

AUGUST 2026

CrossCountry^{USA} magazine

6th
Anniversary
Edition

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From the Editor

Six Years of Cross Country USA Magazine

As we celebrate six wonderful years of Cross Country USA Magazine, my heart is full of gratitude. Since our very first issue in August 2020, it has been my joy and honor to work with this publication from the ground up. What a journey it has been highlighting Christian Country artists, honoring Country Music legends, and sharing the music, faith, and testimonies that continue to inspire our readers across the nation.

This magazine is sustained by a remarkable team, and that team includes you! Our subscribers, artists, advertisers, social media followers, and listeners of Cross Country USA Radio all play an essential role in keeping this mission moving forward. Our editors and writers, graphic designers, and the distribution team at Wilds & Associates are deeply thankful for everyone who has been part of this endeavor, some since the very beginning, others faithfully contributing year after year. We thank God for each of you and look forward to many more years of growth, ministry, and music.

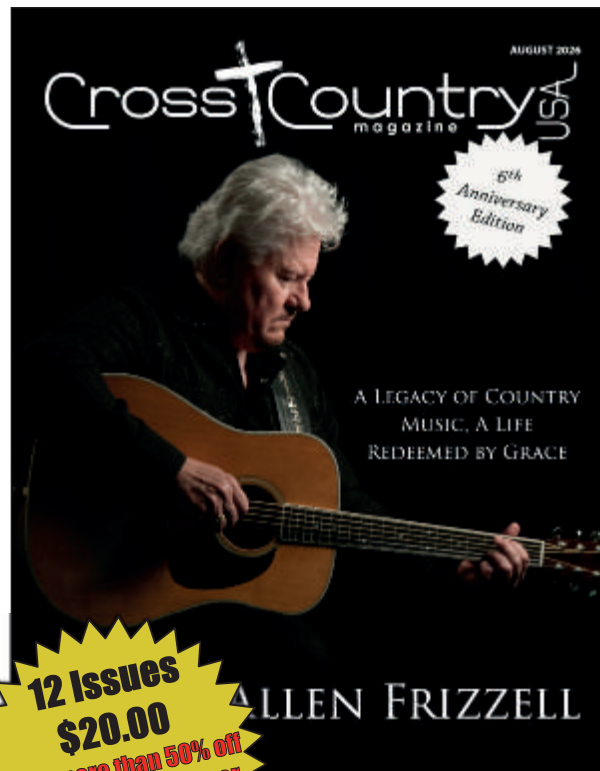
Our commitment remains strong: to bring you the best articles, uplifting news, and our Christian Country music chart. You can help us continue expanding the reach of both the magazine and Cross Country USA Radio. Encourage your family, friends, and fellow concertgoers to subscribe or renew. Share our websites and social media pages on your own platforms. Most importantly, keep every member of our staff and every artist we feature lifted in prayer as we work together to share the love of God through Positive Country Music.

Our greatest hope is that something within these pages ministers to someone right when they need it most. God has blessed us with six incredible years, and we give Him all the praise as we look forward to many more seasons of Cross Country USA Magazine and Cross Country USA Radio.

Robin

Robin Tanner, Managing Editor

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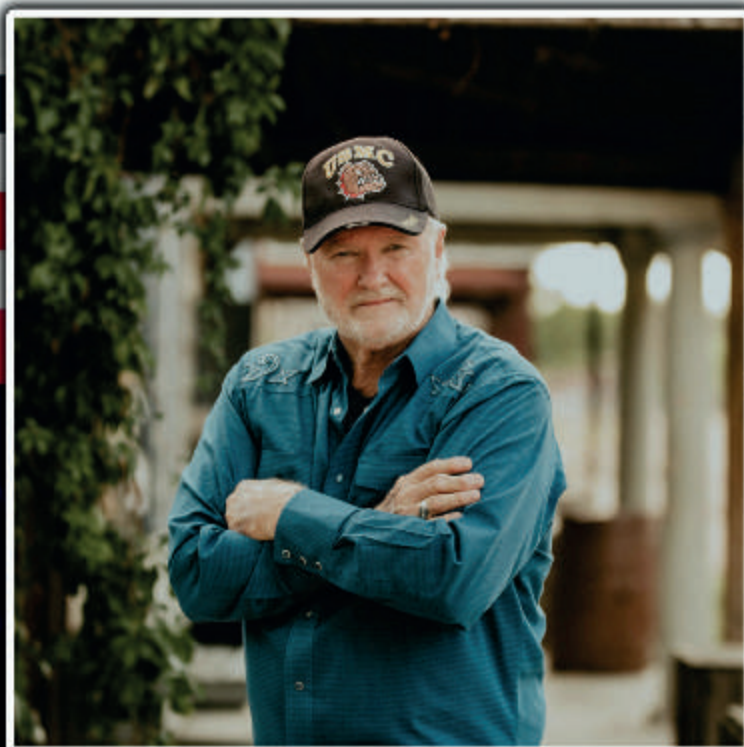
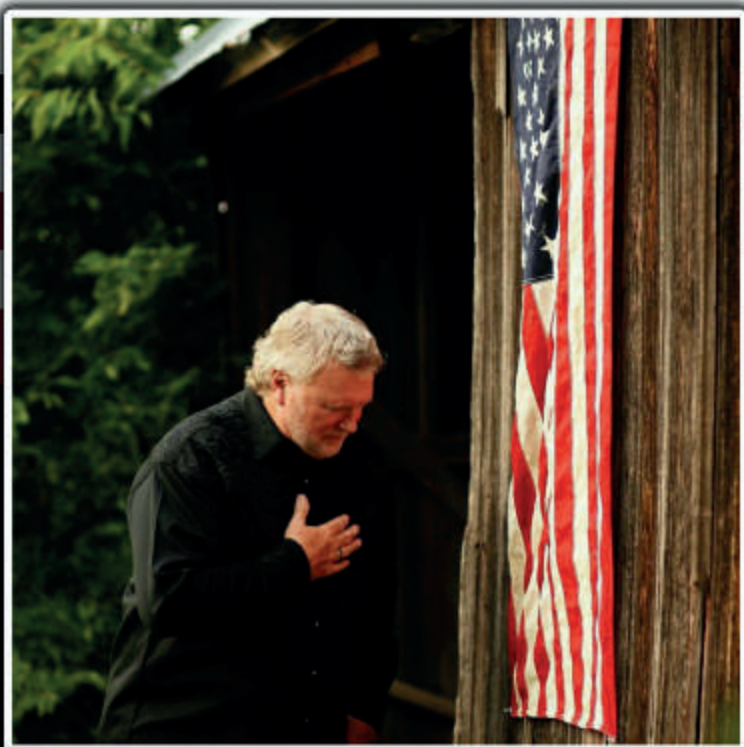
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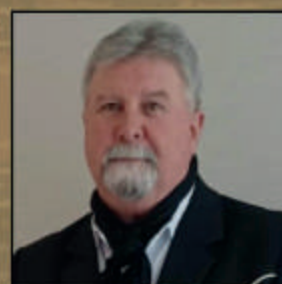
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Love Is All You Need
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We All Need Jesus
J'Lee



The Storm
Jan Harbuck



Squeeze Your Guts Out
Jimmy R. Price



Leading Me Home
Melissa Garner

By Robin Tanner

SKYE FULL OF JOY



Skye Full of Joy is a family group whose music radiates faith, joy, and the strength of their bond. The young sibling trio, Bentley Chase (11), Adelee Skye (9,) and Delilah Joy (8), perform alongside their parents, Melissa and Larry Reeves, who help guide their songwriting, harmonies, and instrumental training. Bentley plays cajon and is beginning guitar, Adelee is learning banjo and guitar, and Delilah is studying piano and mandolin.

Their musical journey is nurtured through their involvement at Lamplight Theater in Kingsport, Tennessee, a Christian theater ministry led by Billy Wayne Arrington. The family describes it as “not a theater that does ministry, but a ministry that does theater,” a place that has shaped their love for performance and storytelling.

Music runs deep in their heritage. Melissa’s mother, Betty White Thurman, who is in Heaven, was a powerful influence. She sang with her family in the White’s Evangelistic Team and released four solo albums. The Reeves family is currently updating Betty’s original songs and hopes to release a tribute album in her honor. The children’s musical inspirations span generations.

The kids have many musical influences, beginning with their mom. Adelee looks up to Anne Wilson, Katy Nicole, Emerson Day, Jamie MacDonald, Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton, and Sara Evans. Delilah adds Blessing Offor, Forest Frank, Chris Tomlin, and LeAnn Rimes, especially for her yodeling.

Bentley agrees with his sisters’ influences and includes Colton Dixon. As a group, they all love The Crabb Family, Jason Crabb, Karen Peck and New River, Cain, Caleb and John, and Josiah Queen.

Over the past year, the family has written eighteen original songs and is working toward a studio recording. Their first song, *I Was Chosen*, tells the children’s adoption story. It is a testimony that rarely leaves a dry eye in the audience. Larry and Melissa fostered for twenty-five years, caring for forty-seven children and adopting twenty. Bentley, Adelee, and Delilah were the children of a former foster child and considered grandchildren. “When they were three, almost two, and just three months old, they entered care. “Pappy and Meme jumped into action,” the family shares, “and God moved mountains.” The three were adopted and became part of the Reeves family forever. Their song title says it all - they were chosen by God and by their parents.

Adelee performed as the youth entertainer at Country Tonite Theatre for two years, while Delilah and Bentley were performing at Dollywood. This year, the children chose to focus on singing together, sharing their music in churches and Christian events. Their adoption song continues to be one of their most moving moments on stage.



The girls competed at NACMAI this past March, where Adelee won 'Vocalist of the Year' and 'Entertainer of the Year.' Delilah earned 'Dancer of the Year' and 'Rising Star Vocalist.' Together, as Skye Full of Joy, they were awarded 'Entertaining Duo of the Year' for Traditional Country. Delilah is the group's multi-talent: she clogs, yodels, sings, and is now a ventriloquist.

The Reeves family began traveling full-time in their RV in 2021, touring the East Coast. They moved to Sevier County after Adelee earned her role at Country Tonite. Delilah later became the youngest performer ever hired at Dollywood, and Bentley was also an actor there. Adelee reflects, "I have loved singing since I was a baby. Then my mom worked with me and put me in some contests and pageants. Then I auditioned for Country Tonite and I got it!" Delilah adds, "I just love to sing and yodel and clog so I practice a lot!"

Their parents have instilled a deep love for the Lord. Adelee shares, "I pray every night and ask God to lead me, and before every performance we pray for God to help me and to let others see Him in me. One time after the show some people came and told me they felt the Holy Spirit when I sang. Many people have said they feel an anointing. That makes me happy! I ALWAYS WANT GOD TO LEAD ME." Delilah adds, "I just love Jesus and want Him to be in my life in everything." And Bentley states, "I love when people give their lives to Jesus and follow him. I want to share His love with people who don't know Him yet." He adds, "I am so glad He gave us talent and that my voice is finally working to sing with them because I LOVE IT! Adelee concludes, "Jesus brought us to our mom and dad to help us do what Jesus called us to do."

The family has built a strong online presence with more than twenty-one thousand followers on Facebook and new accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Their weekly series, Front Porch Sharing, features Adelee's Monday song explorations, Delilah's Tuesday puppet lessons with Bible teaching and yodeling or clogging, Bentley's Wednesday Bible reflections and prayer, Mom and Dad's Thursday marital encouragement, and the entire family's Sunday night devotion and music. They are actively booking churches and events, offering a blend of Gospel, Country, 50's classics, Broadway, and musical theater. Their shows are family-friendly, uplifting, and centered on sharing the Gospel.

Even with a busy performance schedule, the children have big dreams. They want to make people smile, they want to write and record music, and appear on radio and TV. Adelee says, "I want to sing on a lot of stages and tell people about Jesus in my songs and what I say and how I act." Delilah



The Reeves Family

hopes "to be on the radio, be a blogger, sing on a TV show sometime, and act on TV." That dream is becoming a reality. Their Mom, Melissa shares, "We all were cast as a background family in a new Hallmark/Disney for Hallmark Countdown to Christmas with Lacey Chabert and Travis Van Winkle. We spent a month in Florida filming."

They plan to eventually form a full family band - Adelee on banjo, Delilah on mandolin, Bentley on acoustic guitar, and Dad on bass and they are practicing toward that goal. When they're not singing or learning instruments, they enjoy swimming, bike riding, and outings with family.

Bentley Chase, Adelee Skye, and Delilah Joy are young, gifted, and grounded in faith. Their charm, talent, and love for Jesus shine in every performance. With their parents' guidance and God's direction, Skye Full of Joy is touching hearts everywhere they go. Their story is one of joy, calling, and the beautiful truth that being chosen by God and by family can change everything.

Follow Skye Full of Joy on social media.





12th Annual Country with Heart Event Benefits St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Grand Ole Opry stars, Hall of Fame entertainers, songwriters and Country music fans gathered during CMA Fest week to add to a 12-year total of more than 200 thousand dollars for research and treatment at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

By Robin Tanner

Photos by Carol Roshkind and Robin Tanner

The 12th annual Country With Heart for St. Jude benefit presented by Workout Anytime 24/7 with supporting sponsor, Gus Arrendale and Springer Mountain Farms and The Legends of Country Music Museum hosted Country fans from around the world on June 6, the Saturday of CMA Fest. It was an outpouring of love through donations, auction bids and an all-star night of entertainment at the Nashville Nightlife Dinner Theatre. This year's donations, for the one night only benefit, totaled an impressive \$30,000, taking the total monies raised over the 12-year run to more than 200-thousand dollars.

Founder/organizer and host, Bobby Marquez shared, "The miles these friends travel, both fans and stars, and their generosity is truly the heart of this event. They come every year swapping hugs and enjoying dinner and photos together, cheering for the music and spreading the word, helping any way they can. It is so humbling and just a remarkable night of goodwill we know is saving children thanks to the remarkable work of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital."

Country music fans in town for CMA Fest once again lined up for autographs from Country music legend Donna Fargo. Some of the biggest names in Country music including John Conlee, Riders in the Sky, Rex Allen Jr., Charlie McCoy with Jason Coleman and Barbara Fairchild continued to support the effort through personal donations and great performances, bringing the crowd to their feet.

Grand Ole Opry stars Suzy Bogguss and The Whites made their first appearances along with hit songwriter David Wills on stirring sing-alongs. Becky Hobbs entertained on piano with a rousing set

rounded out with the St. Jude theme song she wrote, *Angels Among Us*. Bobby Marquez and his wife DJ Hall of Famer Jennifer Herron hosted the special evening. Bobby opened the show with his special penned song, *Country With Heart* and closed with a loving message conveyed through his song, *Speak Love*.

Another addition this year, auctioneer extraordinaire Steve Sandlin energized the room with a game of bidding for some true treasures. "There are so many folks I can't thank enough. Guitar Center, Nick Young, Jay Jackson, Joe Hobbs, John Q, the teams of Josh Turner and Pam Tillis, The Legends of Country Music Museum, Ron Harman and



Country With Heart Founder/Host Bobby Marquez with St. Jude Representatives



Suzy Boggus



**Roy Morris &
Barbara Fairchild**



Charlie McCoy



John Conlee



**Jennifer Herron
and Donna Fargo**



David Wills



Becky Hobbs



The Whites

our St. Jude girls Lily and Emmy all contributed to this year's auction. Special thanks to David Bushong. And many thanks to everyone who bid on items, our volunteers and the staff at the Nashville Nightlife Dinner Theatre," states Bobby Marquez.

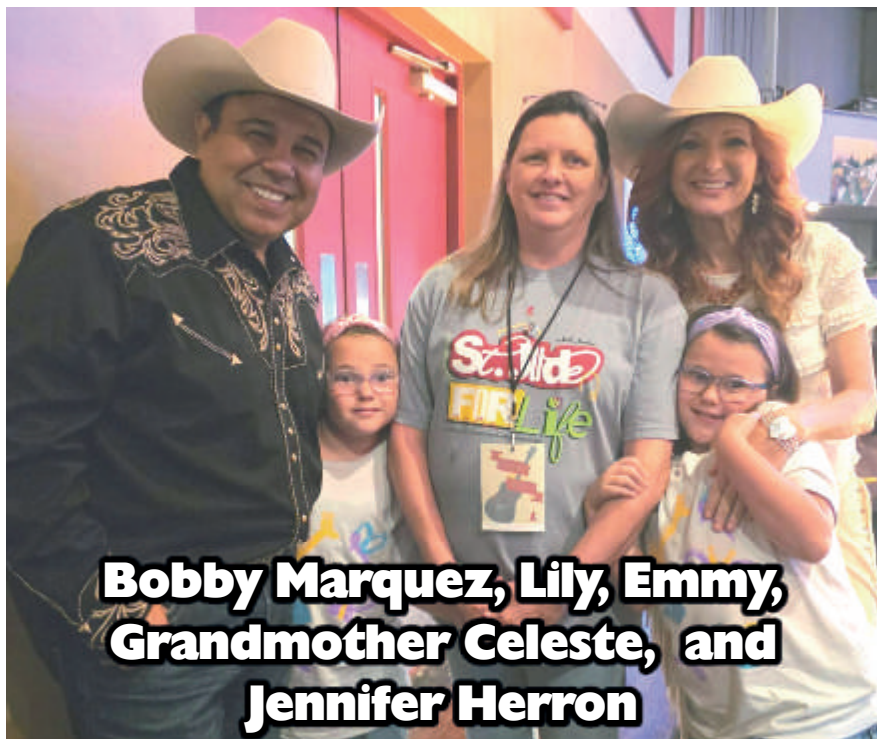
The Country With Heart benefit for St. Jude is held annually during CMA Fest week in June in Nashville, Tennessee in honor of Petey Northup, a St. Jude kid who inspired his favorite singer, Bobby Marquez to give back through a true fan fair experience joining stars and fans for a life-changing event. "It is surreal to know that every dime donated is literally saving lives as St. Jude continues to find

cures and the best treatments, saving children, like little Lily who was there to shout she is cancer free with her twin Emmy. God bless everyone who showed up and helped make this possible," concludes Marquez.

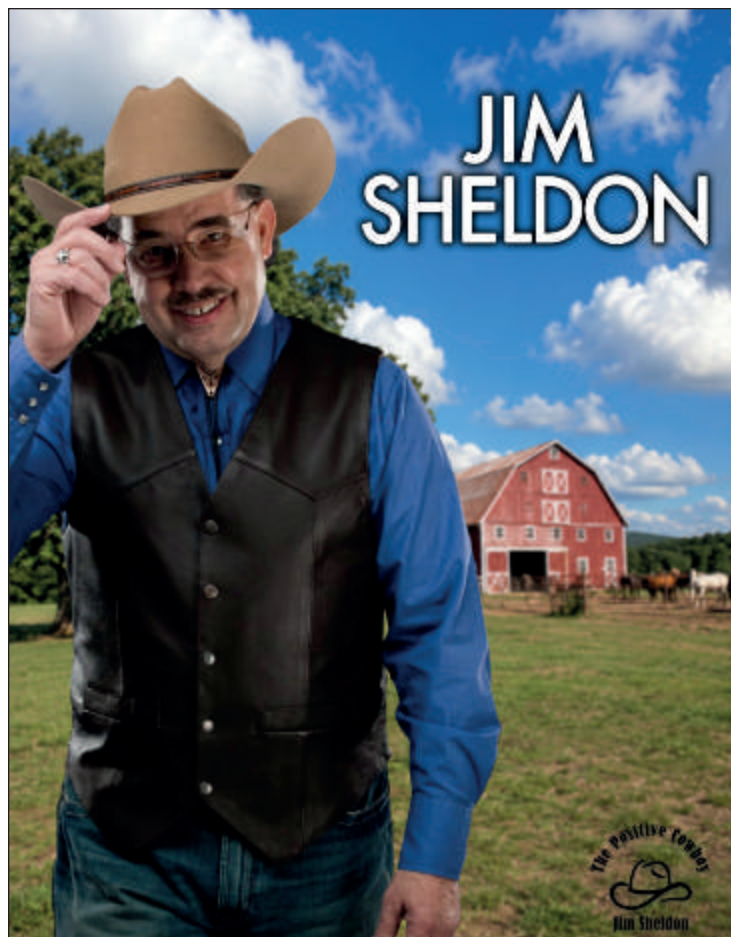
To date, the annual event has raised thousands of dollars for treatments and research. Participating talent has included, Lee Roy Parnell, Exile, Rex Allen Jr., Charlie McCoy, Clint Black, Mark Wills, John Conlee, Wade Hayes, Barbara Fairchild, Crystal Gayle, Chuck Mead, Gary Chapman, David Ball, Riders in The Sky, Sylvia, Andy Griggs, Johnny Rodriguez, John Berry, Linda Davis, Larry Gatlin, Billy Yates, John Schneider, Becky Hobbs and more.

The mission of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is to advance cures, and means of prevention, for pediatric catastrophic diseases through research and treatment. Consistent with the vision of its founder Danny Thomas, no child is denied treatment based on race, religion or a family's ability to pay. Families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food - so they can focus on helping their child live. St. Jude has treated children from all 50 states and from around the world. Treatments invented at St. Jude have helped push the overall childhood cancer survival rate from 20% to more than 80% since it opened more than 50 years ago.

www.bobbymarquez.com
www.stjude.org



Bobby Marquez, Lily, Emmy, Grandmother Celeste, and Jennifer Herron

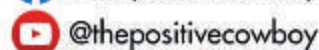
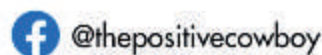


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The Story Behind the Song

JESUS IS THE KING

(Ode to David Lee)

Staff, Cross Country USA

Written and recorded by Ken Mobley

Elvis Presley remains the most iconic music artist of all time. When the King of Rock & Roll passed away on August 16, 1977, the world mourned a legend. Forty-nine years later, his legacy still stands strong in the hearts of millions. To mark the anniversary, we wanted to feature a song that honors both Elvis and the King of Kings - Jesus Christ. Christian Country artist Ken Mobley shares the inspiration behind *Jesus Is the King*, a song born from a message of faith and a special friendship.



Some songs begin with a serious message, and others begin with a smile. Ken explains that *Jesus Is the King* started with both. “I met a gentleman who has become a dear friend and someone I deeply respect. His name is David Lee. Now, if you’ve ever met David Lee, you know he’s not your average entertainer. David is an award-winning Elvis Presley tribute artist who has traveled all over the world entertaining audiences and serving as an ambassador for the music and legacy of Elvis Presley.”

David Lee has performed for thousands, won numerous awards, and built a reputation as one of the finest tribute artists anywhere. But Ken admits, “That’s not what impresses me most about David Lee. What impresses me most is his heart. David is the kind of person who never misses an opportunity to talk about what God has done in his life. He’s open about his struggles. He’s open about his failures. He’s open about the mistakes he’s made. And he’s just as open about the grace that God has shown him.”

Over the years, David has shared his testimony with countless people. He talks about the difficult roads he’s traveled and the battles he fought. He talks about how God gave him the strength to walk away from a lifestyle he no longer wanted to live.

“He talks about how God’s grace helped free him from alcohol and from influences that were pulling him in the wrong direction. Most importantly, he talks about how Jesus Christ changed his life,” says Ken.

Ken admires that David never pretends to be perfect. “In fact, he’d probably be the first person to tell you that he’s far from it. He’ll tell you he loves his wife and daughter. He may even tell you he loves his Cadillac and he’ll definitely tell you he loves Elvis Presley. But if you spend very much time around David Lee, you’ll quickly discover that above everything else, he loves Jesus.”

That truth is what makes this story so special. David Lee has spent much of his life portraying the man many call the King of Rock & Roll. He has performed the music, worn the jumpsuits, and entertained crowds around the world. “Yet for all the admiration he has for Elvis Presley, David is always quick to remind people of one very important truth: There is only one King. And His name is Jesus.”

Ken says that simple thought stayed with him. “One day, as I was thinking about David and the testimony he shares so faithfully, an idea for a song began to form. At first, it was meant to be a lighthearted tribute to a friend. After all, there seemed to be something wonderfully ironic about an Elvis

tribute artist standing on stage telling people that the real King isn't Elvis at all. The real King is Jesus."

He remembers performing the song for David at a birthday celebration. "A few years ago, I performed the song for David. The crowd laughed and smiled. They understood the joke. Something unexpected happened. People didn't just hear the humor, they heard the message. Because, beneath the playful nature of the song was a truth that every one of us needs to remember. It doesn't matter who we are, where we come from or what title we hold. It doesn't matter how much money we have or how famous we become. There is only one King."

He adds, "The older I've gotten, the more I've realized how easy it is for people to place other things on the throne of their lives. Sometimes it's money or success. Sometimes it's pride and sometimes it's people. Yet every one of those things eventually fades away. Only Jesus remains."

Jesus Is the King became much more than a birthday song for a friend. It became a reminder that God's grace is available to everyone, a reminder that no one is beyond redemption. "God can take broken people and write beautiful stories with their lives. David Lee's life is proof of that."



David Lee as Elvis Presley

Ken continues, "God didn't see his failure or his mistakes. God saw him as someone worth saving, someone worth loving and someone worth redeeming. When God looks at David Lee, there is no confusion about who he is. He doesn't see Elvis Presley. He sees a faithful servant, a husband, father and a friend. A man who loves the Lord and isn't afraid to tell others about Him. That's why this song means so much to me."

He concludes, "The message is simple. No matter who you are, where you've been or what you've accomplished, there is only one King who can save your soul. Only one King who can forgive your sins. Only one King who can change your life and His name is Jesus. *Jesus is the King!*"

Jesus Is the King (An Ode to David Lee)

*I was sitting in a waffle house,
Out on highway 24
When an Elvis Presley look-alike
Came walking through the door
He was wearing a leather jacket,
Had on seven golden rings
And a faded t-shirt that said
Jesus is the King
Mmmm mmmhmm Jesus is the King*

Chorus

*I heard him say well you know my name is David Lee
I've lived here all my life, I love kids and Cadillacs
And my mighty pretty wife
But the most important thing
To remember about me
Is how Jesus saved my life
The day he set me free
Ain't who you are or who you look like
That matters to the Lord
So I'm gonna tell the whole world
Til I can't speak no more
Elvis will always be cool...
But Jesus is the King*

*Well, he was laughing and a talking
To everybody there
Then he came over to me
And pulled up a chair
He said it looks like you're searching
For something you can't find
So let me introduce you
To a special friend of mine
Mmmmmmm hhhmmmm a special friend of mine*

Chorus

*I heard him say well you know my name is David Lee
I've lived here all my life, I love kids and Cadillacs
And my mighty pretty wife
But the most important thing
To remember about me
Is how Jesus saved my life
The day he set me free
Ain't who you are or who you look like
That matters to the Lord
So I'm gonna tell the whole world
Til I can't speak no more
Elvis will always be cool...
But Jesus is the King*

Tag

*Mmm hmmm Jesus is the King
Mmm hmmm Jesus is the King
Mmm hmmm Elvis will always be cool...
But Jesus is - the King.*

Remembering...

Staff, Cross Country USA

TOMMY HUNTER

March 20, 1937 – July 2, 2026

In the early spring of 1937, in London, Ontario, a boy named Thomas James Hunter entered the world with a quiet charm that would one day feel familiar to millions. Long before television lights found him, long before “Canada’s Country Gentleman” became a household phrase, Tommy was simply a young Canadian with a guitar, a gentle voice, and a gift for making people feel at home.

As he grew, music followed him like a faithful companion. By the mid-1950s, while most of North America was still discovering what Country music could be, Tommy stepped onto the stage of CBC’s Country Hoedown in 1956. He was just nineteen - earnest, polished, and unmistakably himself. Audiences noticed. Producers noticed. Canada noticed. There was something in his presence that felt trustworthy, warm, and deeply Canadian.

That early chapter opened the door to the moment that would define his life. In 1965, CBC handed him the reins to a new weekly program: The Tommy Hunter Show. What began as a national experiment soon became one of the most enduring music programs in North American television history. Week after week, year after year, Tommy walked into living rooms across Canada with the same gentle confidence - no gimmicks, no caricatures, no hay bales or barnyard props. He believed Country music deserved dignity, and he insisted on presenting it with class.

Families gathered around the television not just for music, but for Tommy himself. He became a familiar friend - the kind you welcomed without hesitation. His show ran for twenty-seven consecutive years on CBC, then crossed the border through The Nashville Network, introducing Canadian Country music to millions of American viewers who quickly embraced him as one of their own.

Across those decades, Tommy’s stage became a crossroads of Country music history. Hank Snow, Roy Acuff, Kitty Wells, Johnny Cash, Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson, Carroll Baker, Reba McEntire, Rita MacNeil, Michelle



Wright, Shania Twain - legends, newcomers, and Canadian trailblazers all stood under his lights. He offered a national platform to artists who needed one and a dignified home for Country music at a time when stereotypes often overshadowed its artistry.

When the television chapter closed in 1992, Tommy didn’t step away from the people who loved him. He took his music on the road, performing across Canada with the same sincerity that had defined his broadcast years. Concert halls filled with grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren - four generations who had grown up with him, now seeing him in

person. On his 75th birthday in 2012, he performed his final concert and retired from touring, closing that chapter with grace.

Honors followed him throughout his life: three Juno Awards, a Gemini Award, induction into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame, appointments to both the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, and even a Canada Post stamp bearing his name. Each recognition reflected not just his achievements, but the affection of a nation that had welcomed him for more than half a century.

On July 2, 2026, Tommy Hunter passed away of natural causes at the age of 89. His longtime business manager, Brian Edwards, spoke for countless fans when he said, “Tommy lived and worked with grace, humility, and deep respect for the audiences who welcomed him into their homes for thirty-six consecutive years.”

And that is how he will be remembered - not only as a broadcaster, not only as a musician, but as a gentle presence who helped lift Country music into the Canadian mainstream and into the hearts of millions across North America. His legacy lives on in the artists he championed, the families he entertained, and the quiet dignity he brought to every stage he ever stepped upon.

A country gentleman, indeed - and one whose influence will continue to echo long after the final sign-off.

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..... CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MUSIC NEWS & SCOOPS

Wildhorse Records Officially Launches as a New Independent Record Label



Wildhorse Records announced its official launch on July 20th as an independent record label dedicated to discovering, developing, and promoting artists whose music is grounded in authenticity, strong songwriting, and meaningful stories.

Founded by music promoter, songwriter, and producer Brian Orr, Wildhorse Records will focus on Country, Bluegrass, Gospel, and Americana music. The label was created to give artists thoughtful career development and a professional home where integrity, purpose, and the story behind each song remain central to the work.

"Wildhorse Records was built from a genuine love for music and the people who create it," said Orr, founder and CEO of Wildhorse Records. "I want this label to be a place where artists are respected, songs still matter, and careers are built with integrity and vision. This launch is only the beginning, and I am excited about what lies ahead."

Wildhorse Records will support artists through songwriting, artist development, recording, production, promotion, and distribution. Its approach reflects the traditions that have shaped American roots music while creating opportunities for today's generation of artists.

The label's official website is now live at WildhorseRecordsUSA.com, offering visitors an introduction to the company, its mission, and the artists and music that will be announced in the months ahead.

Wildhorse Records is guided by four defining values: faith, family, country, and purpose. Its official message - "Authentic Music. Real Stories. Built to Last." - captures the label's commitment to music intended to inspire, encourage, and stand the test of time.

American Idol Winner Hannah Harper has Signed with WME for Global Representation

Hannah Harper began singing in her family's Bluegrass Gospel group at age nine. The Missouri native later became a worship leader at a local church before embarking on a solo career. The 19 Recordings/Atlantic Records artist recently won



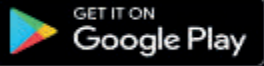
Pictured (L-R): Alex Sera (WME), Hannah Harper, Morgan Kenney (WME) and Carlile Willett (WME).

Photo: Courtesy of WME



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Season 24 of American Idol. Weeks later, Harper signed with WME for global representation. She will be represented by agents Alex Sera, Carlile Willett and Morgan Kenney.

"It's a blessing to work alongside people who share the same goal: creating great music, serving others well and pointing people to Jesus along the way. I immediately connected with Morgan Kenney's vision, heart and the way she champions the people she serves," shares Harper. "I'm honored to be represented by WME and excited to see what doors this partnership may open. Grateful is an understatement."

Harper will join Brad Paisley's Live 2026 Tour and Lauren Alaina's The Stages Tour on select dates this fall.

The Charlie Daniels Band Debuts AI-Generated Music Video For Newly Released Patriotic Song, 'My Home'



Just days after the long-awaited release of the Charlie Daniels Band's (CDB) previously unreleased patriotic anthem *My Home*, the Daniels family is unveiling an ambitious new AI-generated music video that brings the song's message to life in an unexpected way.

The video was conceived and created by the late Charlie Daniels' son, Charlie Daniels Jr., who initially set out to produce a simple lyric video to accompany the song's release. What began as a straightforward promotional project quickly evolved into something much more elaborate after Daniels began experimenting with emerging artificial intelligence video technology.

Using an AI-powered platform, Daniels uploaded the newly released recording and explored a variety of visual concepts inspired by the song's themes of patriotism, faith and appreciation for America.

"I originally just wanted a lyric video for the song," notes Daniels. "I was learning completely on the fly, trying to understand how the system worked, what prompts it needed and how to fine-tune each scene. I spent several days obsessing over it until I finally had something that felt right."

The project took an unexpected turn when Daniels discovered the platform's animation capabilities. "What started as a basic slideshow with lyrics suddenly became a full-fledged music video," he explains. "When I saw what it could do, my mind was blown."

While acknowledging the limitations of current AI technology, Daniels embraced the creative possibilities the platform offered. The result is a visually rich production that captures the spirit of the song while paying tribute to his father's enduring legacy. "It's certainly not perfect," he says. "There were challenges and compromises along the way, but considering it was built by an amateur experimenting with AI, I'm incredibly proud of how it turned out."

The experience has also sparked ideas for future projects drawn from the extensive Daniels vault. "Now that I've got this one under my belt, you can bet there will be more to come," he adds.

The music video arrives shortly after the release of *My Home*, a CDB recording originally created in 2014 for a Macy's Fourth of July television special. Although the song was prominently featured during the broadcast, it remained commercially unavailable for more than a decade until its release earlier this month via Blue Hat Records.

With the rediscovered recording now available, *My Home* joins a growing slate of 2026 projects celebrating the Charlie Daniels legacy.

Fans can watch the official *My Home* music video now on the Charlie Daniels YouTube channel and stream or download the song on all major digital platforms.

Nashville Hall of Fame Songwriter Rhett Akins Invited To Be The Next Member of The Grand Ole Opry

Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame member Rhett Akins, writer of 36 No. 1 Country hits for artists including Luke Bryan, Thomas Rhett, Blake Shelton, and more, was surprised with an

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invitation to become a member of the Grand Ole Opry on June 28, by friend and Opry member Jon Pardi

Pardi slipped into the Opry House under the radar and made his way to center stage to surprise Akins as he finished his set, saying, "Rhett has always been somebody who has always been a mentor and taught a lot to me about how to write songs, how to be a co-writer. He has over 30 No. 1's." Turning to Akins, he continued, "You've always been family to me, but I'm here to invite you to be part of a different family. Rhett Akins, I am here to invite you to become a member of the Grand Ole Opry."

Rhett Akins' wife and children walked out to the stage, an emotional Akins "officially" stepped foot back into the Opry circle, knelt down in gratitude, and said, "All I do every day is write words and I can't think of any words right now except, 'Thank you Lord Jesus.' I have been listening to the Grand Ole Opry since I was a little kid with my grandparents. Watching it when it used to be on TNN. Anytime they'd ask me to play, if I was in Alaska, I'd fly home immediately. I love Country music with all my heart and all I ever wanted to do was meet Hank Jr., meet George Strait. I never dreamed I'd be in this circle right here with Bill Monroe, Minnie Pearl, Roy Acuff, Garth and Alan... and Jon Pardi. This is just unbelievable."

Opry executive producer Dan Rogers praised the honor, saying, "We're going to be so pleased to welcome a fellow like

Rhett who has made such an impact both as a recording artist and an often-recorded songwriter into the Opry family. Rhett lauds the Opry's traditions and is excited to help build its future as the show enters its second century."

Akins will officially join the Opry family later this year, with an induction date to be announced.

Dolly Parton Officially Opens Dolly's Tennessean Travel Stop

Dolly Parton officially opened Dolly's Tennessean Travel Stop in Cornersville, Tennessee, celebrating the launch of a first-of-its-kind roadside destination built around her lifelong love of the open road. Joined by Danny Nozell, manager of Dolly's Travel Stops, and Gregory H. Sachs, partner in the venture, Parton cut the ribbon before a crowd of hundreds

gathered at 3686 Pulaski Highway off Exit 22 on I-65, a busy corridor between Nashville and Huntsville.

The grand opening drew fans, travelers, truckers, and local families eager to see the flagship location, which Parton described as a place designed for "anyone hauling loads, hauling the family, or just passing through." Welcoming guests with her signature warmth, she said, "We built this place for



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you. Good food, real rest, a little music, and people who are genuinely glad you stopped in... that's what the road has always deserved, and that is what you will find here. Welcome home." She also joked about her hands-on involvement, quipping, "I couldn't leave it to beavers. I had to throw my squirrely little self in there," before adding that the goal wasn't competition but comfort: "We think we're gonna have everything that you want or need."

The Cornersville location was chosen for its strong community ties and its potential to inspire future Dolly-branded stops nationwide. The property features a general store stocked with exclusive merchandise, a full-service Southern-style restaurant, DLY BBQ grab-and-go favorites, and the Cup of Ambition coffee and ice cream shop created in partnership with Community Coffee. Travelers will also find a Trucker's Lounge with showers and laundry, a live music space, and numerous photo opportunities, including the Butterfly Lullaby mural commissioned specifically for the site.

One of the most talked-about attractions is the Doggy Parton Dog Park, which includes adoptable puppies from Wags & Walks, blending Dolly's love for animals with her commitment to community service.

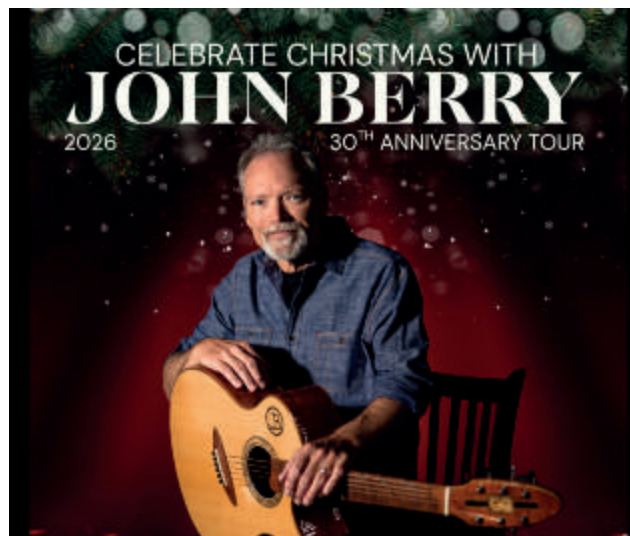
The ribbon-cutting launched a week-long celebration filled with live music, giveaways, and special events.

More details and event schedules are available at dollytravelstops.com.

John Berry Announces Dates For His Historical "Christmas With John Berry" 30th Anniversary Tour

GRAMMY® & EMMY® award-winning singer/songwriter John Berry is excited to announce the first dates for his "Christmas With John Berry" 30th Anniversary Tour. With thirteen shows currently slated, and more to come, the tour will kick off on November 27 in Sugar Hill, Georgia, and continue through the holiday season. John Berry takes pride in offering a fresh new show each year while always including popular classics like *Little Drummer Boy*, *O Come All Ye Faithful*, *Let It Snow*, *Mary Did You Know*, and his timeless hit, *O Holy Night*. For the latest information on the "Christmas With John Berry" 30th Anniversary Tour, visit johnberry.com/tour.

"Thirty years have passed, and I never could have imagined what an incredible blessing it would be to share my music while celebrating the birth of Christ," Berry says. "Robin



and I are deeply grateful to see so many familiar faces return year after year with family and friends to celebrate the joy of the Christmas season together. Sharing this special tradition with all of you is a true gift, and I am forever thankful for your love and continued support."

Each performance is a two-part show that begins with many of his biggest hits before Berry returns after intermission to a beautifully decorated, festive stage to perform fan-favorite Christmas classics while sharing treasured holiday memories. This year also marks the 30th anniversary of Berry's hit single *She's Taken A Shine* and the 30th anniversary of his debut on the Grand Ole Opry.

John Rich Sworn In as Special Envoy for American Landowners

Country music artist and patriot John Rich stepped into a new kind of spotlight this summer, taking on a national leadership role that places him at the center of one of America's most pressing rural issues: private property rights.

In a ceremony held July 10, 2026, inside the Oval Office, Rich was officially sworn in as the Special Envoy for American Landowners, a position created to give farmers, ranchers, and private landowners a direct voice at the federal level.

The appointment, made by President Donald Trump, marks a significant moment for rural communities across the country. The oath of office was administered by Dr. Ben Carson, the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, who



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led the swearing-in ceremony with Rich's family standing proudly at his side. Carson's presence underscored the administration's commitment to elevating rural concerns and strengthening protections for private landowners nationwide.

"President Trump has afforded me the great honor of serving as Special Envoy for American Landowners," said Rich, in a statement. "I look forward to representing and advocating for landowners' rights and standing up for the farmers, ranchers, and rural families who work every day to provide for our country. Protecting private property rights and ensuring that landowners are not harassed, intimidated, or pressured by outside interests will be at the heart of this mission."

Brooke Rollins, secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, stated, "America's farmers, ranchers, and landowners are among the greatest stewards of our nation's resources and the backbone of our rural communities. President Trump understands that private property rights are fundamental to the American way of life. John Rich has long been a champion for rural America, and I look forward to working alongside him as we continue fighting for the people who feed, fuel, and clothe our nation."

In his role, according to the USDA, Rich will engage with and advocate for farmers, ranchers and private landowners and "engage directly with landowners across the country and work to address challenges posed by government overreach, activist pressure campaigns, and outside interests that threaten private property rights and the long-term viability of rural communities. Those threats include "pressure related to large-scale solar and wind development that may impact productive farmland, ranchland, and rural livelihoods."

USDA officials praised Rich's appointment, noting his long-standing advocacy for rural communities. They emphasized that his visibility and influence will help elevate concerns that often go unheard in Washington, especially during a time of rapid change in national energy and land-use policy.

For John Rich, this role represents more than a title, it's an extension of his identity as a Country artist deeply connected to American values, rural heritage, and the people who make



John Rich Family and Dr. Ben Carson

up the heartland. His swearing-in ceremony, attended by his family, symbolized both personal pride and national responsibility.

Country For A Cause Raises \$45,000 For Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt

Great things happen when the Country music community comes together for a cause. Country For A Cause pulled out all the stops during their CMA Fest 2026 concert at Nashville's 3rd & Lindsley and raised \$45,000 for Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt and celebrated the 12th Anniversary with a four-hour show like no other.

Hosted by Country legend T.G. Sheppard and Kelly Lang, along with Devon O'Day, an eclectic group of stellar performers and special guests including Darin & Brooke Aldridge, Moe Bandy, John Berry, Trey Calloway, Allie Colleen, Linda Davis, Hannah Dasher, Ty Herndon, Jake Hoot, Dani-elle Kleha, The Kody Norris Show, The Malpass Brothers, Neal McCoy, Heidi Newfield, Makenzie Phipps, and Mark Wills.

A few surprise guests also donated their time and talents to raise money to help children on their health care journey. These were Chad Brock, Aubrey Nicole (The Voice), Thompson Square, and Billy Yates.

Continued on page 28 >>>



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Pictured L-R: Sherri Forrest, Scott Sexton, Kelly Lang, T.G. Sheppard, Bev Moser

The event was sponsored by Gus Arrendale and Springer Mountain Farms Chicken, and the group of dynamic entertainers performed to a sold-out house for the seventh consecutive year.

Sheppard stated, "Kelly and I are once again honored to have been asked to host Country For A Cause. It truly is one of our favorite concert events of the year and a special way to kick off CMA Fest. Thanks to everyone who gave their time, talent, and support to make our 12th annual benefit concert such a tremendous success. With twenty incredible artists donating their performances for a great cause, it's easy to see why this event continues to be so special. These folks have some of the biggest hearts in the music industry. This year's Country For A Cause was absolutely the best ever, and we are grateful for everyone who helped make it another sold-out event. We hope to see everyone again next year."

Sherri Forrest, President of Country For A Cause added, "The entire Country For A Cause team is thrilled with the fundraising results from our production this year to benefit Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt in Nashville, Tennessee. Thank you to Scott Sexton, our CEO, the Board of

Directors, the volunteers, 3rd & Lindsley, Gus Arrendale and Springer Mountain Farms, Mezek Films, our radio partner at 106.7 Y'all FM, and the artists who give it their all to make this year's show so successful. A huge amount of gratitude goes to our devoted audiences who return year after year with their generous contributions and support. This year has been a rough year for everyone, and you still showed up! Thank you!"

Country For A Cause is an annual concert held just before the CMA Music Festival in Nashville. Artists who have performed throughout the years include Crystal Gayle, The Bellamy Brothers, Mark Wills, Ty Herndon, Doug Supernaw, Baillie and the Boys, Collin Raye, Billy Dean, Jeannie Seely, Jan Howard, The Isaacs, Rhonda Vincent, Larry Gatlin, Ashton Shepherd, Leona Williams, Jody Miller, Lulu Roman, Shenandoah, Billy Yates, Moe

Bandy, and countless others. In 2018, Country For A Cause teamed with Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt as the sole beneficiary of proceeds raised.

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt is one of the nation's leading children's hospitals, treating and helping to prevent a full range of pediatric health issues from colds and broken bones to complex heart diseases and cancer.

In 2025, Monroe Carell was again named among the nation's "Best Children's Hospitals" for the 19th consecutive year by U.S. News & World Report. Additionally, the hospital earned the distinction as the No. 1 pediatric hospital in Tennessee and shares first place in the Southeast region for the fifth consecutive year.

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, a nonprofit organization, opened in 2004, expanded its physical space in 2012, and in 2016 began construction to add four new floors encompassing 160,000 total sq. ft. The new expansion helps to advance the size and scope of the hospital's mission.

For more about Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt: ChildrensHospitalVanderbilt.org.

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Buddy Jewell Honors America's Enduring Spirit with New Single, 'I Am America'



RIAA million-airplay recording artist and Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame member, Buddy Jewell has written and released, *I Am America* which offers a heartfelt reminder of the sacrifices, resilience and shared values that helped shape the foundation of the United States. The song honors the like-minded souls and kindred spirits who continue striving for the same freedoms and ideals envisioned by the nation's forefathers, while acknowledging both America's successes and failures. At its core, *I Am America* is a timely reflection on gratitude, unity and the enduring belief that there is still no better place on earth to call home. *I Am America* is available for download and streaming on all digital music platforms.

Buddy Jewell reflects, "I actually wrote *I Am America* a few years back. I'd been chatting with an old friend, who, like me,

is very patriotic. We'd been discussing how things had changed in the USA since we were kids and what a different world our children were growing up in. I have always had a deep respect and admiration for the brave pioneers who initially settled here hundreds of years ago. They came searching for freedom, with the desire to escape religious persecution and economic hardship, and to raise their families in a way as to preserve their heritage and their culture. I wrote *I Am America* because I wanted to remind my kids and my fans of what an incredible, beautiful, sometimes flawed and many times under-appreciated, country that we've been blessed to be born into. I encourage anyone who might not think as highly of America as I do, to spend some quality time in some other places around the globe like I have. I think it just might change a few folks' minds on the subject. God has so abundantly blessed our nation for 250 years and I pray that he continues to do so for generations to come.

For Buddy Jewell, *I Am America* is more than a song, it is a reflection of a lifelong commitment to honoring the men and women who have served this nation and the values they defend. Throughout his career, Jewell has performed for U.S. service members at military installations across the country and overseas, including an extensive USO tour to remote forward operating bases in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan alongside former Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston. His longtime support of America's military, veterans and charitable organizations, coupled with his deep love for his country, inspired a song that recognizes the sacrifices of those who came before us, celebrates the enduring spirit of the American people and reminds listeners that, despite our imperfections, there is still no greater place to call home.

Fans can connect with Buddy Jewell each week during his long-running Facebook Live series, "Tuesday's Tune," which has aired every Tuesday for the past eight years. The live program streams at 6 p.m. CST and features live music, stories from the road, fan interaction, and updates on Buddy's latest projects. Visit his official website at buddyjewell.com and by following him on social media.



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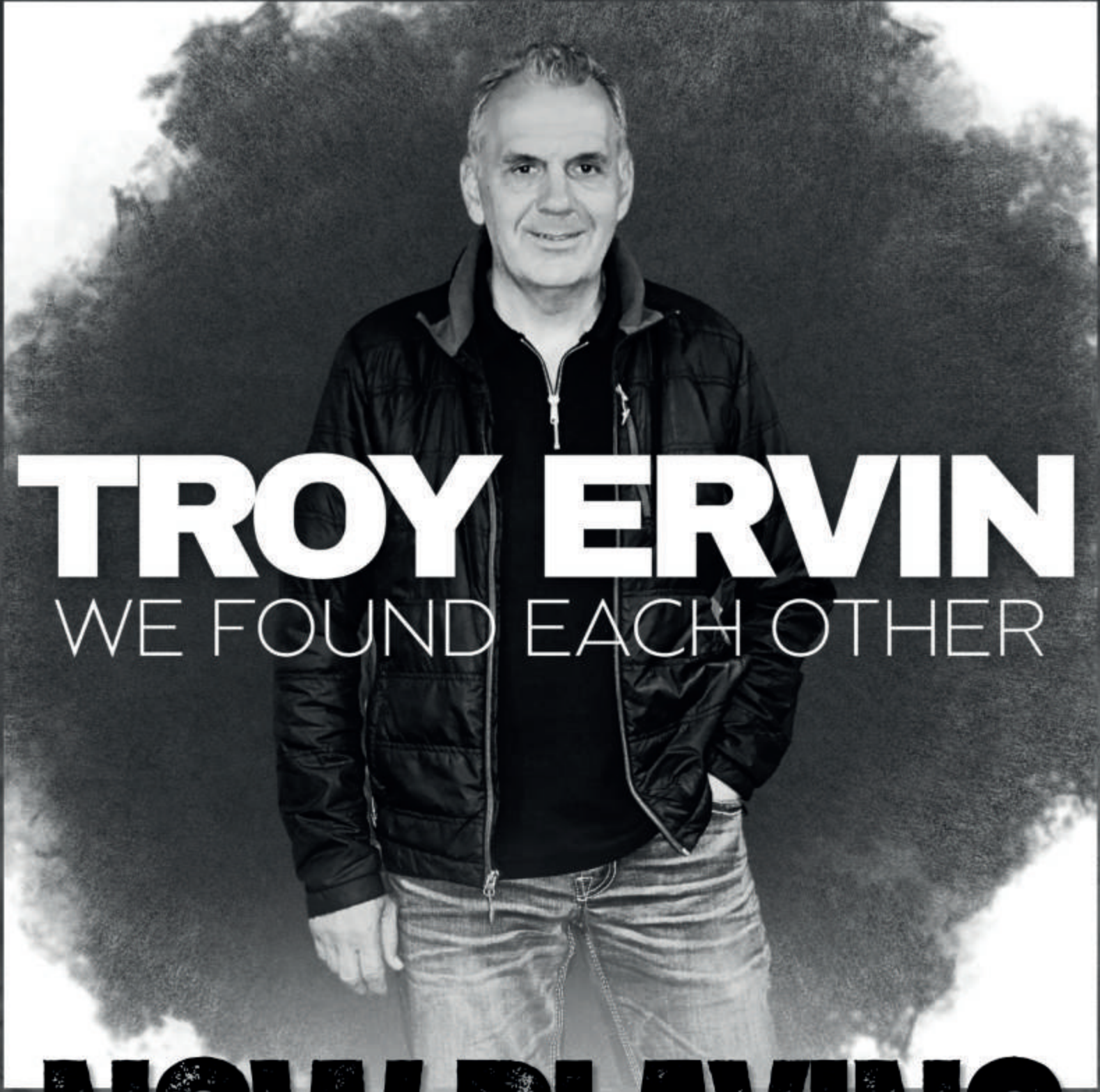
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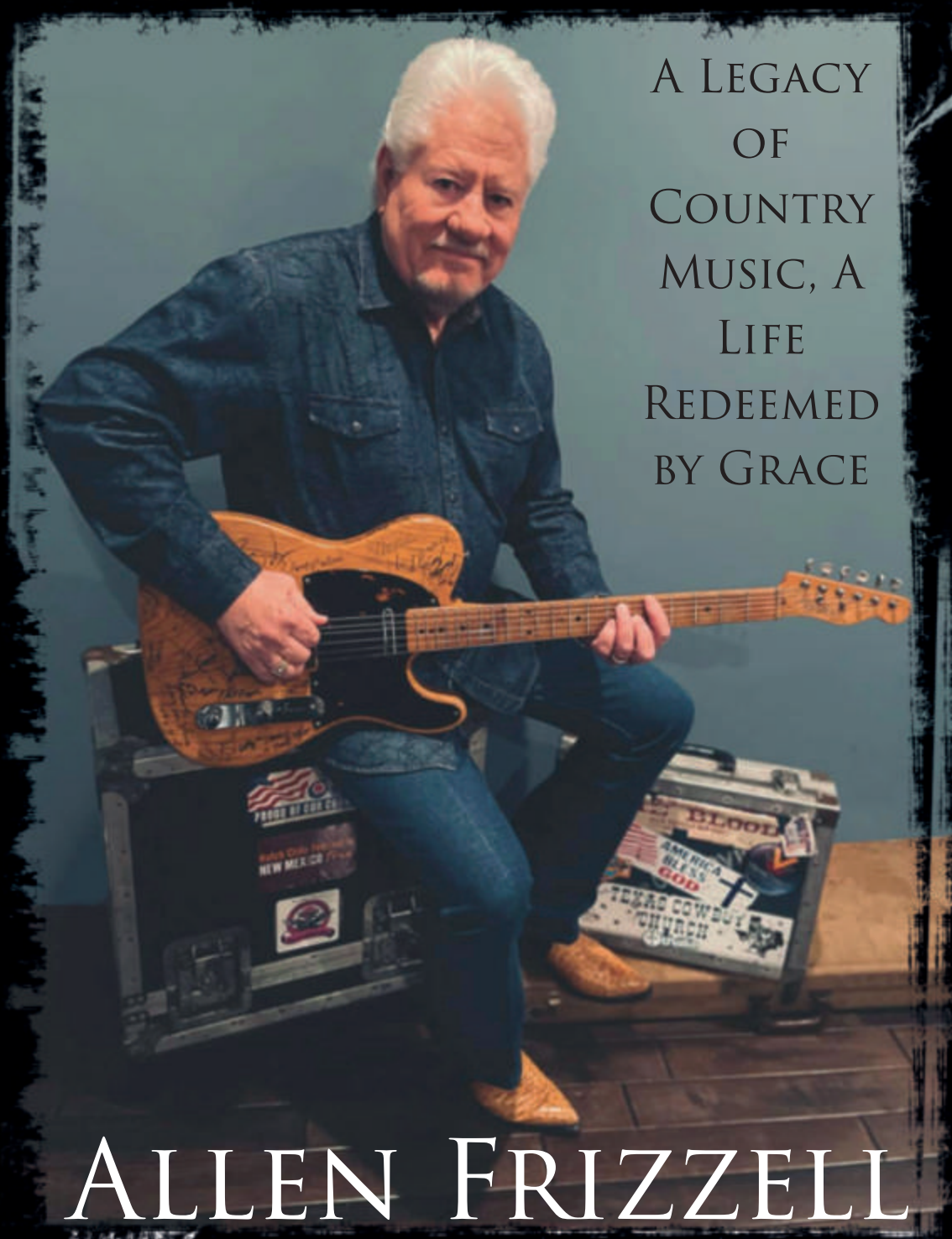
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ALLEN FRIZZELL

The name Frizzell is woven into the very fabric of Country music. For anyone who loves the genre, it is a name that carries history, influence, and an unmistakable legacy. As the youngest brother of Lefty Frizzell and David Frizzell, Allen Frizzell stands proudly within that lineage, although he's forging a path uniquely his own. Allen's journey is shaped not only by music, but by faith, redemption, and the unmistakable grace of God.

Allen's eldest brother, Lefty Frizzell, is widely regarded as one of the most influential Country vocalists of all time. His phrasing, tone, and emotional delivery set a standard that generations of artists - from Merle Haggard to George Jones - would follow. Fourth-oldest brother David Frizzell built his own legendary career, earning Grammy nominations, ACM and CMA awards, and two Song-of-the-Year honors. Together, the Frizzell brothers helped define the sound of Country music from the early 1950s onward, writing and recording songs later cut by icons such as Willie Nelson, Keith Whitley, Alan Jackson, and even Pop artist Jewel.

Allen inherited the same musical gifts - an expressive voice, a musician's instinct, and a producer's ear. But he also carried something deeper: a calling that would eventually lead him far beyond the bright lights of Nashville.

Allen Frizzell was born in Paris, Texas. That same year was a successful one in Country music for his brother Lefty. When Allen was three years old, the family moved to California. "Lefty moved out there and my folks followed him," Allen recalls. "He went out there to do a show called Town Hall Party, and so we moved out there in that area until I was about thirteen. Then we moved in between Fresno and Bakersfield." That's the same area where Merle Haggard and Buck Owens would create the Bakersfield sound.

The Texas native shares his experience growing up in a musical family. "Lefty was almost 24 years older than me, so he was gone. David was in high school as I was coming up as a kid. He's ten years older than me. David went out on the road with Lefty for a while. When I started playing music, I was in my later teens. It started with David - he took me out on the road. I learned the ropes through him, and he was a great teacher. Both my brothers were a great inspiration and influence."

Allen shared the advice his brothers gave him about getting into the music business. "Lefty probably said, 'Don't do it,'" Allen joked. "I learned a lot from both my brothers. David always helped me. He is such an entertainer. I just really watched him - that helped me more than anything. I was really influenced vocally by Lefty."

While he was working clubs with a big band in California, playing Pop-type songs, not making any money, and performing for small audiences, Allen explains, "I went to a jam session one time, and it was a little three-piece Country band. They found out who I was and invited me to sing. That's the only Country stuff I halfway knew - my brother's songs. I got such a great response, and the audience was great."

After that, he put a smaller band together and began booking Country shows. "The family influence was always there. I sounded more like Lefty than I even knew. It just came natural. I told Merle Haggard a lot of people say I kind of sound a little bit between you and Lefty. I said, I don't try to

do that," Allen admits. "Merle said, 'No one has more of a right to sound like a Frizzell than you do!'"

Allen's family didn't go to church very often. "My dad really knew a lot about the Bible. He would send me letters always with scriptures - I still have some of them!" When Allen was sixteen, he attended his girlfriend's church and got saved. He started singing Gospel music locally but ended up leaving the church because the congregation was too strict on a young Christian. "That's when I say I went into the family business singing Country, and I didn't look back. I always believed and knew He was real in my life, but I did fall away from church," he says. "I didn't go back for many years until me and my wife Gayle got married."

"She was a young Christian, and after we had our daughter, Olivia Jade, Gayle said, 'Allen, we need to raise our children in church.' I said, I know you're right, but when you've been hurt in a church, it's hard to get you back in."

Allen was visited by a close friend who witnessed to him and would not give up. "He just kept coming back! Finally, we ended up going to a little church, and we stayed and joined, and I rededicated my life. That was thirty-seven years ago, and we've been in church ever since."

Allen led the music in the church for thirteen years. Years later, the Lord called him into the ministry. "When He did, I told Gayle, I just feel this is something I need to do, and so we did," he adds. "I quit Country music literally. We didn't even know what we were doing or how to go about it, but we had a few evangelist friends that helped." Allen traveled with his family for years, with Olivia Jade on bass and vocals and Cagney on guitar and mandolin. The family band was a blessing to audiences everywhere.

Allen is celebrating a milestone: twenty years in Christian country music and ministry. "I remember when I first got started, the first year, surprisingly, we worked quite a bit. I wondered then what it'd be like being in this for twenty years. We go back to certain places a lot, and they're kind of like family. You get friends all over and a lot of great prayer warriors, so that makes it nice. Then we're always getting new places too, we stay really busy. The Lord has really blessed. It's really become more about ministries than anything else to me, and to see somebody have their lives changed and accept the Lord just means everything."

This month, Allen Frizzell and Don Williams will be inducted into the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame. "What an honor, and of course, being from Texas. I couldn't believe it when they called me the first of the year and said, you're going to be the newest member this year in August. Then to be in the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame with my brothers Lefty and David - Lefty twenty-three years ago, and David five years ago. What an honor to go in there with them. A bonus is being inducted with Don Williams. What a legend! We opened shows for him, and he was just a great guy."



When Tommie Ritter called and told him he was going in, the first person Allen called was his daughter, Olivia Jade. “She has so much wisdom. She said, ‘Daddy, you’ve served the Lord for many years now. The Lord just decided to bless you with that.’ That’s where all the blessings come from, so that’s the way I look at it.”

Allen has been grateful to work with so many in Country music and to have lasting friendships with many of them. He shares a special memory of working with David in Branson, Missouri: “I was a big BJ Thomas fan - he was an incredible singer. It was my birthday, and when we did the show there in Branson, we were always trying to pull stuff on each other. David stopped the show at one point and said, ‘It’s Allen’s birthday, we’ve got to sing the birthday song for Allen. I’ve got a special guest to come out.’ BJ Thomas comes out and sings Happy Birthday to me! That was crazy. David set that up because BJ was coming to perform in Branson. We also had the same producer, Pete Drake, and we both were on Sony Records. We had a lot to talk about, and he was just great.”

The musical lineage of the Frizzells carries on to the next generation. “Our son, Cagney, plays Country music. Olivia Jade came and sang on my newest album. She doesn’t travel and sing anymore, but she came in the studio and didn’t miss a beat - she did great! Tess - she’s so talented and releasing great songs.”

Allen has released his latest album, “Without Jesus, It’s Gonna Be Hell.” His current single is *The Healer*. “I didn’t write it - sure wish I would have. A friend of mine who is pretty successful in the Country business, Brian Martin, wrote it. It’s kind of cool because some of my Gospel stuff changed his life years ago. This song really reminded me a lot of my life. I love this song. When I do it live, I do it acoustically, and they really hear the lyrics, and people love the song.”

Allen and Gayle have been married forty-one years this September. She has been by his side with encouragement, prayers, and taking care of the ministry. “How she puts up with me, I’ll never know. I couldn’t do anything that I do without her. She is a great co-writer; she does all the business and handles all the stuff she’s good at. We make a great team, and it’s just wonderful. The Lord knew who I needed and what I needed. He has blessed and taken care of us.”

The couple recently went to Hawaii to celebrate their birthdays, which are two days apart. Allen shared, “We did our vows out on this beautiful beach on June 30th. It was just beautiful - she was beautiful. We had a preacher and a musician who played a ukulele. We have traveled all over the world and always had a good time, but this was a highlight. It was a vacation and a second honeymoon for us.”

When Allen was first called into the ministry, he thought about changing his name to separate himself from Country music. But the Lord revealed how the name could actually help in certain situations. “We had some people come who hadn’t been in church since they were kids - but came because they were Frizzell fans. They came to see me, and they’re in church today because they came because of the Frizzell connection. Actually, ten family members came and ended up joining the church after we left. We came back a couple years later, and they were still there. Lefty always wanted to do a Gospel album - he didn’t get to - but in a way, he kind of fulfilled it in a different way for me.”

Allen shares what is most important to them about the ministry God has called them into. “The main thing is seeing people’s lives being changed. That’s what it’s all about. We are excited meeting new people and close friends all the time, and we just love it.”

As the saying goes, “What’s in a name?” For the Frizzell name, it’s music legends, classic songs, and - most importantly - sharing the love of Jesus Christ with the world.

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ALAN JACKSON

By Robin Tanner

Country music legend Alan Jackson has experienced a phenomenal music career with hit songs, numerous awards and an enormous fan base from around the world. From those early days in Newnan, Georgia to his final concert in Nashville, Tennessee. We celebrate the amazing musical legacy of Alan Jackson.

Alan Jackson was born October 17, 1958, in Newnan, Georgia to Eugene and Ruth Jackson becoming baby brother to four sisters. He grew up loving the music he heard in church and on an old radio his daddy had won. Alan married his high school sweetheart, Denise in 1979. While working as a flight attendant in 1985, Denise meets Glen Campbell and makes an important Nashville contact for Alan. After meeting with Campbell, Alan and Denise decide to move to Nashville. In 1986, he was signed as a songwriter with Glen Campbell's publishing company. In 1989, Jackson signs as Arista Nashville's first Country artist. *Blue Blooded Woman* was the debut single. This would be the beginning of Alan Jackson's historic career.

A member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Songwriters Hall of Fame and the Grand Ole Opry, Jackson has sold nearly 60 million albums worldwide, including his award-winning Gospel albums. He has collected more than 150 major industry awards, including three CMA 'Entertainer of the Year' honors and multiple ACM and Grammy Awards. He's earned 35 No. 1 hits. These classics include, *Don't Rock the Jukebox*, *Chattahoochee*, *Gone Country*, *Remember When*, *Drive (for Daddy Gene)*, *Chasin' That Neon Rainbow*, *Wanted*, *Little Man*, *It's Five O'Clock Somewhere* with Jimmy Buffett and *Murder on Music Row* with George Strait. When America was stunned in the aftermath of 9/11 and the World Trade Center falling, it was Jackson who took the stage



at The CMA Awards and in his quiet way expressed the confusion and grief of the entire nation with *Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)*.

Jackson released his last full-length album in 2021, "Where Have You Gone," a twin-fiddle'n' steel survey of real country. Classic songwriting that exhumes sorrow, love, life, loss, these 21 songs are a witness to what Country music was born from and will always be. In a press release, Jackson stated. "It's a little harder Country than even I've done in the past. And it's funny, I was driving out here where I live and was listening to the final mixes, just listening to what Keith (Stegall, his longtime producer) sent me, and I started to tear

up. I was surprised to get so overly emotional, but I just love this kind of music. It's what I'd always wanted to do."

From the beginning, Jackson kept fans coming to his sold-out tours through the years until he announced the farewell tour in 2022. Though it's been a large part of his story over the years, the driving force behind Jackson's retirement was his diagnosis of Charcot-Marie-Tooth (CMT) disease, a degenerative nerve condition that made it hard for the Country music legend to stand and keep his balance, something he announced back in 2021. While he assured fans the disease isn't fatal, it made it harder to tour and deliver the performance that he wants for fans. "It's starting to affect my performance on stage a little bit, where I don't feel comfortable and I just wanted the fans and the public to know, if they've come to see me in the last few years or if they come to see me in the future if I play anymore, what's going on."

Jackson closed a 35-year touring legacy with an historic Nashville farewell. The Country Music Hall of Famer delivered the final full-length concert of his legendary career on June 27, 2026, performing before more than 80,000 fans at Nissan Stadium in Nashville. The once-in-a-generation event, *Last Call: One More for the Road - The Finale* - marked the culmination of Jackson's decades-long touring journey and will soon be immortalized through both a national TV special and a live album arriving later this year.

Jackson's nearly two-hour set spanned his entire career, opening with *Gone Country* and moving through more than two dozen hits. The stadium erupted when George Strait joined Jackson onstage for their iconic duets, especially the award-winning song, *Murder on Music Row*. The evening also featured an unprecedented gathering of Country superstars: Luke Bryan, Eric Church, Luke Combs, Lainey Wilson, Carrie Underwood, Miranda Lambert, Cody Johnson, Little Big Town, Jon Pardi, Thomas Rhett, Jake Owen, Riley Green, Lee Ann Womack, and more - who united for a celebratory performance of Jackson's fan-favorite *Pop a Top*. Phones held by the sold-out audience inside the stadium illuminated the night during *Remember When* and *Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)*. Those same people were all on their feet as fireworks erupted for set closer *Chattahoochee* and Jackson's encore of *Mercury Blues* and *Where I Come From*. "This has just been incredible," Jackson told the crowd. "I don't even have words, it's just been completely overwhelming." Beyond the stadium, thousands more watched via livestreams at Belmont University's Fisher Center, the Country Music Hall of Fame's CMA Theater, and massive screens along Broadway, where fans filled rooftops and streets to honor Jackson's final bow.

In an evening that included nine 'Entertainers of the Year' - not counting Jackson - the Hall of Famers' impact was clearly felt. "Alan taught me how to dream," Luke Bryan said, while Cody Johnson noted, "His songs so many times have been the story of my life." Lainey Wilson credited Jackson's songwriting, pointing out "His songs were about real things," a sentiment echoed by Luke Combs who shared, "He has so many nuances in his ability to write songs and there are so

many things to love about Alan." Carrie Underwood recounted how the first concert she ever attended was a Jackson show. "I had the worst seats in the whole place, and it was still one of the greatest concert experiences that I have ever experienced," she recalled, adding, "Tonight will eclipse that." And it did. Those in attendance included NFL and NBA stars, celebrities from the worlds of music and TV and Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, who earlier proclaimed Saturday, June 27 "Alan Jackson Day" in the State of Tennessee.

The farewell concert was filmed for a major network event titled *Alan Jackson: The Last Show*, airing later this year on NBC and streaming on Peacock. The primetime special will spotlight Jackson's three-decade catalog of hits, emotional onstage moments, and the all-star tributes that defined the night. Fans will soon be able to relive the historic night through Jackson's upcoming live album, *"Last Call: One More for the Road - The Finale (Live from Nashville)"*. The album captures the full emotional arc of Jackson's farewell performance, including his biggest hits, his acoustic moments, and his onstage reunion with George Strait. It stands as the definitive recorded document of the night Nashville and the Country music world will never forget. The album release date will be announced soon.

Announced by the CMT Research Foundation, Jackson raised and donated over \$2.25 million dollars through ticket sales, matching contributions and fan donations, thanks to the awareness he brought to the disease through his battle over the past five years. The CMT Research Foundation is a patient-led, non-profit organization that aims to raise funds to invest in science that will lead to treatments and cures for CMT, which affects over 150,000 Americans and over 3 million individuals worldwide.

Alan Jackson released his latest single one day before the historic concert, *Still The One*. One of Alan's most cherished memories is meeting his future wife, Denise, while she practiced her cheerleading routine to *Still The One*, originally recorded by Orleans. "Nearly 50 years later, she's still the one."

Jackson's family were on-hand...and the icon frequently cited them throughout the emotion-filled concert. He smiled broadly as he talked about his five grandchildren, his wife Denise, daughters Mattie, Ali, Dani and their spouses could be seen smiling, swaying, and singing along...just like the thousands of people surrounding them.

www.AlanJackson.com



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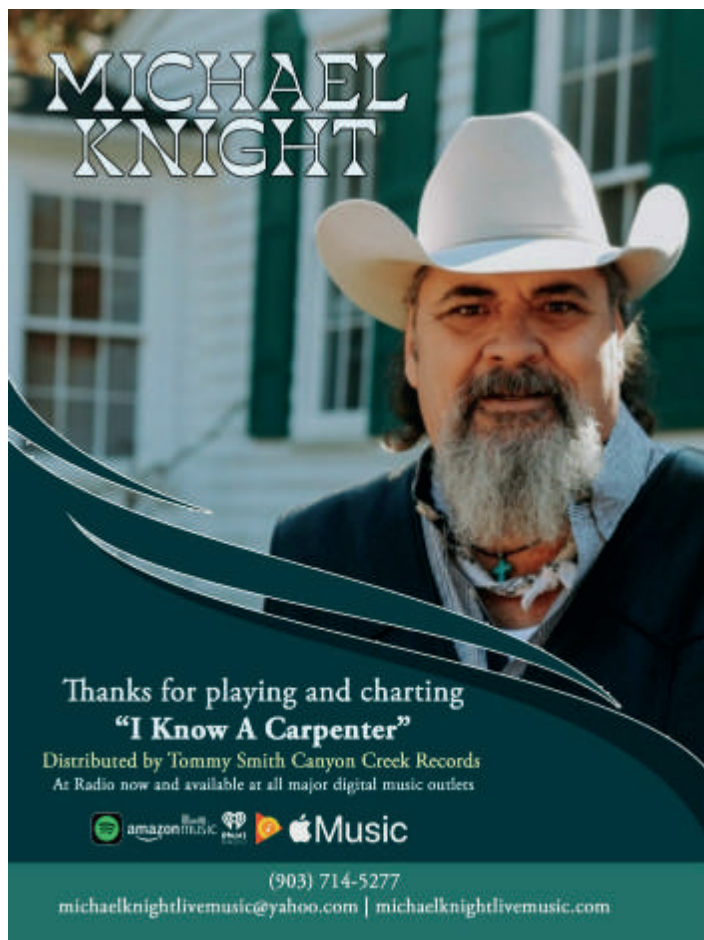
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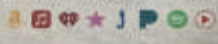
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The MALLPASS BROTHERS

HONOR THE SONGS THAT SHAPED THEM

Known for their deep-rooted traditional style, The Malpass Brothers, Chris and Taylor grew up in Goldsboro, North Carolina, immersed in the sounds of Country and Gospel music from an early age. Inspired by their grandfather's record collection and the artists who shaped the genre, the brothers have built a career on carrying those traditions forward with authenticity and respect.

Staff, Cross Country USA

The Malpass Brothers, Country music duo Chris and Taylor Malpass, released “Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics,” a new live album and DVD collection celebrating the Country Gospel songs that have influenced their lives, careers, and musical journey. Available now through Gaither Music Group, the project brings together beloved Hymns, Gospel standards, and faith-filled favorites performed in the duo’s signature traditional style.

The live album and DVD was filmed live at TBN Studios in Hendersonville, Tennessee. “Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics” captures The Malpass Brothers performing songs that have long been part of their personal and musical foundation. The collection includes previously released tracks *Satisfied* and *He Touched Me*, along with the focus track *The Lighthouse*, Ronny Hinson’s enduring Gospel classic that continues to resonate with listeners through its message of faith, hope, and perseverance.

“We’ve been carrying these songs around with us for a long time,” said The Malpass Brothers. “Some of them we’ve sung on stage for years, some we grew up hearing at church and at home, and all of them mean something to us. Getting to finally put them together on one project and record them live felt like the right way to tell that story.” Other tracks on the live album include, *Family Bible*, *Wings of a Dove*, *Because He Lives*, Dottie Rambo’s, *Sheltered In The Arms of God*, The Louvin Brother’s songs, *The Family Who Prays* and *Keep Your Eyes on Jesus*, *Jesus Take A Hold* written by Merle Haggard and the Johnny Cash recitation, *Ragged Old Flag* along with other Gospel favorites.

“Chris and Taylor have a deep respect for the traditions that shaped Country and Gospel music, and they bring that to life every time they step on stage,” said Paul Sizelove, President of Sun Label Group and Gaither Music Group. “This project captures that authenticity in a powerful way,

and we're proud to partner with them in sharing it with audiences everywhere."

Backed by a seasoned band, "Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics" showcases the warmth, simplicity, and reverence that have become hallmarks of The Malpass Brothers' sound while highlighting the enduring influence of Gospel music on traditional Country artists and audiences alike.

"Satisfied: Country Gospel Classics" is available as an audio album, full-length DVD, and television special. The television special aired on TBN, RFD-TV, numerous channels. The full-length project is also available to stream at Gaither TV+, or fans may purchase the DVD and CD at Gaither.com.

Last month, The Malpass Brothers were honored by their hometown of Goldsboro, North Carolina, with an official proclamation presented by Mayor Charles Gaylor IV recognizing the duo's dedication to Country music and their continued efforts to bring national attention and pride to their community. The duo was also surprised backstage at the Grand Ole Opry with the announcement that The Paramount Theatre in Goldsboro will name its annex after The Malpass Brothers later this year. The brothers received another accolade earlier this year as Chris and Taylor Malpass were inducted into the North America Country Music Association International Hall of Fame.

Best known as modern-day troubadours who carry the torch for traditional Country music, The Malpass Brothers

began singing and playing together professionally at a very young age. Alongside their dad, Chris Malpass Sr., the siblings performed at churches all over the southeast, but they continued to hone their traditional sound by working alongside and amongst the legends.

The Malpass Brothers were inspired by the legendary harmonies of duos like Jim & Jesse, the Louvin Brothers, and the Wilburn Brothers. Mentored by steel guitar legend Don Helms and later handpicked by Merle Haggard as an opening act for seven years, the brothers have carried the torch for traditional Country across stages nationwide. Their debut album, "Memory That Bad" was produced by Haggard, followed by projects with Bluegrass Hall of Famer Doyle Lawson. Their latest release, "Lonely Street," co-produced by Lawson and Ben Isaacs, showcases the Malpass Brothers' authentic songwriting and deep reverence for the golden era of Country music. Their successful TV show, The Malpass Brothers Show airing on RFD-TV on Saturday nights is now in Season Three.

www.themalpassbrothers.com



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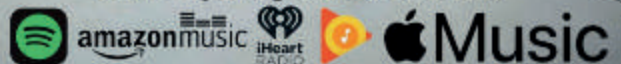
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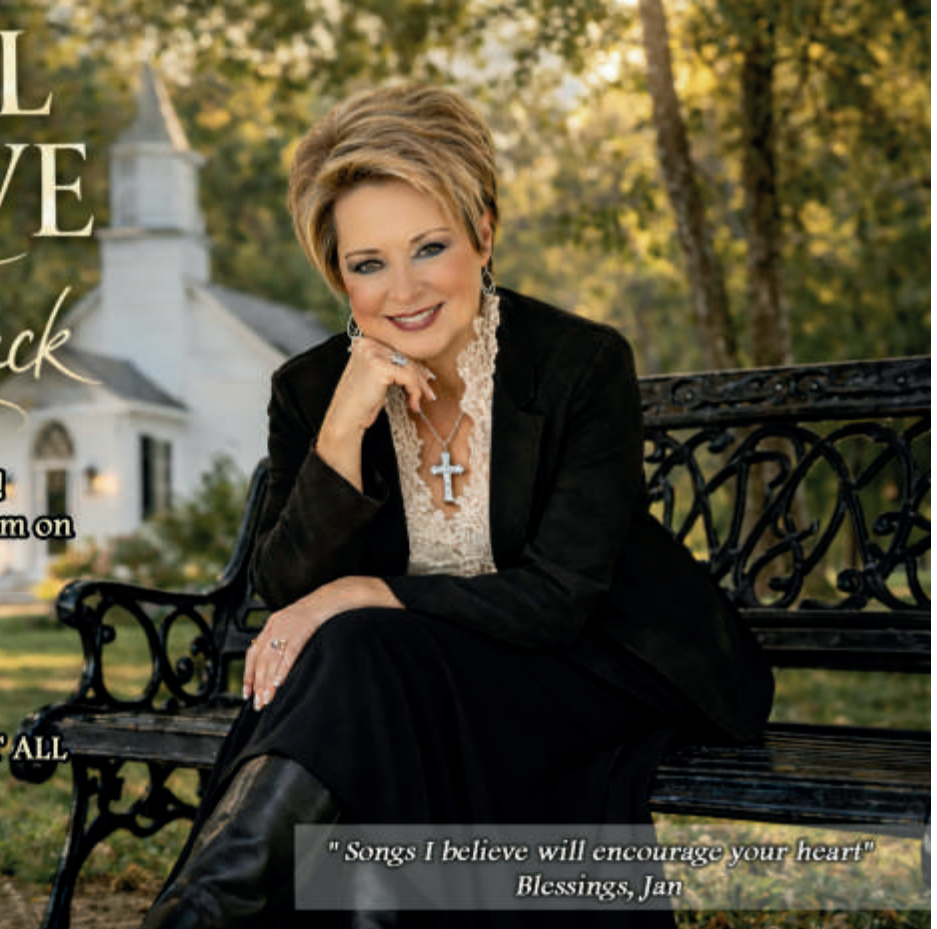
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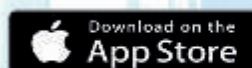
OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN COUNTRY TOP 100 - AUGUST 2026

TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST	TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	9	Looking For The Light	Delnora	51	62	Real Good Day	Kevin Morris
2	12	Jesus Is The King	Ken Mobley	52	58	Somebody Here	Linda Lanier
3	18	Preacher Man	David Timms	53	76	Strength Of A Survivor	Aaron Justice
4	15	When I Hear His Name	Victoria Steelman	54	42	Three Nails And A Cross	George Strait
5	11	This One's For You	Rocky and Tamie	55	73	Jesus On My Mind	Bruce Hedrick
6	5	What I Got (La-De-Da)	Caleb Deramus	56	98	America I Will Stand Up For You	Mike Lechner
7	21	The Bridge	Daryl Baker	57	72	The Promise	Charity Hamilton
8	7	Song For My Son	Walker Hayes	58	86	I'm Yours	The Murphys
9	17	God Is Good Ya'll	Wings of Love	59	85	Little More Like Jesus	Dave Edwards
10	23	Let Me Tell Ya' Bout My Faith	Kali Rose	60	46	Heading Home With Jesus To Be	Lizzy G And Jeff Naper
11	20	Saving Grace	Krystina B	61	80	I Know A Carpenter	Michael Knight
12	1	He Made It All	Dust And Grace	62	71	The Eastern Gate	Ava Kasich & Martha Lambert
13	31	That's The Way Mama Raised Me	Luke Hendrickson	63	91	One Man	Bruce & Betsy Mullen
14	26	The Turn	The Pauls	64	68	Angels Among Us	Dale Rochell
15	29	Jesus Is The Way	Rachel Taylor	65	-	Hot Line	Bobby Gibson
16	2	What I Don't Know	Paula Slow	66	75	Rocks	Heather Thomas Van Deren
17	37	Edge Of Heaven	Scott Peacock	67	87	We All Need Jesus	J'Lee
18	34	My God Can	Valerie Ellis Hawkins	68	60	Meanwhile Back At The Cross	Ron Hemphill
19	3	Jesus Loves Me	Dierks Bentley	69	-	Let Him In Anyway	Blake Shelton
20	38	The Last Song	Terry and Debra Luna	70	84	Footprints In The Sand	Dwight Sanders
21	56	At War With Myself	Cyndi Reynolds	71	-	If I Know Him	Kevin Kappler
22	30	Why Me	Jenny Dean	72	83	The Storm	Jan Harbuck
23	4	Whiskey Road	Michael Tetrick	73	79	Chandelier Angel	Danny Mullins
24	14	In The Morning	Hunter Logan	74	-	I Will Never Know The Desert Again	Eddy Mann
25	41	Healer	Allen Frizzell	75	74	Someday Things Are Gonna Get Better	Johnny Jones
26	27	Get Out Of The Boat	Felicia Deramus Paul	76	-	Jesus Wouldn't Do	Jordan Davis
27	45	If I'm Guilty	Thomas Brown	77	82	High Tower	The Epps Family
28	49	Wayfaring Stranger	Debbie Bennett	78	90	Far Side Banks Of Jordan	Julie Reese
29	48	Tell Me That There Ain't A God	Jon Brennan	79	-	I Just Walked	Gary Russ
30	77	Piano For Sale	Chris Golden	80	99	Me And Jesus Gonna Get It Done	Norman Lee Schaffer
31	54	Soldier Of The Cross	John Penney	81	88	Love Is All You Need	Joy LaVallee
32	43	My Tiny Soul	JW Jackson	82	-	If I Could Talk To Daddy Again	Roger Barkley, Jr.
33	81	Sunday's Best	Shellem Cline	83	-	Songs Like Those	Debbie Mills
34	13	Say Hello To Heaven	Steve Warren	84	-	Grace	Dawson Road
35	25	It'll Be Good To Be Home	The Journeys	85	96	Empty No More	Marty Denton
36	47	Snowy Sunday Morning	Biscuits and Gravy Band Indiana	86	-	Trade Your Story For Glory	Marty Deroche
37	57	There's Power In The Name Of Jesus	Jonathan Ray Smith	87	92	Drinking From The Fountain	Daryl Branson
38	50	Getting Back Up	Troy Richardson	88	94	Squeeze Your Guts Out	Jimmy R. Price
39	51	Cherished Memories	Jeff Hamilton	89	-	Redemption Story	Alexa Finney
40	19	New Man	Chuck Day	90	93	Man Down At The River	Gary Herd
41	95	Old Gravel Road	John Michael Ferrari	91	-	A Prayer I Never Prayed	Tyson Leamon
42	70	The Good In Bye	Small Town Sunday	92	-	Not On My Watch	Darin Kinser
43	61	I Was There	Jerry Weatherly	93	-	Without You (I Haven't Got A Prayer)	Frontier Brothers
44	40	Wish You Were Here	Johnathan Bond	94	100	Stand Up For The Flag Kneel At The Cross	Ray Epperson
45	78	How Much Grace	Liam Tysinger	95	-	Never To Far Gone	Alex Ervin
46	67	Georgiana Alabama 1939	Michael Ray Fain	96	-	The Devil Cried	Jason Welch
47	35	Somebody Bigger Than You And I	David Smith	97	97	Leading Me Home	Melissa Garner
48	63	House of Fire	Lonnie Hardy	98	-	When A Cowboy Prays	Brandon Lake & Cody Johnson
49	66	I'm From The US Of A	Roger Barkley Jr	99	-	Let Go Of The Reins	Daryl Jorden
50	64	River Of Life	Sonshine Road	100	-	We Found Each Other	Troy Ervin



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The Legacy & Music of DON WILLIAMS

Country Music legend and Texas native Don Williams was known as Country music's "Gentle Giant." His soft baritone voice and laid-back demeanor made Don a musical giant with his fans and fellow artists. He built his career on songs that reflected his values, his voice, and his unwavering sense of self. That consistency earned him a lasting connection with audiences around the world.

Don Williams was born May 27, 1939, in Floydada, Texas. He learned guitar from his mother and performed in various Country, Folk, and Rock & Roll bands. After moving to Nashville in the early 1970s, he began shaping a solo career defined by clarity and emotional truth.

Collaborating with a close-knit creative circle, including producer Cowboy Jack Clement, songwriter Bob McDill, and producer Allen Reynolds, Williams developed a sound that stood apart from the genre's prevailing trends. His rise was steady and extraordinary. Between 1972 and 1992, Williams charted 56 singles, including 45 Top Ten hits and 17 No. ones. Songs like *Tulsa Time*, *I Believe in You*, *Good Ole Boys Like Me*, *Lord, I Hope This Day Is Good*, and *Love Is on a Roll* became cornerstones of Country music. Other hits by the Gentle Giant included: *Amanda*, *I Wouldn't Want to Live If You Didn't Love Me*, *You're My Best Friend*, *Some Broken Hearts Never Mend*; *It Must Be Love*, *Till the Rivers All Run Dry* and *Lay Down Beside Me*

Inducted into the Grand Ole Opry in 1976, he went on to earn the Academy of Country Music's 'Single of the Year,' and he was named 'Male Vocalist of the Year' by the Country Music Association, which later awarded him 'Album of the Year' for 1981's "I Believe In You."



Williams was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2010. Kyle Young, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum CEO shared his thoughts on Williams. "In giving voice to songs like *Good Ole Boys Like Me*, *Lord, I Hope This Day Is Good*, and *Amanda*, Don Williams offered calm, beauty, and a sense of wistful peace that is in short supply these days. His music will forever be a balm in troublesome times. Everyone who makes Country music with grace, intelligence, and ageless intent will do so while standing on the shoulders of this gentle giant."

Those who were fortunate to experience The Gentle Giant in concert understand. Don normally sat in a chair surrounded by his talented band. He sang all his hit songs and entertained his audiences, night after night. His laid-back concerts had his loyal fans in the palm of his hand, singing his many songs back to him. Williams had fans worldwide, selling records in the British Isles, Europe, Latin America, and Australia. He is one of the few Country stars who has toured in Africa; his DVD *Into Africa* draws upon his performances on that continent.

Among Country's major acts, Don Williams was perhaps the least enamored of his success. From an interview with Oxford University Press, Don commenting on his reputation as a superstar. "The only way that I would be comfortable with that sort of title is when people tell me that my music has helped them through some stage in their life. But as far as that whole approach to special treatment and people carrying on over you, I never have been too big on that." It was that approach that made his fan base honor his legacy for decades.

Williams has had a strong influence over a variety of recording artists of different genres. His hits have been covered by artists such as Johnny Cash, Eric Clapton, Lefty Frizzell, Josh Turner, Sonny James, Alison Krauss, Billy Dean, Charley Pride, Kenny Rogers, Alan Jackson, Waylon Jennings and many others. He possessed a timeless, cross-cultural resonance that continues to influence generations of artists.

In March 2016, Williams announced he was retiring from touring and cancelled all his scheduled shows. "It's time to hang my hat up and enjoy some quiet time at home. I'm so thankful for my fans, my friends and my family for their everlasting love and support," he said in a statement.



Williams married Joy Janene Bucher in April 1960. They had two sons - Gary and Tim. Don Williams passed away, September 8, 2017, at the age of 78.

Now, nearly a decade after his passing, that voice returns in a deeply personal and unexpected way. "Epilogue: The Cellar Tapes" is not just a collection of unreleased recordings. It's a continuation of the story Williams spent a lifetime telling. Co-produced by his son, Tim Williams, and longtime collaborator Garth Fundis, the album was drawn from multi-track tapes Williams had stored in the cellar of his rural Tennessee home.

Recorded between 1979 and 1984, one of the most celebrated periods of his career, the material captures Williams at his creative peak. It was an era that produced defining works, and the recordings on "Epilogue" carry that same understated power. With careful restoration, Fundis and Tim Williams set out to honor not just the recordings, but the intention behind them, preserving the integrity of performances shaped alongside a core group of musicians who helped define the "Don Williams sound."

For both men, the process was as emotional as it was technical. The recordings offered a bridge between past and present, transporting them back to the original sessions while reaffirming the enduring relevance of Williams' artistry. In many ways, *Epilogue: The Cellar Tapes* feels exactly as its title suggests: a final chapter that brings the story full circle. An artist who valued home, simplicity, and authenticity above all has, in a sense, delivered one last gift, from the very place he cherished most. It is rare and fitting for a voice that never needed to shout to be heard - and never will be forgotten. "These songs Dad recorded are - as music can be - a time machine," says Tim Williams. "In working on this project, we tried above all to stay true to how Dad approached production... and then just to stay out of the way of the music."

"Don liked every one of these songs," adds Garth Fundis. "I think he'd be thrilled to know that people could hear him sing these new songs they didn't know existed. I'm certain Don would be proud of this album."

The album's first single, *Leaving Louisiana in the Broad Daylight*, is available alongside an official video, offering a fresh take on the song written by Rodney Crowell. While previously recorded by The Oak Ridge Boys and Emmylou Harris, Don's version brings a characteristically relaxed precision to its quick rhythm and storytelling.

"Epilogue: The Cellar Tapes" is available on vinyl, CD, and digital formats, with several exclusive vinyl variants available through retailers including Barnes & Noble and Cracker Barrel, as well as the Don Williams and Craft Recordings official stores.

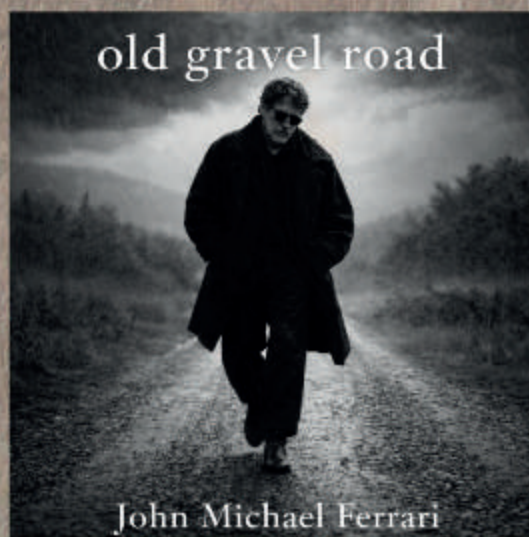
The Grand Ole Opry, Keith Urban, Trisha Yearwood and more all came together to celebrate the songs and legacy of Don Williams on June 10. Opry 100 Honors: Don Williams paid tribute to the true hitmaker who became an Opry member 50 years ago.

The Texas Country Music Hall of Fame has announced that Don Williams will be inducted into the Hall of Fame this year, alongside Allen Frizzell, in recognition of their enduring contributions to Country music. The induction ceremony will be held during the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, August 7 - 9, 2026. in Carthage, Texas.



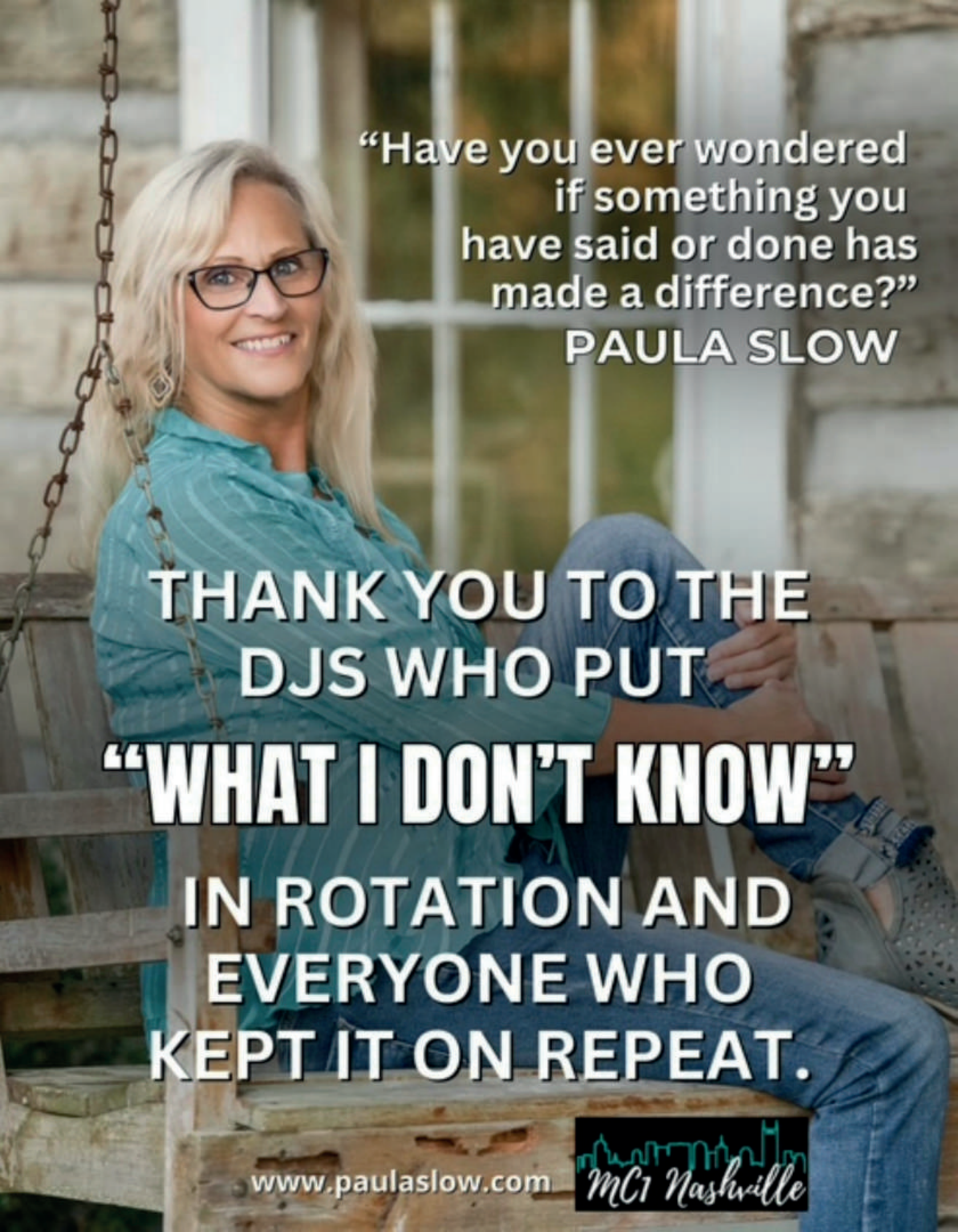
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THE EPPS FAMILY

By Cory Parker

For more than half a century, the name Epps has meant something in Southern Gospel circles - something steady, something faithful, something that refuses to fade even when the faces on stage change. Today, based out of Belton, South Carolina, the ministry is carried by Wanda, Angela, and Terry, but the story reaches back through three and four generations of believers who believed that worship was not a performance but a calling.

The Epps story starts in a small church with a pastor who preached with conviction and a grandmother who carried a quiet desire to sing. Together, they raised five children who grew up in pews, revivals, and the kind of home where harmony was as natural as breathing.

As the children grew, each eventually stepped into their own ministries. But one son – Haynie - held tightly to the family mantle. He carried the Epps name with strength and sincerity until March 2008, when God called him home. His passing could have closed the chapter. Instead, it ignited a new one.

The mantle fell to his daughters. Today, the Epps Family is made up of Wanda, Angela, and Terry (Wanda's husband). They travel full-time across the United States, carrying the same message their grandparents once carried into that small church: Jesus saves, Jesus restores, and Jesus is coming again.

Their mission remains clear: To see the lost come to realize that there is no other way to true peace or salvation but through the blood of Jesus, and to remind the church that Jesus is alive, and it's time to get excited. He's coming.

Over the years, the Epps Family has shared stages with some of Gospel music's most respected voices: Brian Free, Karen Peck, Gerald Crabb, The Perrys, The Perry Sisters, The Shepherds, The Hinsons, The Browders, and others who helped shape the sound of modern Southern Gospel.



They've also taken their ministry far beyond church walls, singing on multiple Carnival Cruises, bringing worship to audiences who never expected to encounter it on open seas. And through it all, they've watched God open doors - and close some too. Each shift, each season, each unexpected turn has shaped their testimony.

There's a quiet humility in the way the Epps Family talks about their journey. They don't measure success by charts or crowds. They measure it by faithfulness.

They hope their grandparents are proud. They hope their father is proud. But above all, they pray their Heavenly Father finds them faithful.

Their current radio single, *High Tower*, distributed by GAC Records, is gaining traction and introducing the Epps legacy to a new generation of listeners. It's a reminder that even after fifty years, the message still matters, and the music still carries it well.

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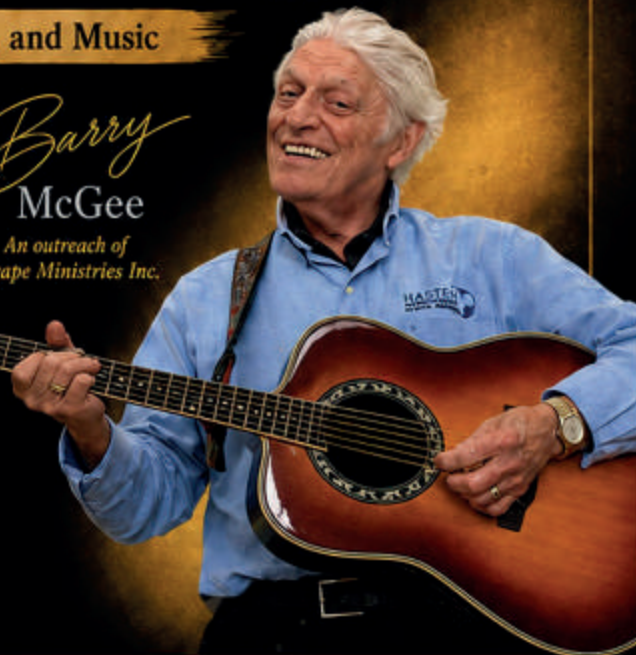
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Jeff Hamilton's story begins in the hills of Pike County, Kentucky - a place where faith is woven into the rhythm of daily life and where music rises naturally from front porches, church pews, and the winding roads of eastern Kentucky. Long before he ever stepped onto a stage or heard his songs on the radio, he was a boy sitting in church beside his parents, listening to his father sing the old Southern Gospel standards.

Jeff Hamilton

A Voice Raised for the Mountains and for the Master

By Cory Parker

“**I** never had a choice about going to church on Sunday morning,” Jeff says with a laugh. “No questions asked. I knew I had to. Back then I never understood why. Now that I’m older, I understand. I thank the Lord for my Mom and Dad.”

His father, who has sung for the Lord for more than forty-five years, became Jeff’s earliest musical influence. The sound of those Gospel songs settled deep into him, even when he didn’t realize it. “He still sings the old style Southern Gospel,” Jeff says. “I grew up listening to him.”

For Jeff, faith wasn’t just inherited, it became personal on April 16, 2017, Easter Sunday. “I gave my heart to the Lord that day,” he says. “My wife was also saved and baptized that day. My Dad helped baptize us.” It was a moment that marked the beginning of a new life, a new calling, and eventually, a new direction in music.

That day didn’t just change his eternity - it changed his purpose.

Years before his salvation, Jeff traveled and performed with a cousin in a local group. They played anywhere people would listen - clubs, bars, weekend venues that kept him away from home and left him feeling empty.

“We were pretty good,” he says. “But there was something missing. Besides me being away from my wife and kids every weekend, it was awful. I was playing and singing in places I never should’ve been in.”

It took time - and distance - for him to understand what that missing piece was.

“Years down the road I knew what was missing in the songs: the Lord. I was meant for more. I had a job to do, and it wasn’t playing and singing in those places, it was for the Lord.”

Today, Jeff speaks with conviction about that turning point. “The Lord gave me this job I do, and I will do it as long as I have air in my lungs. We all have a job to do for Him. Mine is writing and singing. I’m the happiest I’ve ever been.”

Jeff never entered the music ministry to chase fame. “I never got into the music ministry to make it big or have my name in lights,” he says. “I just write songs about my life that everyone can relate to.”

His songwriting is deeply personal - stories of his own struggles, the experiences of friends, and the spiritual battles faced by everyday believers. “I love songs that tell stories,” he says. “I think that’s the best songs written.”

His mission is simple, and he repeats it often: "If one song I write can touch the heart of one lost person and bring them to the Lord, then I'm doing my job."

Despite his humble approach, Jeff's music has resonated far beyond the mountains of eastern Kentucky. He has been named 'Best in the Mountains Singer,' an honor he doesn't take lightly. "Knowing the people here thought enough of me to even nominate me, that's huge. Like I've said before, it's all in His name."

He has also been the #1 artist in the tri-state area for many months, and his first two nationwide radio singles charted across multiple Gospel, Christian, and Christian Country Top 100 charts. "That to me is amazing," he says. "Praise the Lord."

Jeff's latest single, *I Pray*, follows his hit *Cherished Memories*. Both songs have charted nationally, but their meaning goes far deeper than numbers.

"*I Pray* is a song I wrote for my lost family members, friends, and coworkers," Jeff explains. "I have people in my life that don't know the Lord. This song is the prayers I pray every day of my life."

"*Cherished Memories* I wrote as a gift for Mom and Dad," he says. "Thanking them for everything they've done for me. But mostly it's about the time we are allowed to be together."

Jeff often reflects on a moment from his childhood, a sermon preached by his Uncle Sonny. Jeff was lying in the back seat of the church when he heard words that stayed with

him for half a century: "Imagine the Lord can do anything He wants to... He can snap His fingers and your heart would stop right now, and you open your eyes standing in front of God. Are you ready to face Him?"

That question became a compass for Jeff's life. And now, for his ministry.

Jeff understands the weight of being a Christian in a watching world. "We are the only Bible some people will ever read," he says. "Sinners watch every move us Christians make. Waiting for us to mess up, and we do. No one is perfect. Just our Father."

But he also knows the beauty of grace. "When we mess up, we can always take it to the Lord, drop on our knees, and say a prayer."

Today, Jeff Hamilton stands firmly in his calling. Not as a celebrity, but as a servant.

"My mission is clear," he says. "To help point the lost in the right direction. Help them on their journey. Help them find the Lord. Point them to the truth - Jesus."

He pauses, then adds the words that define his heart: "It's not about me. It's all in His name. I'm a nobody... helping the lost find their way. My songs can only take you so far - help lead you - but you have to do the rest."

And in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, his voice continues to rise steady, sincere, and full of purpose - carrying the Gospel to anyone willing to listen.

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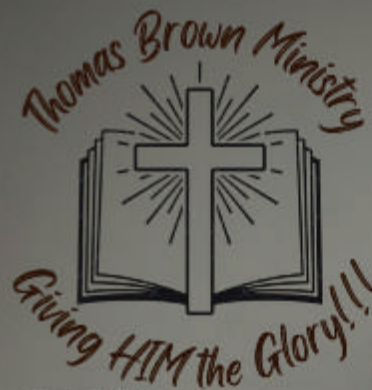
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THE ROAD BETWEEN US

By Mason Callahan

The first light of morning spilled across the Alabama hills like a soft-spoken promise, brushing the tops of the pines with gold. It was the kind of sunrise that made people slow down, even if only for a breath, and remember that life still held gentle things. On that particular morning, seventy-two-year-old Harold McCready stood on the porch of his small farmhouse, coffee steaming in his hand, watching the sky brighten as if it were an old friend arriving right on time.

Harold had lived in Kennedy his entire life. He knew every bend in the road, every neighbor's dog, every story tucked into the red clay. He also knew that the world had gotten faster - too fast for his liking - but he'd learned to let it pass by like a train he didn't need to board. His life was quieter now, shaped by routines and memories, and he was mostly content. Mostly.

The ache of loneliness had crept in over the past few years, settling in the empty spaces left behind when his wife, Marlene, passed. She had been the laughter in the house, the warmth in the winter, the one who insisted they wave at every passing car "because kindness doesn't cost a dime." Without her, the silence sometimes felt too large.

But this morning, Harold sensed something different in the air - a tug, a nudge, a whisper of change. He didn't know why. He just felt it.

He finished his coffee, fed his old hound, Baxter, and stepped into his truck. Every Friday, he drove into town to volunteer at the Cross Country USA Welcome Center - a small but lively place where travelers stopped for maps, snacks, and stories. Harold didn't work there for the paycheck; he worked there because Marlene had loved it. "People need a friendly face on the road," she used to say. "Let's be that face." So, he tried.

The drive into town was peaceful, the kind of drive that reminded him why he never wanted to live anywhere else. The fields rolled out like patchwork quilts, stitched with fences and dotted with cows. The sky stretched wide and unhurried. And the two-lane highway, worn but faithful, carried him forward like it had for decades.



When he pulled into the Welcome Center, he noticed a dusty blue SUV parked near the entrance. A young woman sat on the curb beside it, elbows on her knees, face buried in her hands. Something about her posture - the heaviness of it - made Harold pause.

He walked toward her slowly, Baxter trotting behind. "You alright there, miss?" he asked gently.

The woman looked up, startled. She had tired eyes, the kind that had cried recently. "Oh - I'm fine. Just... car trouble. And maybe life trouble."

Harold nodded. "Well, I'm better with cars than life, but I can take a crack at both."

She let out a small laugh, the kind that slips out accidentally when someone surprises you with kindness.

"I'm Emily," she said. "I'm driving cross-country. I'm supposed to be in Oklahoma by tonight, but the engine started making a noise I don't like."

"Let's have a look," Harold said. He popped the hood, listened, poked around, and after a few minutes, he had a diagnosis. "Your alternator's giving you fits. You'll need a new one. But the shop in town can fix it today."

Emily sighed. "I'm on a tight schedule. I'm moving for a new job. I can't afford delays."

Harold studied her face. She looked young - mid-twenties, maybe - but worn in a way that suggested she'd been carrying more than her share.

"Life doesn't always care about our schedules," he said softly. "But sometimes delays are blessings in disguise." Emily didn't respond, but her eyes softened.

Harold called the local mechanic, arranged a tow, and insisted Emily come inside the Welcome Center to rest while she waited. She hesitated, then agreed.

Inside, the place smelled like fresh coffee and old stories. Maps lined the walls. A bulletin board displayed photos of travelers who had passed through - smiling families, bikers, retirees, road-trippers with sunburned noses and wide grins.

Emily wandered slowly, taking it all in. "This place feels... safe," she said.

"That's the goal," Harold replied.

They sat at a small table near the window. Harold poured her a cup of coffee, and she wrapped her hands around it like it was the first warm thing she'd held all day.

"So," he said, "what's waiting for you in Oklahoma?"

"A job," she said. "A fresh start. My mom passed last year. My lease ended last month. My friends all moved away. I just... needed to go somewhere new."

Harold nodded. "Starting over takes courage."

Emily looked down. "It doesn't feel like courage. It feels like running."

"Sometimes running is the first step toward healing," Harold said. "But you'll find your footing."

She blinked hard, fighting tears. "I hope so."

For the next hour, they talked - not about heavy things, but about small ones. Favorite road trip snacks. The best gas station coffee in America. The strangest roadside attractions they'd ever seen. Emily laughed more than she expected to. Harold felt lighter than he had in months.

When the tow truck arrived, Harold followed Emily outside.

"Thank you," she said. "You didn't have to help me."

"Sure I did," Harold replied. "People helped me when I needed it. I'm just returning the favor."

She smiled - a real smile this time.

The mechanic estimated a few hours for the repair. Emily looked anxious, but Harold had an idea.

"How about you join me for lunch?" he asked. "There's a diner down the road that makes a chicken-fried steak big enough to feed a small army."

Emily hesitated, then nodded. "I'd like that."

They drove to the diner, Baxter riding in the back seat like a king. The place was cozy, with red vinyl booths and a jukebox that still worked when you kicked it gently. They ordered lunch, and as they ate, Emily asked Harold about his life.

He told her about Marlene - how they'd met at a church picnic, how she'd taught him to dance in the living room, how she'd insisted they take road trips every summer even when money was tight. He told her about the Welcome Center, about Baxter, about the quiet ache of missing someone who made the world brighter.

Emily listened closely. "You loved her so much."

"I still do," Harold said. "Love doesn't stop. It just changes shape."

Emily swallowed hard. "I wish I had someone like that."

"You will," Harold said. "But first you need to learn to love your own story. Even the messy chapters."

She looked out the window, thinking.



After lunch, they returned to the Welcome Center. The mechanic called - the car was ready. Emily's relief was visible, but so was something else: hesitation.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said.

"You already did," Harold replied. "You let me be useful. That's a gift."

She hugged him - a quick, tight hug that carried more gratitude than words could hold. When she pulled away, her eyes were shining. "I won't forget this."

"You better not," Harold said with a grin. "And when you get where you're going, send us a postcard. We put them on the bulletin board."

"I will," she promised. She climbed into her SUV, started the engine, and rolled down the window.

"Harold?"

"Yes, ma'am?"

"You said delays can be blessings in disguise."

"That's right."

She smiled. "This one was."

He tipped his hat. "Safe travels, Emily."

She drove away, the dust rising behind her like a soft farewell. Harold watched until her car disappeared around the bend. Then he looked down at Baxter. "Well, boy," he said, "I think today was a good day." Baxter wagged his tail.

Harold walked back inside the Welcome Center, feeling something he hadn't felt in a long time - a spark. A reminder that even in the quiet corners of life, connection still found its way in. Sometimes through strangers. Sometimes through broken alternators. Sometimes through moments that weren't planned but were meant all the same.

A week later, a postcard arrived. It was from Oklahoma.

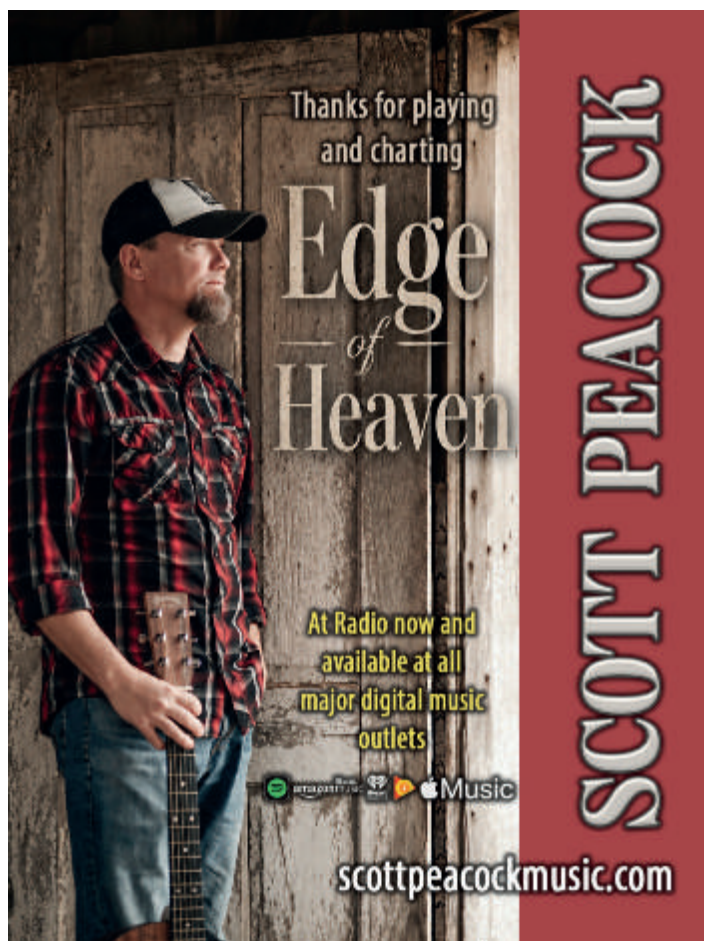
On the front was a picture of a wide, open sky. On the back, in Emily's handwriting: *"Made it safely. Found an apartment. Starting work Monday. Thank you for reminding me that good people still exist. You were the first kindness on my new road. I'll carry it with me."*



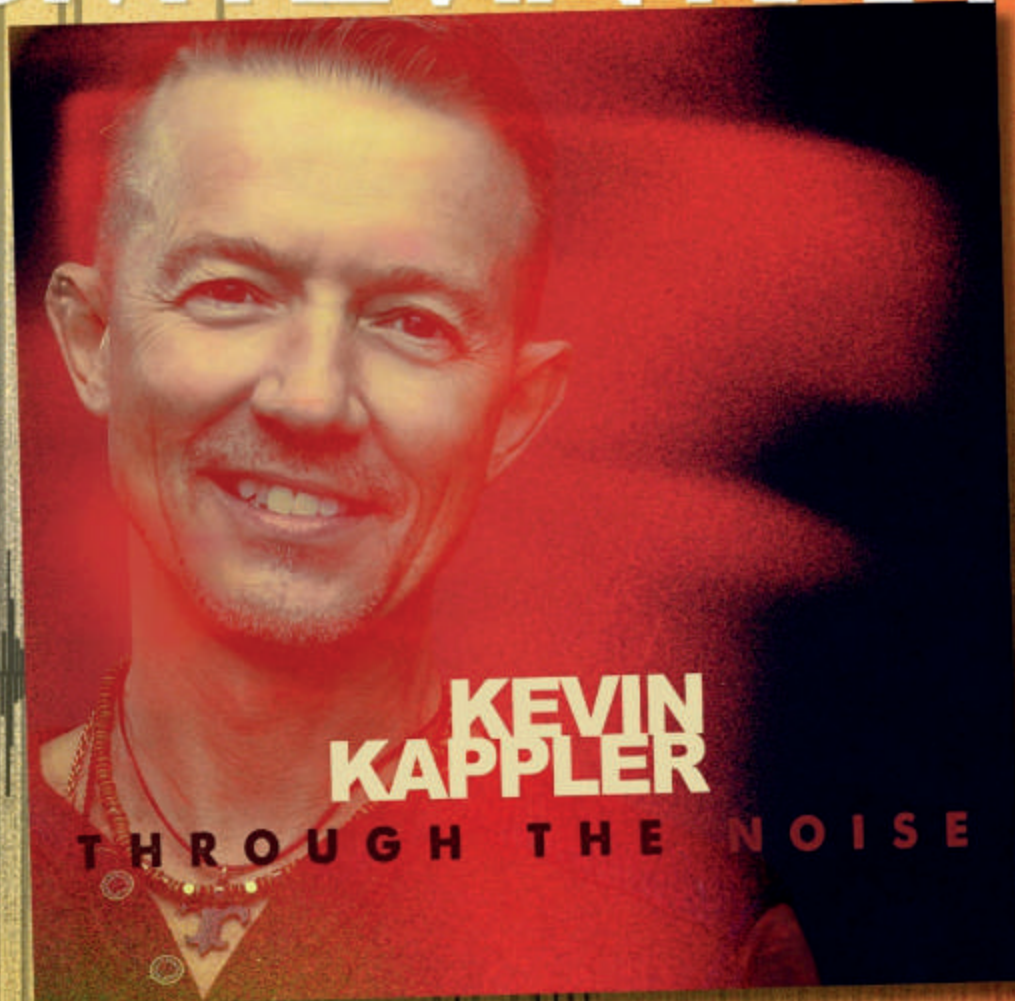
Harold pinned the postcard to the bulletin board, right in the center. Then he stepped outside, looked at the horizon, and whispered toward the morning light: "Thank you, Marlene."

Because he knew - deep down - that she had something to do with it.

And the road, faithful as ever, stretched out before him, ready for whatever came next.



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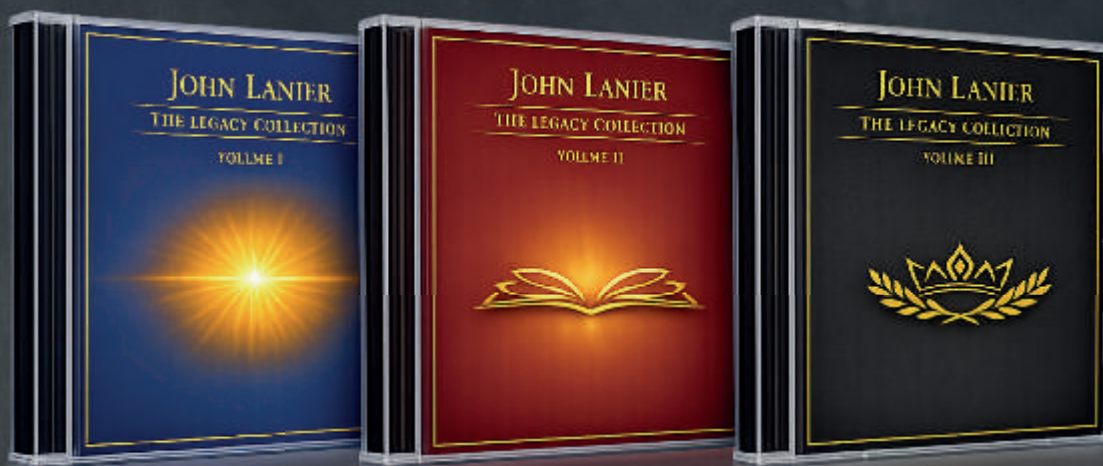
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