts, including #1 hits *The Church on Cumberland Road*, *Sunday in the South* and *Two Dozen Roses* from 1989, *Next to You*, *Next to Me* from 1990, and *If Bubba Can Dance (I Can Too)* from 1994. The single *Somewhere in the Vicinity of the Heart*, which featured guest vocals from Alison Krauss, won both artists a GRAMMY® Award for 'Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal.' To date, the group has garnered over one billion global streams and sold millions of albums worldwide.

Richard Sterban, Iconic Bass Singer with The Oak Ridge Boys, Releases Health Update

Richard Sterban, 53+ year member of The Oak Ridge Boys, who has been off the road convalescing since mid-May, has released a health update.

"In March of this year, I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer," said Sterban. "But I am under the care of the best cancer doctors in the country and, with the help of the Good Lord above, I believe I will be able to get through this."

Sterban, who has been a member of the group since 1972, continued. "I want to thank everyone, especially the fans, for your concern, and I would appreciate your continued prayers. Most days I'm feeling very good, and I hope to be back out on the road in several months."

Sterban, whose bass notes are featured prominently in the Oaks' double platinum single, *Elvira*, last appeared with the group at the Academy of Country Music Awards in May. Since that time, Aaron McCune and Tim Duncan have been filling in for him on tour. The Oak Ridge Boys are scheduling shows into 2026.

Richard Sterban began his singing career as a six-year-old soprano in Sunday school in his native Camden, New Jersey. Prior to joining the Oaks in 1972, Richard sang with J.D. Sumner and the Stamps Quartet, which afforded him the opportunity of a lifetime - the chance to sing with Elvis, the King of Rock and Roll, singing with him every night on stage, recording with him, and appearing in one of his movies ("Elvis on Tour").

Country Music's Finest Come Together For 'Friends Of The Atwoods: A Night Of Giving Benefitting Tim & Roxane Atwood'

Music City's finest will come together for 'Friends Of The Atwoods: A Night Of Giving Benefitting Tim & Roxane Atwood' on Tuesday, November 18th at 3rd & Lindsley benefiting longtime members of the Music City community as they face mounting health challenges due to ongoing spinal surgery complications and Roxane's recent stroke.



The Oak Ridge Boys (2025)

Photo: Brandon Wood/Indie Bling Studio

Doors open at 6:00 PM, with the show starting at 7:30 PM. Sponsored by Gus Arrendale & Springer Mountain Farms, with additional contributions from Mezek Films and in partnership with Music Amplifies, the evening will feature live auction items and more, with proceeds helping offset medical expenses not covered by insurance. Plus, as a bonus, you never know just who may stop by.

Tim and Roxane Atwood have dedicated their lives to Country music. Tim spent 38 years as the Grand Ole Opry's staff pianist, playing with legends like Roy Acuff, Dolly Parton, Carrie Underwood, Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, and Taylor Swift, while Roxane produced Grand Ole Opry Live and Opry Backstage, helping launch stars like Dierks Bentley and Blake Shelton.

In recent years, life has taken a difficult turn. After Tim suffered a debilitating back injury five years ago, Roxane became his caregiver. Now she needs care herself, after a stroke on September 2, 2025, which left her with partial paralysis. The return home required major accessibility renovations, including ramps, remodeled spaces, continued therapy, and outside caregiving.

Tim and Roxane have long supported causes like Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, the Humane Society, and the Musicians Emergency Relief Fund, and they now need the support of the community they've always given to. Donations, financial, supplies, or even prayers - are deeply appreciated.

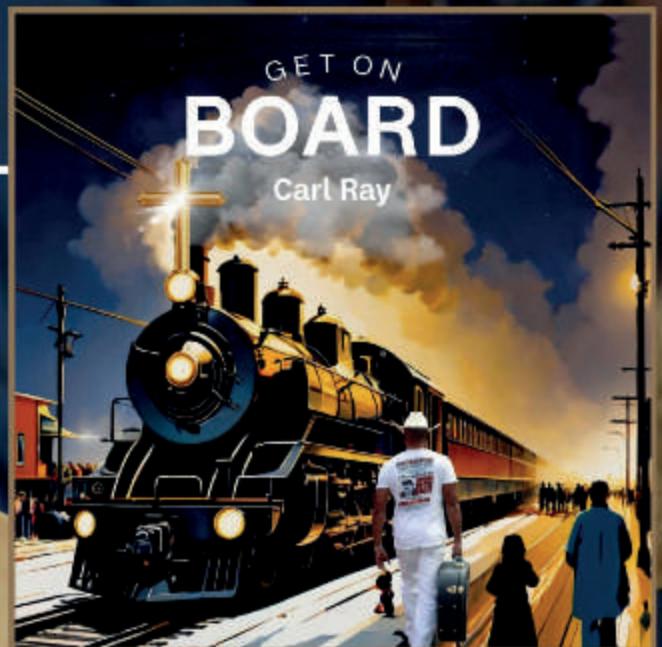
To purchase tickets to the event, visit [ticketweb.com/event/country-musics-finest-comes-together-3rd-and-lindsley-tickets/](https://www.ticketweb.com/event/country-musics-finest-comes-together-3rd-and-lindsley-tickets/) Those unable to attend may also contribute via the GoFundMe page at [gofundme.com/f/support-tim-and-roxanes-road-to-recovery](https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-tim-and-roxanes-road-to-recovery).

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The Legacy & Comedy of SARAH CANNON (“Minnie Pearl”)



In Celebration of the Grand Ole Opry's 100th birthday, we honor an individual that impacted the Opry in the early years. Sarah Cannon, aka Minnie Pearl, is one of the most beloved comedians of all time. She has taken her place in the Country Music Hall of Fame and the National Comedy Hall of Fame. This Grand Ole Opry star became part of our lives every Saturday night for over 25 years on TV's Hee Haw. Minnie commanded her audience's attention only by saying, "How- Dee!! I'm just so proud to be here!!" Then she would talk about her fellers and family in Grinders Switch to the audience's delight. We pay tribute to the talented comic Sarah Cannon and the extraordinary lady known as Minnie Pearl.

Sarah Colley was born October 25, 1912, in Centerville Tennessee, fifty miles southwest of Nashville. She was the youngest of five daughters born to a prosperous sawmill owner and timber dealer in Centerville. She graduated from Ward-Belmont College (now Belmont University) - at the time Nashville's most prestigious school for young ladies - where she majored in theater studies and dance. She taught dance for the first few years after graduating.

Her first professional theatrical work was with the Wayne P. Sewell Production Company, a touring theater company based in Atlanta. She produced and directed plays and musicals for local organizations in small towns throughout the Southeast. Part of her work involved making brief appearances at civic organizations to promote the group's shows, and during this time she developed her Minnie Pearl routine. Sarah had all intentions to be a serious actress, but while touring with an Atlanta company, she created the Minnie Pearl character that became her life's work.

While producing an amateur musical comedy in Baileyton, Alabama she met a mountain woman whose style and speech became the basis for "Cousin Minnie Pearl." Her first stage performance as Minnie Pearl was in 1939 in Aiken, South Carolina. Her now-famous hat was purchased

downtown at Surasky Bros. Department store before the show. The following year, executives from Nashville radio station WSM saw her perform at a bankers' convention in Centerville and gave her an opportunity to appear on the Grand Ole Opry on November 30, 1940. The success of her debut on the show began an association with the Grand Ole Opry that continued for more than fifty years

Pearl always dressed in frilly "down home" dresses and wore a hat with a price tag hanging from it, displaying the \$1.98 price. Her signature greeting to her audience was "How-w-w-DEE-E-E-E! I'm jest so proud to be here!" delivered in a hearty holler. After she became an established star, her greeting became a call-and-response with audiences everywhere. Pearl's humor often involved her unsuccessful attempts to attract "a feller's" attention!

Minnie drew much of her comic material from her hometown of Centerville, which she called Grinders Switch. Grinders Switch was a community just outside Centerville that consisted of little more than a railroad switch. Those who knew her recognized that the characters were largely based on actual Centerville residents. She spun stories involving her comical relatives, notably "Uncle Nabob," his wife "Aunt Ambrosia," "Lucifer Hucklehead," "Miss Lizzie Tinkum," "Doc Payne," and, of course, her "Brother," who was

simultaneously both slow-witted and wise. She usually closed her monologues with the exit line, "I love you so much it hurts!" She also sang comic novelty songs and often danced.

On February 23, 1947, Colley married Henry R. Cannon, who had been an Army Air Corps fighter pilot during World War II and was then a partner in an air charter service. After the wedding, Cannon set up his own air charter service for Country music performers and took over management of the Minnie Pearl character. His clients in the charter service included Eddy Arnold, Colonel Tom Parker, Hank Williams, Carl Smith, Webb Pierce, and Elvis Presley.

Cannon portrayed Minnie Pearl for many years on television, first on ABC's Ozark Jubilee in the late 1950s; then on the long-running television series Hee Haw, both on CBS and the subsequent syndicated version. She made several appearances on NBC's The Ford Show, starring Tennessee Ernie Ford. She also appeared as a celebrity panelist on game shows such as Match Game in 1977 and 1978, and Hollywood Squares in 1980. Her last regular performances on national television were on Ralph Emery's Nashville Now on the former The Nashville Network (TNN) cable channel. With Emery, she performed in a weekly feature "Let Minnie Steal Your Joke" in the Minnie Pearl character, and read jokes submitted by viewers, with prizes for the best jokes.

The simplicity of the humor and demeanor of Minnie Pearl endeared her to fans of all ages. Cannon is considered a pioneer in the genre of Country comedy, especially for women. "Most women comics don't want to get down on the level of the country girl who makes a fool of herself. I understand that," Cannon said. "But for one time I'd like them to get inside Minnie Pearl's skin and see what fun she has, because she really has a great time. She's as nutty as a fruitcake and wild as a can of crab. And she's very happy."

"I've always said I envied Minnie Pearl. She's a part of me, but at the same time, she never has any financial concerns, and she never worries about whether she might have performed less than her best," she adds.

Unlike Minnie's character, Cannon's life was not without worry. Later in life, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. After undergoing radiation and a double mastectomy, Cannon became a spokesperson for the Nashville medical center where she underwent treatment and funded a nonprofit group that helps fund cancer research, The Minnie Pearl Cancer Foundation. The Sarah Cannon Cancer Center and Research Institute has expanded from Nashville to other hospitals in Tennessee and Kentucky. She worked tirelessly for various charities, including the American Cancer Society and became an advocate for cancer awareness and early detection.

Offstage, Sarah and her beloved husband of 49 years, Henry Cannon, were virtually inseparable. The couple had no children. In 1969 they purchased a large estate home in Nashville next door to the Tennessee Governor's mansion. The Cannon's attended Brentwood Methodist Church, just to the south of Nashville.

Cannon suffered a debilitating stroke in June 1991, bringing her performing career to an end. After the stroke,

she resided in a Nashville nursing home, where she received frequent visits from Country music industry figures, including Chely Wright, Vince Gill, Amy Grant, and many more. Her death on March 4, 1996, at the age of 83 was attributed to complications from another stroke.

Her legacy lives on in countless ways at the Grand Ole Opry - a memorial fountain at the artists' entrance, her shoes encased and displayed by the membership wall, and life-size statues of her and her longtime Opry collaborator Roy Acuff greet patrons at the Ryman Auditorium.



She was an important influence on younger female Country music singers and rural humorists such as Jerry Clower, Jeff Foxworthy, Bill Engvall, Carl Hurley, David L Cook, Chonda Pierce, Ron White, and Larry the Cable Guy. In 1992, she was awarded the National Medal of Arts. In 2002, she was ranked as number 14 on CMT's 40 Greatest Women in Country Music list.

Thank you, Sarah Cannon, for sharing your comedic talents and introducing the world to Cousin Minnie Pearl, and showing us all how gracious and adored you were to your fans and peers in the entertainment industry.

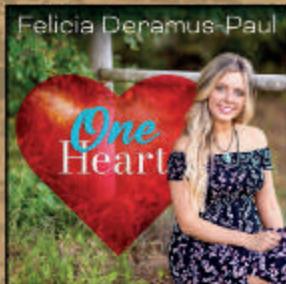
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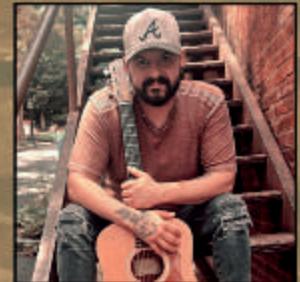
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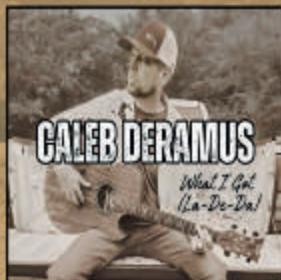
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Johnathan Bond



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The Journeys



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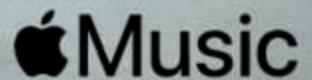
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Celebrating 100 Years of the Grand Ole Opry

By Robin Tanner

(Portions of this feature include contributions from the Grand Ole Opry website)

Photos by Chris Hollo ©2019 Grand Ole Opry

The Grand Ole Opry, “The Show That Made Country Music Famous” has presented a yearlong all-star celebration for the Opry’s 100 Birthday by showcasing Country music’s past, present and future. Over the last century, the Opry has introduced Country music to fans worldwide. Its stage has witnessed iconic moments between artists and celebrities and its broadcast has evolved from radio, to television, to digital. Throughout it all, the Opry has been a vehicle to bring people together through good times and bad. We join the celebration by honoring the history and special moments of the past 100 years of the Grand Ole Opry.

A radio-loving founder of National Life and Accident Insurance Company convinced the company to launch its own radio station: WSM – named after their slogan, “We Shield Millions.” National Life built a small studio in its downtown Nashville office. WSM went live for the first time on October 5, 1925. On the night of November 28, 1925, announcer George D. Hayes introduced fiddle player Uncle Jimmy Thompson as the first performer on a new show called “The WSM Barn Dance.”

In December of 1927, Hayes proclaimed on-air, “For the past hour we have been listening to the music taken largely from the Grand Opera, but from now on we will present the Grand Ole Opry.” The new name for the WSM Barn Dance stuck. Now, 100 years later, the show Hayes started is still going strong. Along the way, the station moved to Opryland Hotel and is currently at the Acuff House. It has launched countless Country music careers and led the way for Nashville to become Music City.

Early Opry performers such as Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, Ernest Tubb, and Bill Monroe became musical foundations for the Opry during its years in residence at the historic Ryman Auditorium, later welcoming to the stage artists who would become entertainment icons including Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, and Bill Anderson. “The Grand Ole Opry, to a Country singer, is what Yankee Stadium is to a baseball player. Broadway to an actor. It’s the top of the ladder, the top of the mountain. You don’t just play the Opry; you live it,” stated Bill Anderson who is the longest serving Opry member with 64 years.

Some of the Grand Ole Opry’s most historic moments happened inside the Ryman Auditorium: Hank Williams made his debut. Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Willie Nelson, Jeannie Seely, and Dolly Parton joined the Opry family. Elvis Presley made his only Opry appearance. Johnny Cash became a member and met his wife, June Carter at the Ryman Auditorium.

The Opry said goodbye to the Ryman Auditorium on Friday night, March 15, 1974. George Morgan closed out the show with *Candy Kisses*. After the Opry, Johnny and June Carter Cash sang *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* on the following Grand Ole Gospel Time to end the evening. The next night, President Richard Nixon joined Roy Acuff on stage at the Grand Ole Opry House. The night featured a packed lineup. They kept the traditions of the Ryman by bringing a 6-foot circle of hardwood that was



Blake Shelton hosting the “Opry 100th: A Live Celebration”



Bill Anderson

taken from the Ryman and placed center stage at the Opry House. The Opry returns to the Ryman each year for a wintertime run.

Many artists have stood in that historic circle from Connie Smith, The Oak Ridge Boys, Reba McEntire, Trace Adkins, Dolly Parton, Dierks Bentley, Vince Gill, Martina McBride, Brad Paisley, Ricky Skaggs, Marty Stuart, Mel Tillis, Garth Brooks, Carrie Underwood, Alan Jackson, The Gatlin Brothers, Randy Travis, Josh Turner, Jamey Johnson, T. Graham Brown, Scotty McCreery, Lainey Wilson, newest members Steve Earle and Kathy Mattea and many more artists that are a part of the Opry family. Opry member Garth Brooks says, “The Grand Ole Opry is the pinnacle of what I do. Nothing will ever match being a member of the Grand Ole Opry.”

Over the decades, the Opry continued to grow and evolve. The Opry was televised live for the first time on March 4, 1978, as part of a PBS fundraising special, but the show wouldn’t start regular television broadcasts until 1985. The 1990s brought some of the Opry’s most monumental moments: Minnie Pearl and Jimmy Dickens celebrated their 50th anniversary with the show and Roy Acuff made his final Opry performance, one month before he passed. Throughout the 2000s, the show and its cast paid tribute to fallen members Hank Williams, Waylon Jennings, and Minnie Pearl. In 2002, the Opry celebrated its 4000th consecutive Saturday Night broadcast.

In May of 2010, the venue was ravaged by a historic flood that forced the Opry House to close its doors for five months for restoration. The show pressed on at other venues across Nashville, including two former homes: War Memorial Auditorium and the Ryman. The Opry House was beautifully restored, and the show made its triumphant return on September 28 of that same year. The Grand Ole Opry celebrated 40 years at the Opry House on March 16, 2014, and in 2015, the show celebrated its 90th anniversary with a star-studded weekend-long birthday bash.

In March of 2020, COVID-19 forced the Grand Ole Opry to make the hard decision to temporarily cancel live audience shows. In a historic moment for the Opry, the Saturday Night Grand Ole Opry broadcast live without an audience, via Livestream. The show continued to broadcast live on WSM Radio and Circle TV, keeping the music playing and the circle unbroken. After seven months of performing without a live audience, in October of 2020, the



Carrie Underwood



Gene Watson

Opry kicked off its 95th anniversary by welcoming back 500 guests to the Opry House – and so began a month-long celebration of the Opry, Country music, its artists, and its fans. Once reopened, the Opry resumed its tradition of drawing both locals and tourists alike through its doors. It remains one of the top attractions in Nashville.

The Opry 100 celebration honors the artists, songs, and moments on the iconic stage that have defined the genre. With bigger shows, surprise guests, thrilling debuts, and tributes to legends who paved the way, while ushering in the next era of Country music making the Opry's best year yet.

For any Country music artist, their dream is to perform on the Grand Ole Opry. The highlight is when you become a member. That is the goal for an artist that has the love and respect of the Opry and its history. Here are some quotes from some Opry members:

Alan Jackson, who has been an Opry member for over 34 years shared his thoughts. "You think about people like Hank Williams, who stood on that spot of wood, and Mr. Acuff, and, of course, George Jones. And just about anybody you can think of who has made Country music has been on that stage. That's what makes you so nervous – to think about the historical part of the Opry and how it's played such a part in Country music. The ultimate dream when you're in Country music is to be asked to join the Grand Ole Opry. It's the cornerstone of Country music. I don't know if Nashville or Country music would exist if it wasn't for this foundation, and I'm proud to be a part of it."

"Becoming a member of the Grand Ole Opry is something I've wanted since I was a little girl," said Martina McBride. Eddie Montgomery from Montgomery Gentry said, "My dad always said, 'you know, no matter what awards you win, you haven't made it until you get to play the Opry and you're a part of the Opry.'" A quote from Brad Paisley says, "Pilgrims travel to Jerusalem to see the Holy Land, and the foundations of their faith. People go to Washington, D.C. to see the workings of government, and the foundation of our country. And fans flock to Nashville to see the foundation of Country music, the Grand Ole Opry."

Mark Wills, who became an official member of the Opry on January 11, 2019, recalls. "Out of every accolade that I have, becoming a Grand Ole Opry member is the highlight to everything. People who want to become Country singers



have a standard and that standard is singing on the Grand Ole Opry.”

Darius Rucker recalls, “When I was asked if I wanted to perform on the Grand Ole Opry, I yelled, ‘Are you kidding me?’ I’ve been waiting for that my whole life. To be invited where so many of the greatest Country artists have performed is an honor, and I still can’t believe it has been bestowed on me. Just to stand in the circle where so many greats have stood - Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, I just couldn’t believe it.”

Many artists have referred to the Opry as a family and their home. Opry member Ronnie Milsap stated, “I feel this is a family here, so kinda regardless of whatever happens in your life, you always can come home to the Grand Ole Opry, thank God.” Family group the Isaacs became members over four years ago, Ben Isaacs recalls. “One of the biggest highlights of my career was being asked to become members of the Grand Ole Opry! When we were asked, that was the 96th year of the Grand Ole Opry. It’s a very elite group and it’s a very cool house that we get to live in.”

Artists from genres beyond Country - like Pop, Rock, Soul, and Folk - have graced the Grand Ole Opry stage over the years, including, Kevin Costner, The Beach Boys, Kevin Bacon, Kenny Loggins, Steve Martin. CeCe Winan, Keb’ Mo’, Jason Isbell, MercyMe, Ringo Starr, Post Malone, Brandon Lake, Train and most recently Pop artist Sabrina Carpenter and many more who have performed on the Opry stage. Music legend James Taylor will make his Grand Ole Opry debut on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, as part of the Opry’s 100th anniversary celebration.

Here are a few of the highlights during the Opry 100th birthday celebration:

NBC’s “Opry 100: A Live Celebration” honored the Grand Ole Opry’s centennial with a star-studded, three-hour broadcast hosted by Blake Shelton which aired on March 19, 2025. The landmark special paid tribute to 100 years of the Grand Ole Opry, the show that helped define Country music. It was a night where history was made on Country music’s biggest stage, as millions tuned in to celebrate a century of the icons, the songs, the stories, and the performances that have shaped the genre. The broadcast is still available to stream on demand on Peacock.

100 Years of Grand Ole Opry: A Celebration of the Artists, the Fans, and the Home of Country Music, was released on April



Connie Smith recently celebrated 60 years as an Opry member.



Vince Gill

15, 2025. This commemorative hardcover book is a richly illustrated tribute to the Opry's century-long legacy, offering fans a behind-the-scenes look at the institution that shaped country music.

The Grand Ole Opry presented "Opry 100 Honors," a series commemorating the Opry's centennial milestone. This series paid homage to the trailblazing artists who defined the Opry's first century and continue to inspire generations of Country musicians. "Opry 100 Honors" features live performances by today's top Country stars, celebrating the legacies of icons such as Loretta Lynn, Johnny Cash, June Carter Cash, Charlie Daniels, Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, and Bill Monroe. It's a celebration of the voices, stories, and traditions that built the Grand Ole Opry into the world's longest-running radio show and a cornerstone of American music.

It was the Opry's Rhinestone Milestone Birthday during all October with birthday shows and surprises. and more. If you haven't experienced the Opry, now is the time. Because you only turn 100 once!

For the 100th celebration, the Opry released "Opry 100: Country's Greatest Songs." It's a one-of-a-kind album featuring never-before-released performances - LIVE from the iconic Opry stage. The 20 tracks were chosen from the fan-voted list of 100 Greatest Songs. Listeners will hear Country legends in rare archival recordings, and today's biggest stars paying tribute with brand-new covers of the songs that shaped a genre. "The Opry 100: Country's Greatest Songs" will be available November 7th.

For 5,000+ (and counting) consecutive Saturday nights, the Grand Ole Opry has rung out on the airwaves. It's the world's longest-running radio show and now also runs every Friday, plus seasonal Tuesdays and Wednesdays, in addition to traditional Saturdays.

Since Uncle Jimmy Thompson first played his fiddle, marking the birth of the Grand Ole Opry. From its "Barn Dance" beginnings to its global fame today, the Opry continues an untouchable legacy of shaping and sharing Country's sound. With the most celebrated family of artists in the industry and a passionate global audience, it remains the true home of Country music.

You can listen to the Grand Ole Opry on WSM 650 AM, by downloading the app and their website. For more information and tickets visit www.Opry.com.



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Luke Combs



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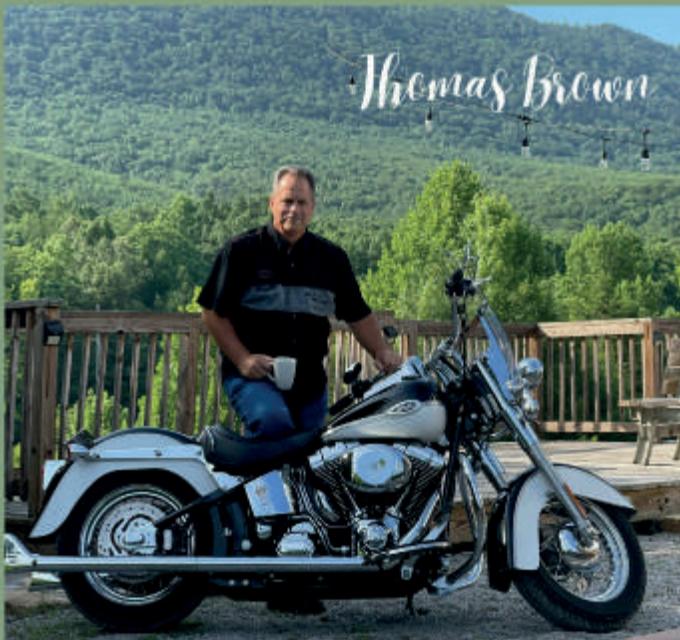
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Song Writers:
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Melissa Evans

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CrossCountry **HOT 100**

OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN COUNTRY TOP 100 - NOVEMBER 2025

TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST	TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	4	When The Son Comes Down	Sonshine Road	51	77	Looking In The Rearview	Daryl Baker
2	5	I Surrender It All	Luke Hendrickson	52	62	Why Me	Jenny Dean
3	3	Right Where You Want Me To Be	Don Stiles	53	63	Nothing No Nothing	Rachel Taylor
4	9	The Phone Call	Richard Lynch	54	73	Hand In Heaven	The Murphys feat. Abigail
5	16	When I Saw You There	Eternal Vision	55	74	I've Been Thinking	Waymasters
6	27	Get On Board	Carl Ray	56	49	Lighthouse In The Harbor	Gina White
7	14	He Owns Both Sides Of The River	Terry & Debra Luna	57	38	Holy Ghost Conviction	Jennifer Leann Phillips
8	6	Wake Up Call	Cyndi Reynolds	58	85	You Can Call On Him	Aaron Partridge and Steve Apirana
9	17	Thirst & Hunger	Rick Lang	59	70	My Home In Glory Land	Beverly Brown Simms
10	18	Somebody's Praying	Michael Knight	60	58	One Of These Days	Carol Barham
11	26	Father To The Fatherless	Jim Sheldon	61	46	I Don't Need A Mansion	Mary Fay Jackson
12	23	Mama's Old Chest Of Drawers	Marvin Harrell	62	71	Hallelujah	Dust and Grace
13	22	Before You Call Me Home	Greg McDougal	63	68	Southern Shine	Shawn Chastain
14	20	Gravel Gospel	Shellem Cline	64	75	It's Never Too Late	Chuck Hancock
15	24	Heavens	Chris Hughes	65	76	Anyway	The Pauls
16	11	It Doesn't Seem Enough	The Journeys	66	72	Find Your Way Back Home	LizzyG
17	32	That's When God Moves	David Timms	67	78	If That Ain't True Love	Melanie Walker
18	2	Peacemaker	Delnora with Chris Golden	68	82	Headed For Home	Donnivan Wells
19	36	Through Christ	Jimmy R Price	69	87	Even When I Fall	Thomas Brown
20	1	Blues And The Badge	Corey Farlow	70	86	Hannah Whooped The Devil	Jason Welch
21	29	God Does Not Change	Cowboy Joe Babcock	71	81	Take Over Me	Rex Robards
22	28	Fueled Up Fired Up And Ready To Go	Billy Gregg feat. Nikki Nelson	72	88	Footsteps Of My King	Todd Lee
23	35	Grandma's Bible	Debbie Bennett	73	79	Thank You For The Rain	Ben Stone
24	34	Just Me	John Penney	74	84	Footprints In The Sand	Dwight Sanders
25	10	Truth Cries Out	Mary James	75	--	New Man	Chuck Day
26	61	You Can't Box Me In	Fortner Brothers	76	83	I'll See You In The Rapture	Lester Feltner
27	40	Gonna Hit Those Church Steps Running	Carey Easley	77	90	Pushing You Away	Mike McAdoo
28	43	I Felt God Today	Heather Thomas Van Deren	78	99	Preachers In Hell	Troy Ervin
29	37	It Matters To Him	Jan Harbuck	79	93	Not On My Watch	Darin Kinser
30	44	Through The Noise	Kevin Kappler	80	97	Blessed Is The People That Know	Jonathan Ray Smith
31	42	A Pew For You	Aaron Loy	81	--	Greatly To Be Praised	Melissa Evans
32	67	The Colors And The Cross	Bobby Gibson	82	92	Back Pew Prayer	Woodie Kitchen
33	13	His Church Went Marching On	Troy Richardson	83	--	In Times Like These	Bruce and Betsy Mullen
34	45	Country Sinner	Victoria Steelman	84	91	Don't Cry For Me	Teresa Johnson
35	48	Roof-Tearing Off Friends	Chris Perdue	85	94	Thanks To Calvary	Greg Finch
36	30	What A Gift	Gena Hamilton	86	--	God Don't Waste The Hurt	Gary Russ
37	7	We Need Jesus	Kenny Evans	87	98	Your The Man	Judy Bailey
38	47	My Mama's Guitar	Brad Irons	88	--	Don't Need A Stone	By Faith
39	55	When Love Arose	Joy LaVallee	89	95	Daddy's Hat	Debra Camp
40	50	Living Proof	Ken & Kim Stull	90	96	I Feel Knew	J'Lee
41	57	I Saw A Miracle Today	Michael Ray Fain	91	--	Somebody Bigger Than You And I	David Smith
42	52	Here's My Heart	Scott Peacock	92	--	Meanwhile Back At The Cross	Ron Hemphill
43	54	Waiting In The Water	Debbie Mills	93	--	Country Church	Claude Davis
44	56	If We Never Meet Again	Todd Brumley	94	--	You Can Talk To The Father	Richard Strong
45	59	I Am Salt	Kenny Cable	95	100	My God Can	Valerie Ellis Hawkins
46	25	One More Sinner Saved	Norman Lee Schaffer	96	--	Where Are You Now	Ken Mobley
47	21	They Laughed	Steve Warren	97	--	Bucket List	Daniel Wheeler
48	65	God Talks To Me	Dawson Road	98	--	My Everything	Tarrance Phillips
49	53	Here I Am Today	Shay & Michi	99	--	Blood Bought Cowboy	Marty Deroche
50	64	Always Enough	Dale Rochell	100	--	Longing To Go There	Robert Blankenship



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ANNE MURRAY

By Robin Tanner

Anne Murray is a global music icon whose signature voice and timeless catalogue have defined a career spanning over five decades. A trailblazer across Country, Adult Contemporary, and Pop, the Canadian native sold over 55 million albums, earned countless accolades, and became one of the most influential female artists of all time.

From her humble beginnings in Nova Scotia, Murray's passion for music led to early performances across Canada and her debut album "What About Me." In 1969, she signed with Capitol Records and released "This Way Is My Way," featuring *Snowbird* - the breakout hit that made her the first Canadian solo female artist to reach No. 1 on the U.S. charts and earn Gold certification.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Murray's crossover success continued with hits like *Danny's Song*, *You Needed Me*, *Shadows in the Moonlight*, *Broken Hearted Me*, *Daydream Believer*, *Could I Have This Dance*, *A Little Good News*, and *Just Another Woman in Love*. Her music resonated across genres and generations.

Her accolades include four Grammys, 26 JUNO Awards (the most in history), three American Music Awards, and multiple honors from the CMA and CCMA. She is a Companion of the Order of Canada and was recently awarded the 2025 JUNO Lifetime Achievement Award. Her star shines on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Nashville's Walkway of Stars, and Canada's Walk of Fame, with inductions into several Halls of Fame.

Murray's influence paved the way for Canadian artists like Céline Dion, Shania Twain, K.D. Lang, Alanis Morissette, and Sarah McLachlan. With 32 studio albums, 15 compilations, over 1 billion global streams, and tours spanning the U.S., UK, Australia, Europe, and beyond, her reach remains unmatched.

On October 27, the Opry House hosted The Music of My Life - An All-Star Tribute to Anne Murray, featuring Trisha Yearwood, Martina McBride, K.D. Lang, Kathy Mattea, Lorrie Morgan, Pam Tillis, Shenandoah, The Gatlin Brothers, Collin Raye, Natalie Grant, Michelle Wright, Victoria Shaw, and appearances by Brenda Lee, Randy Travis, and Barry Trotz.

To celebrate her 80th birthday, Murray announced her 33rd studio album "Here You Are," released September 5, 2025. The project features 11 unreleased tracks recorded



between 1978 and 1995, revitalized by Grammy-winning producer Bob Rock and mixer Adam Greenholtz. Highlights include *Rest Easy (In My Love)*, *Bring All Your Heartaches to Me*, and *Straight From the Heart*, with new background vocals by Anne and her daughter Dawn, and fresh instrumentation by her nephew Dale. The album's cover showcases a 1971 painting by Canadian artist Harley Brown. Available on CD and vinyl - including a limited gold edition with signed lithograph - "Here You Are" expands Murray's legacy with music that bridges past and present.

Beyond the stage, Murray's philanthropic work includes the Anne Murray Centre, a charitable foundation and museum she continues to oversee. Her legacy as a groundbreaker, mentor, and national treasure remains firmly intact.

For more, visit www.annemurray.com.

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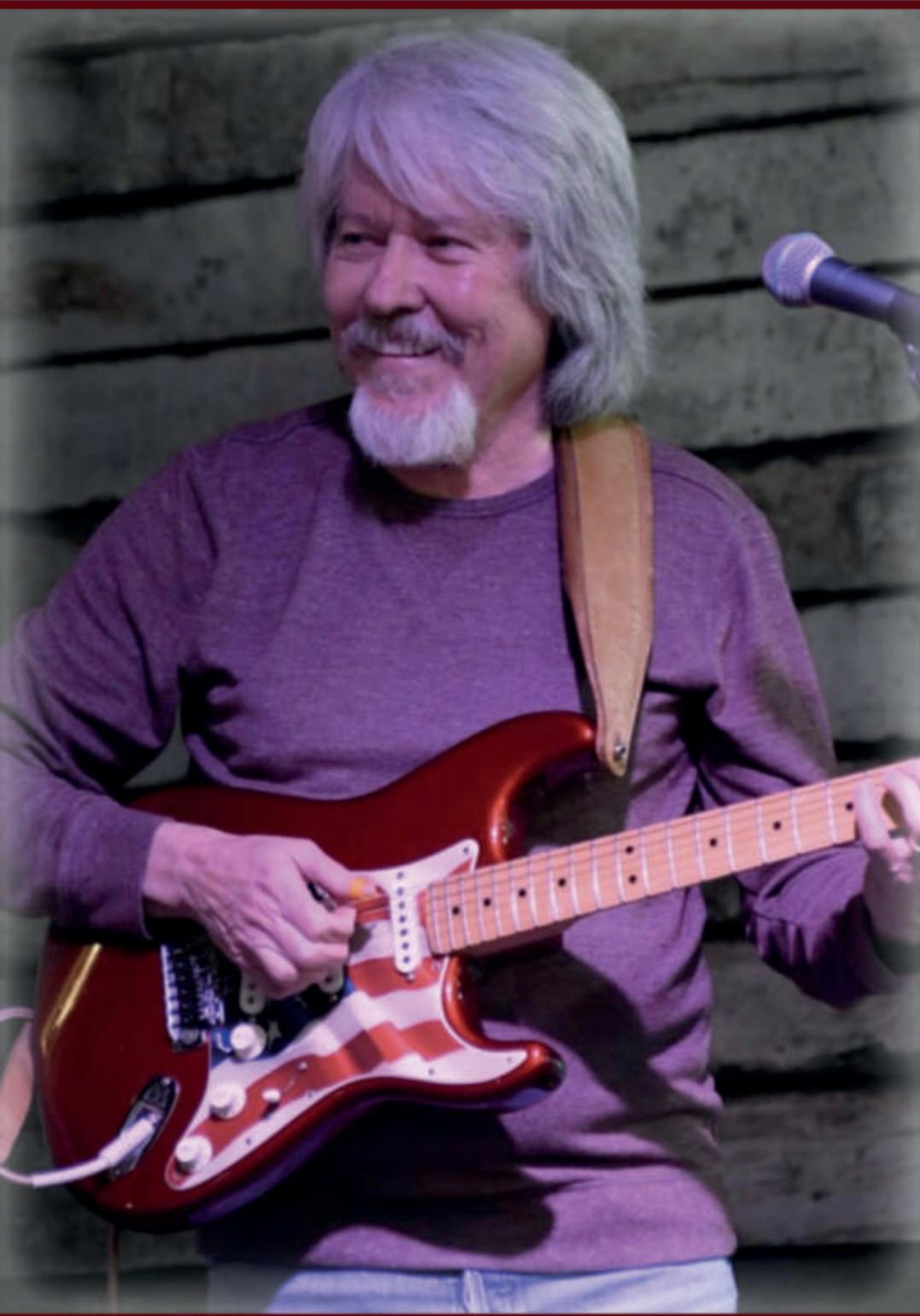


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