



Cross to Country ^{USA} magazine

ALWAYS LORETTA

**The ultimate Loretta Lynn tribute
show featuring EMILY PORTMAN as
Loretta Lynn with The Coalminers**

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Country Music Star Re-Enlists
in the U.S. Army Reserve**

**Josie Music Awards Returns to the
Grand Ole Opry House for 9th Annual Event**

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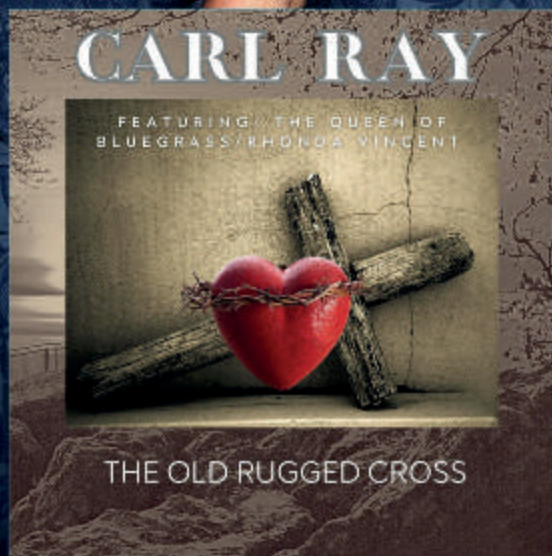
CARL RAY

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Melanie Walker

*In Jesus Name
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Amen!
Amen!*



I've known Melanie for 20 years. We have a really great rapport. She's developed a sound that is so authentic. Songs like "In Jesus' Name We Pray, Amen, Amen" reflect who she is and the message she wants to convey. I've enjoyed watching her grow as an artist, and I look forward to making music with Melanie in the future.

*-Mandy Barnett,
Grand Ole Opry Member*

Though my mom and dad have been gone for many, many years, this sweet song reminds me of one of the gifts they gave me, leading me to faith in Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen!

*-John Berry,
Country Artist, Grammy Winner*

*"This sing-along favorite got me at first listen and stayed with me all day!
A Loretta-like feel in a 2023 package."*

*-Devon O'Day,
Main Street Today Host and Member of the TN Radio Hall of Fame*

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From the Editor

As we say in the South, "Happy Fall Y'all!!!"

Fall is always a great time of year - the beauty of the vivid colors with the changing of the leaves, the bonfires, fall decorations, and everything pumpkin spice - if you like that kind of thing! LOL! Of course, you can't forget football season!

School has already been in session for a few weeks. Please, let's pray for all the children, teachers, and the school staff. We pray for their safety and strength as they learn the skills that will shape their lives. It has been 32 years since I was in school and ten years since my son graduated. Even back then the kids had to deal with temptation and bullying. In this world we live in with all the changes and opinions, it makes dealing with issues at school a major task. We need to pray for our kids more than ever. They hear and see so much, and for a young person with morals it can be a difficult situation.

Recently at a store parking lot I overheard a mom having a casual conversation with her daughter that looked about eight years old. The parent was using profanity in front of the child. It made me think, what would happen if the child said those words to a grandparent or back to the parent. Would the child get chastised or would they laugh it off? Parents should lead by example.

I was blessed to be raised right and to have respect. Many kids are not that lucky. There are many children who were raised in Godly homes but still choose to go down the wrong path and yield to the temptations of today's society. The Bible says, "Train up a child in the ways he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it." - Proverbs 22:6.

I remember when I was in middle school and the kids in my grade were playing and talking. I wasn't in the "it crowd." I would walk up, and the kids would stop and say there is "Little Miss Christian." During those times I did feel left out. But I came to understand that being referred to as "Little Miss Christian" as a child was a compliment! I wouldn't trade my faith and beliefs for anything or anybody to fit in with the "it crowd." I am thankful that in high school I did have some friends that always included me.

While writing this, I am reminded of a few lines to a Whitney Houston song, *The Greatest Love of All*...

*I believe the children are our future,
Teach them well and let them lead the way.
Show them all the beauty they possess inside,
Give them a sense of pride to make it easier.
Let the children's laughter remind us how we used to be.*

(Linda Creed, Lyrics / Michael William Masser, Music
EMI Gold Horizon Music Group / BMI)

Robin

Robin Tanner, Managing Editor

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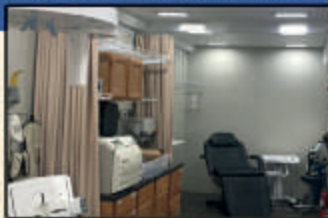
NEWS FROM THE MEDICAL MISSION FIELD Summer 2023

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/DR. PETER L. KUNKLE

Hasten International is already international in scope. However Acts 1:8 not only calls us to share the Good News to the ends of the earth, but we are also called to do that locally.

With our Domestic Medical Missions trailer, Hasten is about to do exactly that, bringing health and the hope of salvation to those in our own communities, states, and country. The Hasten Medical Missions trailer will travel to help communities that are underserved in getting health and dental needs met. You can join us in this vision for the future as we are moving forward with the vision by acquiring and equipping this trailer.

We invite you to join the campaign to make this Domestic Medical Mission trailer a reality by supporting our "Get On Board" campaign to fund this project. Would you consider giving a gift of between \$100 and \$10,000, or more? Give online now at www.HastenInternational.org or mail a check sent to the address below. All contributions are appreciated.



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HAITI

Even while working and ministering in some of the most adverse conditions imaginable, Dr. Daniel Adolphe writes from Haiti:

"Thank you for praying for Haiti, we survive. I enjoy knowing you all continue to pray for us. THANK YOU, my friends, because without your prayers, things would be worse. I can't stop thanking all HASTEN donors for their support. I'm really proud of you all. My staff and I continue to work together to help our community and God has never let us alone."



Hasten International is excited to introduce two new medical professionals to our work in Columbia.

They are already on site, working and evangelizing, showing more people the love of Jesus.

Dr. Daniel Gonzalez

Dr. Tannia Camargo

**Quote from Dr. Dennis Pruett
Founder, Hasten International**

"Medical evangelism is the best way in the world to put Christian ideals into action. You see with your eyes, touch with your hands, and feel with your heart the love Christ had for people when he helped them. This is made wonderful when you see the appreciation from a people who now understand that the love God had for all mankind is manifested by His servants."



*Donna
Kilmurray*

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Remembering...

Anita Ballard Pitts

November 11, 1953 - August 4, 2023

Staff, Cross Country USA

Born in Clanton, Alabama, Anita's journey led her to make her home in Duncan, South Carolina. She lived a life dedicated to the Lord and her family. As a compassionate Registered Nurse, she cared for others with a selflessness that left a lasting impact on those she tended to. Her nurturing spirit also found expression as a minister of music, using her melodious voice and musical talents to lead others in worship and praise. Her gift for songwriting and musicianship spread the joy of Gospel music far and wide, touching the hearts of countless individuals across the globe.

Anita's involvement in the Global Promotions of Gospel music allowed her to touch the lives of people from around the world.

A devoted member of Praise Cathedral Church in Greer, South Carolina, Anita's faith was the cornerstone of her life. She found solace and strength in her relationship with God, and her commitment to her faith was evident in all aspects of her life.

Anita was blessed with a loving family that provided her with unwavering support and guidance. Her parents, Rev. David A. Ballard and Ida Ballard Burnette along with her parents in love Rev. Buell A. Pitts and Paula W. Pitts and her siblings Sheila Diane Ballard and Joseph Duane Ballard, shared a bond that transcended time and distance. She was the cherished wife of Paul Pitts, and their love story was one of unwavering devotion and companionship.



As a mother, Anita poured her heart and soul into nurturing her three children: Christopher W. Pitts, Jeffrey M. Pitts, and Robyn Pitts Smith. She was a pillar of strength and a constant source of love and support as they navigated life's challenges.

Anita's love extended to her six grandchildren: David Paul Pitts, William Simmons, Elijah Smith, Selah Smith, Grace Lee, and Theodore Pitts. Her pride in their accomplishments knew no bounds, and she relished every moment spent with them, creating treasured memories that will forever be held close. In the presence of her two great-grandchildren, Willow Pitts and Eve Lee, Anita found joy in the innocence and wonder of youth. She delighted in their laughter and playful spirits, finding happiness in their every embrace.

On August 4, 2023, Anita passed away peacefully in her sleep, leaving behind a void that can never be filled. Though her departure from this world was sudden, her impact on the lives she touched will forever be remembered with fondness and gratitude.

In this time of grief and loss, friends and loved ones find comfort in the beautiful memories held dear and the knowledge that Anita's spirit lives on in the hearts of all those she loved.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." - Psalm 34:18.

May strength and solace be found in knowing that Anita now rests in eternal peace, forever embraced in the loving arms of her heavenly Father.

Based in SW Oklahoma, Dale travels the country, singing and sharing God's Word and what He has done for us!

Thanks for playing

I'M NO STRANGER TO THE VALLEY

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DALE ROCHELL

Visit our Facebook page: "Waves of Faith Country Gospel" for bookings, videos, and daily quotes or contact us by phone at (580) 467-0720



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Daniel Shane
Boone
"That's My Drive"

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Barry McGee

By Robin Tanner

As an award-winning Christian comedian, musician, and dramatist, Barry McGee uses humor to help create a great response at the altar. As a certified evangelist with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Jerry Falwell Ministries, and Racers for Christ, ministry is always the goal. Barry states, "I love to entertain and minister. For the past thirty years of fulltime ministry, I have lived my dream!"

Barry has won 'Comedian of the Year' for many years from numerous award shows such as CCMA/ICM (Christian Country Music Association) in Nashville, Tennessee, CGMA (Country Gospel Music Association) in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and the ICGMA (International Country Gospel Music Association) in West Plains, Missouri.

Barry is also a NASCAR/Motorsports chaplain and volunteer as shop chaplain for Motor Racing Outreach (MRO). "We have done volunteer work with Richard Childress Racing, Wood Brothers Racing, Richard Petty Motor Sports, and Morgan Shepherd Racing. We do chapel services for NASCAR and Raceway Ministries, national drag race events, and I am ordained with Racers for Christ (RFC). We also do chapel services for National Hot Rod Association (NHRA)."

Barry has worked with Dr. Tony Evans, Ricky Skaggs, Charlie Daniels, Aaron Neville, and Lee Greenwood. He has performed as a platform artist with Prison Fellowship and Chuck Colson. "We have done shows for thousands of inmates," he mentions. Some of the characters he portrays have been televised on the lawn of the Capitol in Washington, DC. McGee also landed a role in the ABC movie "Target Earth."

Barry's current services and live musical productions are as follows: Evangelistic messages as a Motorsports Chaplain, Harvey Tater (Musical Comedy), John on the Island of Patmos (Musical Drama), David and Goliath - The Battle is the Lord's (Musical Drama), Jonah's Journey (Comedy), Daniel in the Lion's Den



(Musical Drama), Noah (Musical Drama) and Johnny Rock - 81 year old rock star (Musical Comedy). Each year Barry is scheduled at multiple revivals, youth crusades, vacation bible schools and family church services as well as numerous prison campaigns and racing events.

Barry shares a ministry that is close to his heart. "I am so very excited to have been appointed Director of Outreach with Hasten International. They are a very unique medical missions ministry that is impacting people in different parts of the world!"

Barry recently signed a recording contract with Grace Records Nashville. McGee's first single to radio is *What'll I Do*.

Barry concludes, "My biggest and most special blessing in my whole life (next to Jesus) is my wife Donna of 47 years. Right after I was saved at fourteen years old, we met at a church function and God put us together for the rest of our lives! How did God know what I would need for many years to come? She gave me two of the greatest children on planet earth, Jessica and Jordan. They are incredible leaders in many settings! Thank you, Lord and THANK YOU, LORD!"

www.barrymcgee.org



Barry as "Harvey Tater"



Carol Barham

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MEGAN BRIANNA



Megan Brianna is a preacher's kid AND a preacher's grandkid from Lexington, North Carolina. Naturally, this sixteen-year-old would grow up in the church - singing at the age of five and playing piano at the age of six. A shining, musical light, it was meant "to be" for Megan.

By Robin Tanner

Megan tells a little of herself. "I grew up in church and was saved at a revival, at the age of nine. My grandfather was a pastor for fifty years, while my dad is currently a pastor and has been preaching for twenty-five years. I started witnessing and passing out Gospel tracts when I was very young. I was raised up in a Christian home that puts God first in everything. We are very supportive of each other! My parents always encouraged me to sing for the Lord. They were always right there to pull me up, telling me to keep going for the Lord. I thank God for birthing me in the right home, and at the right time for His will to be accomplished. Two wonderful, Godly people in my life have gotten me to this point."

"I was privileged to go to a Christian school, having some amazing people and teachers who have impacted my life. However, in middle school, I began getting bullied for being a Christian and not following down the path of my peers. It got to a point where my parents decided to pull me out and homeschool me. It was a hard time in my life because I didn't understand why so-called Christians could do that to each other. While being homeschooled, I was able to grow more spiritually and get closer to God. I was very sheltered, but looking back now God allowed that so I would be here today,

a guiding light to other teens. Unfortunately, I still had friends in my life who continued to discourage me, especially when it came to my singing. For a period of my life, it was so hard and discouraging."

"There will always be people telling you that you can't. They will sit there as you sing and have a horrible look on their face. That is not a good feeling! Satan will attack when you are doing it for the Lord. Yet, it is most rewarding when people encourage you on this journey, reaching all that you can for Christ. You can't please everyone and there will always be *someone* who does not like what you are doing. You have to remember that you are doing it for the cause of Christ. It is amazing to sing, afterwards hearing of someone receiving Christ. I never thought I would be standing here after experiencing all the bullying that I went through. God put people in my life that are in the music industry to help me overcome. Now, I can share my testimony. My *lowest of lows* I get to share, hopefully helping others realize it is all worth it. I want to reach lost souls, showing those who have been bullied in churches and schools, there is hope. They can make it through with God's help. There is no stopping God's calling, no matter who says otherwise!"

On Christmas Day Megan's grandfather passed away. With God's help she sang at his funeral. It was there that Megan felt a calling on her life. "The day my grandfather died, although it was a tragic event, God was able to turn it for His glory. I went to the piano just to have time alone with God. I sat down and began playing. There was so great a peace that I experienced, yet a peace I can't explain. I began getting booked to go to different churches, and began taking voice lessons. I never dreamed that God would bring me to this point at all, much less this quickly."

Megan has been really busy lately. She has opened concerts for various Gospel artists. In June of this year, she performed with a choir of artists known as the Country Chorale. The event was held at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tennessee. It was the 41st year celebration of Sunday Mornin' Country. Megan also holds special moments in singing for North Carolina's Lieutenant Governor, Preacher Rafael Cruz (Senator Ted Cruz's dad), as well as for former Congressman Mark Walker. To say that the future looks bright for this young songstress is an understatement.



Megan and her parents at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tennessee

Megan has recently signed with Grace Records in Nashville, and already has an album in the works. She is thrilled to have a song featured in the upcoming movie, "The Message," along with having an acting role in the movie. Her current radio single is entitled *I'm Saved And I Know That I Am (Medley)*.

With musical influences the likes of Anne Wilson, Lauren Daigle, The Carr Family, Debbie Bennett, and Billy Myers - one can expect to experience peace and happiness in the presence of God at a Megan Brianna concert. "I will talk to anyone and help them in any way that I can. It

isn't about me, but about God in feeling His presence and seeing him move. God has truly blessed me. It is my turn to serve Him, letting my generation (and future generations) know that you can serve God at any age, and under any circumstances. I so want to be that beaming light, beckoning young people to know the Lord!"

Deano Graham



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LARGE VENUES, FAIRS, & FESTIVALS

Ashley Eden

My Turning Point

Ashley Eden is a singer and musician from the small town of Bluefield, Virginia. For this registered nurse (RN) holding a bachelor's degree in nursing, music and ministry seems to have taken a natural lead in her life. Ashley simply cannot get away from the music that was instilled in her from a little child, "I cannot remember a time when music was not a part of my life. Music runs deep in my family, and has been passed down from generation to generation."

By Deborah Baliles



A five-year-old Ashley began singing and ministering in church with her family. By age twelve, she would begin playing music; first the piano, then the guitar. She loved both instruments and wanted to learn more and more. Ever learning, and within a year, Ashley would be playing with the church youth band. With a family very involved in music and church, Ashley recalls the times of practicing songs with her cousin in the back seat of the car. An aunt would work with them, teaching harmonies. Along with her cousin, Ashley would sing and play in the band for the youth services every Friday night. Already in love with the music, Ashley was subconsciously falling in love with the ministry in music.

At Deliverance Temple Church (DTC) in Brushfork, West Virginia, Ashley not only learned of the Love of God, but learned about the heart of worship as well. “I cherish the time singing in DTC’s youth band; it helped to shape me into the person that I am today. Deep down, I have always known in my heart that ministering the Gospel through music was my calling.”

While attending college, she married her best friend, Kirkland Perdue in 2019. Today they minister together in sharing the Gospel. The husband-and-wife team travels to minister in different churches and communities. “Some of the most memorable moments in ministry have been singing and playing under the anointing of God. I love ministering with my husband and seeing God move in people’s lives. I desire to pursue a ministry career to reach others with the message the Lord has given me through music as well as supporting my husband as he preaches the Gospel.” Ashley and Kirkland are currently attending church at Faith Chapel Ministries in Baxter, Tennessee, under the leadership of Bishop Steve Warren.

One of Ashley’s biggest challenges is being in the forefront, as she was content with being supportive in the background. Throughout her life, she has always struggled with “feeling less than,” depression, and anxiety. From time to time those old feelings surface for her, but Ashley has learned that God can do so much “more than” one can imagine. Ashley’s testimony is as such. “God has truly revealed himself to me in this season. I am finding my identity

in Him. Even on days of struggling, I am encouraged by God’s unwavering love and mercy. Without Him, I would not be here today.”

Ashley finally reached an amazing turning point. “I remember a specific revival with my Bishop, Steve Warren. It was preached April of 2021. I was in a very low place, about to give up everything. The message preached went straight through me. I will always refer to that moment as my turning point. From that moment, I have such a desire to work in my calling as my relationship with God is strengthened, every single day. You are never too far away, or in a place, where God’s grace and love cannot meet you. The Lord is blessing me with opportunities to reach those ordinarily unreachable. So, a transition to a music ministry career is absolutely possible. I am excited! With God, *all things* are possible.”

Regarding today’s cultural, social, and moral environment, “It is a bit of a mixing pot. I simply want to be that voice that rises above it all, reaching people just to let them know that God loves them, and that Jesus died to save them. Regardless of one’s conditions and/or circumstances, you cannot outrun the abundance of God’s love. I want to be the voice of truth, having the wisdom to clearly express what is right, and what is wrong, in God’s eyes.”

From that turning point in her life, Ashley is releasing her first solo album this year, fittingly titled, “New Beginnings.” She hand-selected cover songs that have ministered to her personally and profoundly. Her first single release, *He’ll Make A Way* was written by Gerald Crabb and originally sung by The Crabb Family. “This song reminds me, Ashley Eden, that no matter whatever I may face (or whatever you may face), God will *always* make a way.”

At an Ashley Eden event, one can expect a variety of Southern Gospel and Contemporary music. “I love all genres of music, as long as there is a message. The purpose in songs that I sing is to uplift, encourage, and talk about the goodness of God. And, I purpose to do just that! Praying that something in the music will be a turning point for another life.”

Ashley Eden’s debut album launched June 30, 2023 and is available on all major music platforms.



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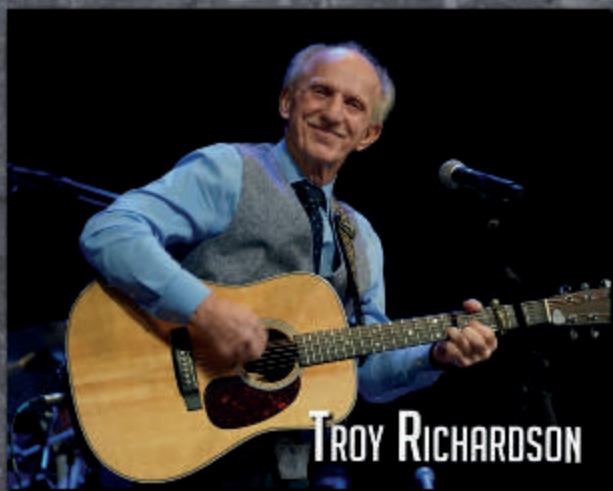


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LEGENDS SERIES

MIDSOUTH BAND

By Robin Tanner

When it comes to Christian Country legends, Midsouth definitely qualifies for that title. This trailblazing band pushed the popularity of Christian Country music forward in the late 80s and 90s. During that time, Christian and Country music merged with their faith-based lyrics and Country influenced sound that has been a driving force in our genre for over three decades. Midsouth became a driving force in a developing genre known as Christian Country.

Midsouth began their recording career with Morningstar Records in the mid-80s. They were offered an exclusive agreement with Word Records in 1989 and recorded three projects. The band became a cross-over success when their music did well in both markets of Christian and Country music. In 1994, the band signed with Warner Alliance, a division of Warner Brothers, where they recorded two more projects that continued to be accepted across multiple genres of the music industry.

Midsouth toured heavily and had a very successful run as a band until deciding it was time to leave the road in 1997. Since that time, the band has continued to get together for special occasions for their strong fan base throughout the country who continue to love their special brand of music.

The band was originally founded in the 70s. They were known as The Mid South Boys, a Southern Gospel group based out of Sheridan, Arkansas. During the early eighties, the original members of the group had left. It was at that time that the group was purchased by Texas native, Robby McGee. He was raised with the music of The Eagles, The Gatlin Brothers, and Alabama, to name a few. Robby joined up with bandmate Bobby Bowen from Arkansas, who happened to have been heavily influenced by Kenny Hinson and Tony Turner, who had been raised in the Bluegrass state of Kentucky. Kent Humphrey, who was raised under many of the same musical influences, would later join the band to share the lead vocals with Bowen. McGee was the primary songwriter of the band. It didn't take long for the band's



signature Country sound to catch the attention of the growing Christian Country industry and the fans.

Midsouth has been blessed to experience many memorable highlights in their music career. Members of the band recall these special moments. "Due to the style of our music, we've performed in many venues not typically accustomed to Gospel music, and with many popular Country artists such as Willie Nelson, Charlie Daniels, Ricky Skaggs, Highway 101, and Colin Raye, just to name a few. Some of our more memorable moments would be the first time we heard our music on the radio, having our music videos run on CMT and other outlets; performing live on Ralph Emory's "Nashville Now" show with Barbara Mandrell, Minnie Pearl and George Jones; performing *God Bless America* for the Dallas Mavericks; having the opportunity to attend the Grammys in 1992 for the nomination of our "Shoulder To Shoulder" recording; and our song *Without You (I Haven't Got a Prayer)* crossed-over as a Top 30 Pop hit in Billboard Magazine and ultimately won a Dove Award."

Since those early days, Midsouth has seen many ups and downs of the music industry. The band shares some insight during their time on the road. "From a luxurious bus to a broken-down bus; a beautiful venue to a flatbed trailer; greatest sound ever to worst sound ever; celebrating chart songs to radio bombs; record company signs, record company drops. The music industry can definitely be rewarding and challenging at the same time. However, having said that, there's nothing like stepping onto a stage and seeing people clap their hands, sing along with your music, and talk to you

like you are one of their dear friends (even though you've never met). That feeling, along with hearing how our music has and continues to impact people's lives all across the country are two of the most rewarding experiences (and gifts) that a music career could ever give."

Midsouth has received several accolades beginning with their 1985 'Newcomer of the Year' award. They received a Grammy nomination in 1992 for their "Shoulder to Shoulder" project, received several Christian Country Music Association awards, and won a Dove award for 'Country Recorded Song of The Year' in 1995 for the song, *Without You (I Haven't Got A Prayer)*. Most recently, the band received the 'Living Legend' award from The Inspirational Country Music Association.

In September of 1988, tragedy struck the band when one of their members, Robby McGee, had a scuba diving accident that left him paralyzed from the chest down. The doctors did not give him much hope of walking, playing his keyboards or singing again, and for Robby and his wife to be able to have children. However, after spending four months in the hospital, God was faithful and Robby was able to walk, play, sing, and come back on the road with the band. It was also during those four months in the hospital, at the verge of wanting to quit, that God gave Robby a song that has gone on to become arguably the most impactful one to someone going through a difficult season of life. The song was titled

Don't Give In. A little less than a year after the accident, God blessed Robby and his wife Vanessa with a son.

Midsouth states, "Our mission and goals are pretty simple; to bring glory to God in all that we do! Whether it's through our everyday lives out in the marketplace throughout the week, performing our music on a stage, through a song we've written, or anything else, we want the goodness of God to be so evident, that others are drawn in."


When you have the pleasure to attend a MidSouth concert, expect to laugh, dance, smile, and clap along with a stage full of talented musicians, singers, and writers who's music will leave you feeling encouraged and inspired and ready to pass it on to others!

Midsouth is excited to bring an upcoming event to their fans. "On October 27th at Landmark Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, we will not only be doing a live performance but we will also be making that performance a Pay Per View event! We want to be able to play all of our hit songs for all our fans across the country at one time and decided that a PPV is a great way to make that happen."

For more information, you can check out Midsouth's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/MidsouthBandMusic.



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*The Josie Music Awards Show Returns to
the Grand Ole Opry House for 9th Annual Event*

By Robin Tanner

There are thousands of independent artists in music today. Many talented artists need an advocate to believe in them and encourage them in their endeavors of music. These artists have found such allies in Josie Passantino-Boone and Tinamarie Passantino. Many artists consider this mother and daughter influential for promoting their careers with the Josie Music Awards.

The Josie Music Awards is the largest, multi-genre, privately-owned, independent music award show globally, bringing in thousands from around the world to celebrate each year. The JMAs is also the greatest place for networking, collaborations, and finding lifelong musical friendships.

The Josie Music Awards began after years of Josie and Tinamarie working with thousands of music artists by interviewing them on their radio talk show, The Josie Show, and other shows hosted by Josie and produced by Tinamarie. They also played these artists music on their radio station, Country Blast Radio. Josie grew up working in the radio business, starting her own show at the age of fourteen years old. Tinamarie, being a manager, took on the management role of the business forming the daughter and mother super



**Josie Passantino-Boone and Tinamarie Passantino,
founders of the Josie Music Association, LLC**

team. Another outlet from the Josie Network of brands also includes IndiesVoice Magazine.

Tinamarie and Josie are both CMA voting members as well as members of an advisory panel that rates commercial Country radio music. They have won multiple broadcasting awards and are listed in the National Register's Who's Who

in Business Professionals. Tinamarie was also the 'Center Director of the Year' for three years along with the NAEYC Accreditation (National Association for the Education of Young Children), and Achievement Awards included 'Outstanding Teambuilding' and 'Outstanding Quality.'

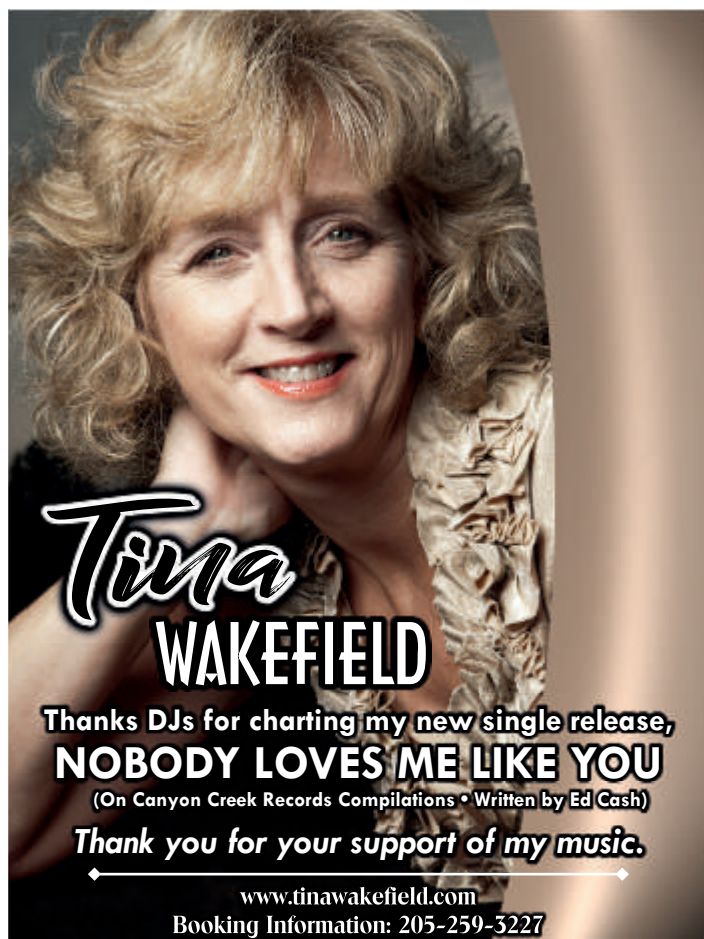
As with many families, the Passintinos have experienced difficult times but found strength in their faith. "We went through a hard time as a family for what will be two years soon with my mom's diagnosis of skin cancer. The difficult surgeries and recoveries strengthened our beliefs in God and all He does to look after us. We appreciate all of the JMA Family coming together to show support and love and bless us with their daily prayers."

The festivities will begin with a full weekend of music. Josie and Tinamarie add, "We will have three events during JMA Weekend, including JMA Music Fest October 20, 2023, held at the Nashville Zoo. The JMA Gala Pre-party event on October 21, 2023, will be at the Opry House Studio A. The 9th Annual Josie Music Awards will take place on October 22, 2023, and is privileged once again to be held at The Grand Ole Opry House. Attendees can expect great performances, award presentations, about fifty performances during the weekend, special guests, raffles, prizes, and classes, and there are always surprises."



Josie expressed, "One of the biggest highlights and honors we have experienced at The Josie Music Awards is bringing our annual award show to The Grand Ole Opry House. The venue is beautiful, historic, and magical. Everyone we work with there is so kind, helpful, experienced, and professional. A big stand out in our minds is the first time the big red curtain opened to a roar of applause, happiness, and love in the room instantly felt from the stage. Something that has always stood out for us since the first Josie Music Awards event in 2015 is the amount of love and support you feel in the room being at our annual event. We have never felt anything like it anywhere else."

www.josiemusicawards.com

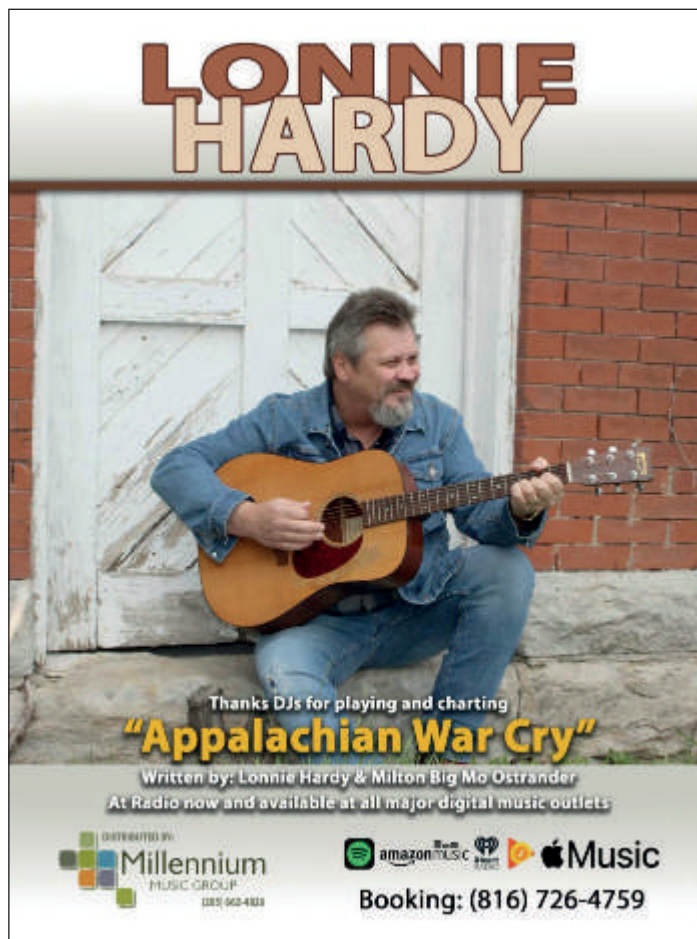


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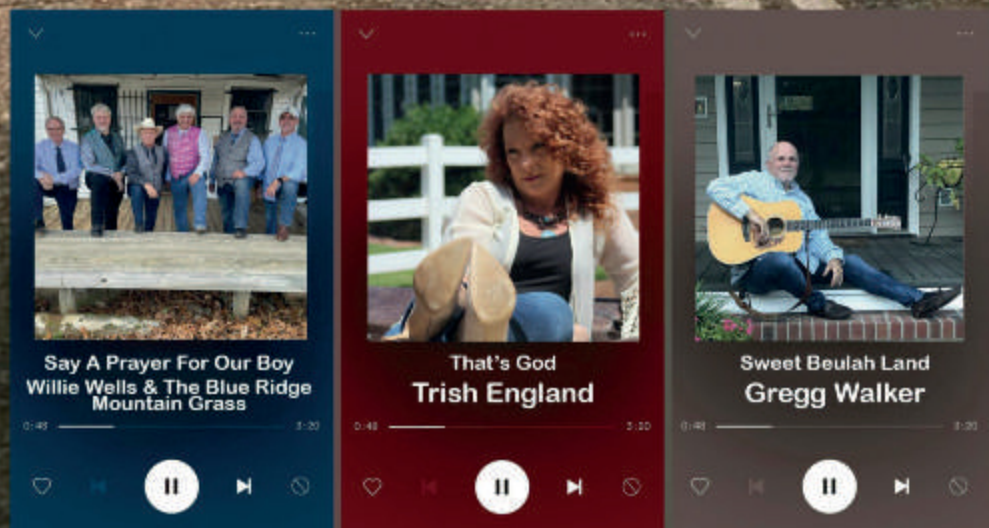
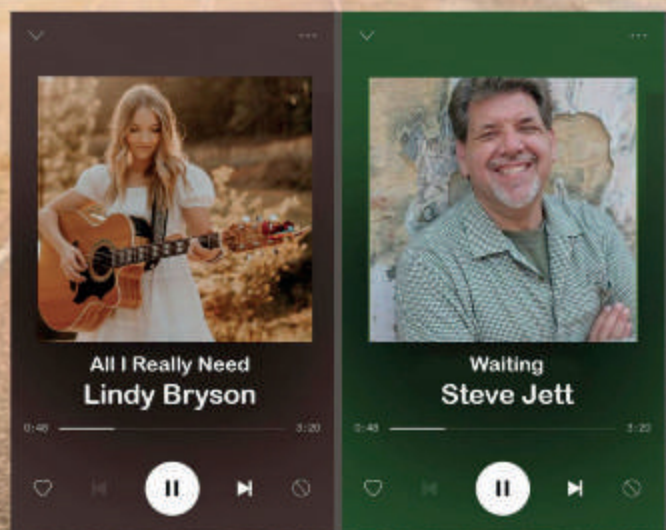
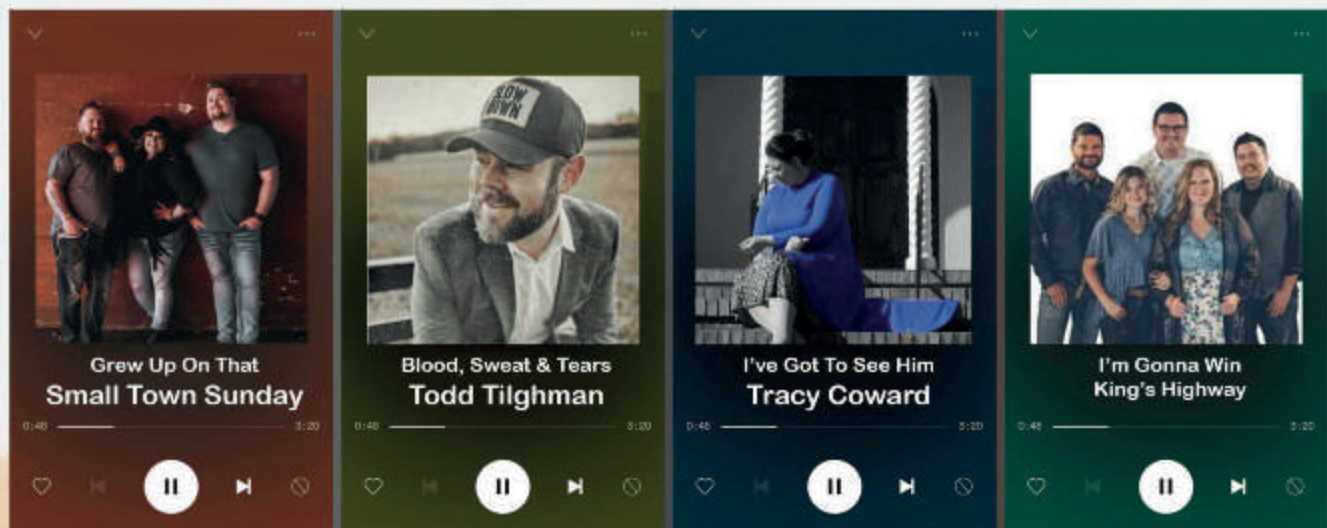
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CrossCountry Report

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MUSIC NEWS & SCOOPS

Thirteen-Year-Old Yodeling Cowgirl Phoebe White Performs on the Grand Ole Opry with Riders In The Sky

Phoebe White - the thirteen-year-old yodeling cowgirl from Kentucky - experienced a major milestone in her music career. One of her biggest goals was to perform on the Grand Ole Opry. That goal became reality on August 2, 2023, when she was called up to guest perform with GRAMMY award winning and Grand Ole Opry Members Riders In The Sky, whom she also recorded her debut EP with in 2022, "UnXpected." Phoebe shares "It was a dream come true to perform on The Grand Ole Opry! I had so much fun playing with Riders In the Sky! I can't stop smiling! Thank you to everyone who made this magical night possible."

Phoebe is a self-taught yodeler with an extensive vocal range, and an equally dynamic and jovial personality. She enjoys playing guitar, mandolin, piano, ukulele, banjo, and more. Her love of music spans many different generations and genres, but her favorites are Country, Western, Gospel, Bluegrass, and R&B. Her bubbly inner child, poise on stage, powerful voice, and energetic performances are simply captivating since she began performing at the age of eight. Phoebe is inspired by music pioneers who have gone before her.

and worldwide radio; appeared on Best of America by Horseback on RFD-TV; plus was featured at the Country music capital of Kentucky: Renfro Valley, The Kentucky Opry, and received an honorary exhibit at the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame on August 12, 2023. Phoebe also likes to dance, swim, and go camping with her family. However, Phoebe's most favorite thing to do is entertain live audiences, which she has been doing since 2017.

American Country Network, a New Music-Focused Channel Coming in 2024

A new Nashville-based national Country music television network is slated to launch in early 2024, Billboard can exclusively reveal.

Former The Country Network CEO Tommy Snyder and 8 Track Entertainment president Noah Gordon are spearheading the new initiative, named American Country Network (ACN). Snyder will serve as CEO and Gordon as chief creative director.

The network's programming will include Country music and country lifestyle-themed content including movies, lifestyle shows and documentaries, as well as Country music videos from both established artists and newcomers. The network also aims

to have branded music charts to track the popularity of the music videos airing on the network.

"We want to play great music and engage fans who love Country music - and that includes genres such as Americana, Folk, and Bluegrass," Gordon tells Billboard.

In addition to over-the-air broadcast, the privately funded American Country Network will launch a streaming platform to include Roku, Sling TV, LG TV, STIRR, Freebie TV, Amazon TV, Apple TV, iOS, and Android.

The American Country Network is set to soon open a studio in the Nashville area, providing a central hub for programming creation. "It will broadcast in about 40 major markets and you can consume it in many ways - iPad, cell phone, smart TV, video on demand," Gordon says. "We also think there is value in licensing some content and

potentially kind of refurbishing it - some content that on its own wouldn't be something people would consume, but if we wrap it with a best-of, or a best-moments that fits together."

Also leading the company's launch are chief information officer Keith Chester, who has nearly three decades of



Phoebe White with Riders In The Sky
Photo courtesy of Grand Ole Opry

Phoebe has performed with Suzy Bogguss, members of Chicago, The Doobie Brothers, New Grass Revival, The McLain Family Band, and shared the stage with Folk singer Michael Johnathon, David McLean, and Bluegrass band of the year: The Farm Hands. She has also performed in Nashville, on national TV,

entertainment industry experience, including managing and producing artists, actors and television personalities, and Jeff Goodwin, a marketing industry exec with four decades of experience, will serve as American Country Network's marketing director.

In addition to his previous role as CEO of The Country Network, Snyder previously worked alongside late Country Music Hall of Fame member Charlie Daniels, and wrote songs recorded by Country music artists as well as for movies and television. Producer-engineer Gordon has produced music including Dan Tyminski's "God Fearin' Heathen" album. He currently helms 8 Track Entertainment, an Alabama-based company that comprises a sports and entertainment management division, a music production and publishing entity, a television/film division, and a record label, which is distributed by Warner Bros./ADA.

The network will mark a reunion of sorts for Gordon, Snyder, and Brock, bringing The Chad Brock Show from its former home at The Country Network to the American Country Network. The show will exclusively air on ACN as one of the first originally produced shows on the new network, and airing bi-weekly following its launch.

"Also among the shows in the works are The Producer's Chair, a segment based on a long-running

show once held at Nashville's Douglas Corner, that will highlight the producers and songwriters behind many top Country hits." Gordon also noted children's programming for Saturdays, while Sunday Revival with Marty Raybon is slated for Sundays, led by the group Shenandoah's lead singer. They have hopes to launch an awards show that will air on the American Country Network at some point.

American Country Network will join a slate of Country music and/or rural lifestyle-focused networks, including RFD-TV (which launched in 2000), the Paramount-owned CMT (which launched in 1995) and the Circle Media/Opry Entertainment Group-owned Circle Network, which launched in 2020.

Gordon says of their plans to differentiate American Country Network from competitors, "Circle Network has the Grand Ole Opry and a bunch of wonderful programming. My hope is that we can become a network that is a great - not alternative - but kind of a sister network. If you like what you see there, you are probably going to find some things you love on ACN. And nothing against reality shows or anything, but going back, especially if you were a fan of CMT when it first came out, we want to have another great option for promoting and exposing music videos - both current and older fan favorites. I'm hoping to have the best of both worlds in how we deliver music."

Cross Country Report continued on page 32 >>>



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Nancy Jones Presents Fundraising Check to Huntsville Police Department

Nancy Jones, widow of the late George Jones, in partnership with Concerts 4 A Cause, The Wounded Blue, and the Von Braun Center (VBC) presented a fundraising check on Wednesday, July 19, to benefit the family of Officer Garrett Crumby following his death and Officer Albert Morin who was critically injured in a shooting on Tuesday, March 28.



Pictured L-R: Mike Vojticek, Von Braun Center Assistant Director; Kirk Giles, Huntsville Police Chief; Josh Bleidt, Concerts 4 A Cause; Nancy Jones; Randy Sutton, The Wounded Blue; Tommy Battle, Huntsville Mayor; Steve Maples, Von Braun Center Executive Director.

Photo by Jeremy Westby / 2911 Media

Upon hearing of the shooting, Jones immediately wanted to utilize the high-profile tribute concert, *Still Playin' Possum: Music & Memories of George Jones*, planned for April 25, 2023, to honor her late husband and her connections within the music industry to raise money in support of both officers and their families. Guitars autographed by Brad Paisley, Trace Adkins, Wynonna, Dierks Bentley, The Oak Ridge Boys, Travis Tritt, Tanya Tucker, Jelly Roll, and many others were sold through the fundraiser. Additionally, a pair of front-row tickets to the concert were auctioned off with support provided by 93.3 NASH Icon.

"I am beyond thankful for the friendships I have with so many artists who agreed to sign guitars to help raise this money," said Nancy Jones. "Everyone did their part, and we did the right thing here. I hope this money will help these families not have to worry about some of the day-to-day bills that put a burden on you when you are dealing with health and tragic situations."

Police Chief Kirk Giles accepted the fundraiser proceeds of more than \$80,000 on behalf of Officer Albert Morin and fallen Officer Garrett Crumby's family. "The outpouring of love from our community was overwhelming following the death of Officer Garrett Crumby and the critical wounding of Officer Albert Morin," Chief Kirk Giles said. "Thank you to Nancy Jones, the artists, these organizations, and everyone who donated to support Officer Crumby's family and Officer Morin following this tragic shooting."

Jones connected with Concerts 4 A Cause, a non-profit that works to bring hope and inspiration through music, to help facilitate the fundraiser. "Concerts 4 A Cause was established to do this very thing," said Josh Bleidt, Concerts 4 A Cause Founder. "We raise money and help those in need through music events and the artists' giving hearts. Today, we are helping two families of law enforcement. Tomorrow it may be a veteran or a child. We are happy we can do our part by bringing some financial relief to these families."

To help spread the word nationally about the fundraiser, Jones contacted The Wounded Blue, whose mission is to improve the lives of injured and disabled law enforcement officers. "The Wounded Blue is proud to have played a role in the amazing Country Music event that raised funds for the family of Huntsville Police Officer Garrett Crumby's family who was tragically gunned down and for Officer Albert Morin who was also shot and critically injured," said Randy Sutton, The Wounded Blue Founder and Chairman. "The kindness and compassion shown by Nancy Jones in her quest to help these families shall be honored by the entire law enforcement community."

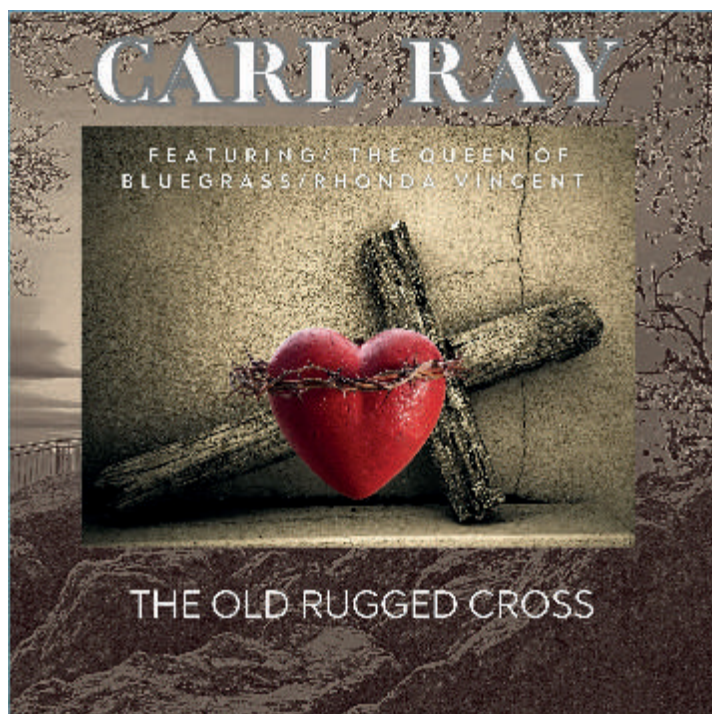
"We knew an event of this caliber would be very successful - not just for the VBC, but for the entire City of Huntsville and North Alabama - because it would attract thousands of people to our community who love listening to music by the great George Jones," said Steve Maples, Von Braun Center Executive Director. "This sold-out concert was one of the top five highest-grossing events ever held in the VBC's 48-year history and had an estimated economic impact of over \$1.2 million; however, the amazing generosity of Nancy and her team to our local law enforcement is what will make this one of the most legendary events to be held in Huntsville."

New Release by Country Artist Carl Ray Titled 'The Old Rugged Cross,' Features the 'Queen of Bluegrass' Rhonda Vincent

Nashville recording artist Carl Ray's new single, *The Old Rugged Cross* feature's a guest appearance by The Queen of Bluegrass, Rhonda Vincent and was just released to radio in August. Ray's voice, likened to Vince Gill for his tenor appeal, laced with Vincent's distinct Bluegrass tone delivers a passionate, poignant rendition of this Gospel classic.

The Old Rugged Cross was produced by Ray and Greg Cole for Slaw Dog Productions in Nashville. Ray is excited several Bluegrass pickers joined him such as, Darrin Vincent on bass, Seth Taylor on Acoustic and Mandolin, B.J. Cherryholmes on Fiddle, Josh Swift on Dobro.

Born and raised in Texas, Ray was discovered by Reggae International Artist, Johnny Nash. Ray penned songs for Nash on Epic and London Records titled *You're the One, We've Got Trouble, Sing World A Love Song, Baby You're Mine*, and *Baby I Believe In You* recorded by Jazz artist Bill Summers.



Ray also released *I Love Country Music* and *Play That Country Music Black Boy, Coming Home, I Stand With This Country, I Can See Clearly Now* (originally sung by his mentor, Johnny Nash), *Moments Like This* and *Just Gotta Live With It*. Ray has shared the stage with Wade Hayes, Hank Thompson, and Junior Brown Marty Stuart, Pam Tillis, Jason Aldean, Wade Hayes, Mark Wills, Neal McCoy, The Del McCoury Band and more. Ray has also performed with the Tulsa Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ray joined forces with honky-tonk crooner David Ball to record *Textbook Case On What Not To Do* and has been interviewed by the Associated Press, Billboard Magazine, US News and World Report, Legacy Magazine, Green Card Magazine, Richmond Times, Denver Post, The Rolling Stones, Fox News and countless other print media as well as major cyber zines.

The Oak Ridge Boys Celebrate 50th Anniversary Milestone With Duane Allen, Joe Bonsall, William Lee Golden, and Richard Sterban

GRAMMY® Award-winning and Country Music Hall of Fame members, The Oak Ridge Boys are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the four members, Duane Allen (1966), Joe Bonsall (1973), William Lee Golden (1965), and Richard Sterban (1972) coming together to form the group as known today.

The Oak Ridge Boys have received four Academy of Country Music, two American Music, five Billboard, four Country Music Association, five Grammy, and twelve Dove Awards, just to name a few. They are members of the Grand Ole Opry, the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, the Vocal Group Hall of Fame, and the Country Music Hall of Fame. They have achieved

seventeen #1 hits including *Leaving Louisiana In The Broad Daylight*, *Bobbie Sue*, *Trying To Love Two Women*, *(I'm Settin') Fancy Free*, *American Made*, and the unforgettable *Elvira*. With an astounding thirty-seven Top 20 Country hits, with twelve gold, three platinum, and one double-platinum album, The Oak Ridge Boys have made their mark in every facet of the Gospel, Pop, and Country music industries.

"I was 25 years old in 1973 when I joined The Oak Ridge Boys," shares Joe Bonsall. "I am 75 years old in 2023 and I am STILL an Oak Ridge Boy. It has been and still IS an amazing ride."

"It has been an honor to sing with Duane, Joe, and William Lee," shares Richard Sterban. "We have been extremely blessed. I have had an extraordinary life, and I am thankful to the Lord above."

The group originally started in 1943 when they were recruited to entertain the sequestered personnel and their families at the Oak Ridge nuclear research facility located nearby. In 1945, they made their debut performance on the prestigious Grand Ole Opry stage.

In the early seventies, The Oak Ridge Boys continued to expand their cutting-edge style. After the addition of Richard Sterban in 1972 and Joe Bonsall in 1973, the Oaks were forever changed with a new direction, a new sound, and a new path. Their career stands alone with its legacy, its style, and its continued contributions to Gospel and Country music.

"The history of The Oak Ridge Boys runs deep in America's history," says William Lee Golden. "I am honored to still be a part of it. We are a family and always will be."

"To be anywhere with anyone for fifty years is an accomplishment, and we are celebrating!!" adds Duane Allen. "Come out to one of our shows and sing along with us!"

For more information and to view upcoming tour dates for The Oak Ridge Boys, please visit www.oakridgeboys.com.



Pictured L-R: Joe Bonsall, Duane Allen, William Lee Golden, Richard Sterban,
Photo by Brandon Wood / Indie Bling Studios

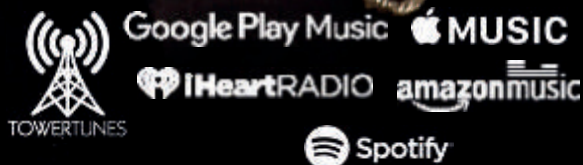
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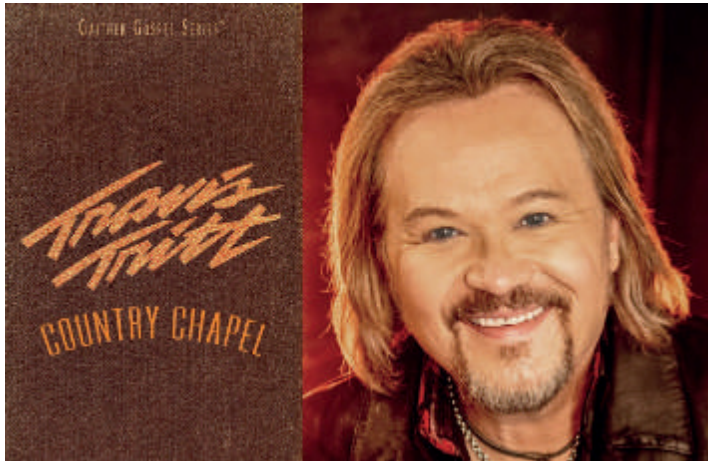
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Travis Tritt Releases First Ever Gospel Project, 'Country Chapel'

Multi-award-winning artist Travis Tritt is set to release his highly anticipated debut Gospel project, "Country Chapel," taking listeners on a nostalgic journey back to his childhood roots. Captivating audiences with authentic renditions and powerful testimonies of redemption, this heartfelt album pays homage to Tritt's formative years within the comforting embrace of the Country Chapel.



Produced by Dave Cobb at Georgia May Studio in Savannah, Georgia, Country Chapel seamlessly blends traditional church harmonies with Tritt's signature award-winning vocal style, offering a unique and inspiring listening experience. This long-awaited Gospel project promises to be a defining milestone in Tritt's illustrious career, touching hearts and souls through the universal language of music.

Released by Gaither Music Group, "Country Chapel" will be available on September 15, 2023. The first release from the album was *When God Dips His Love in My Heart. Like the Father Loves His Son* was released on August 18, 2023. Finally, on September 15, 2023, the soul-stirring track, *Nobody's Fault But Mine* will be unveiled, serving as a testament to Tritt's remarkable musical journey and unwavering dedication to the Gospel genre. "Country Chapel" is distributed by Capitol Christian Music Group and Universal Music.

With a career spanning over three decades, Tritt has garnered numerous accolades and chart-topping hits. Known for his distinctive voice and powerful songwriting, Tritt continues to captivate audiences worldwide with his timeless music and electrifying live performances.

Tritt's albums, seven of which are certified platinum or higher, have led him to amass more than 30 million in career album sales, two GRAMMY® Awards, four CMA Awards, including the CMA Horizon Award (now known as the New Artist Award), a Billboard Music Award for Top New Artist, an invitation to become a member of the world-famous Grand Ole Opry, he has a devoted fan base that has filled venues coast-to-coast. He also charted more than forty times on the Hot Country Songs Chart, earning five #1s and twenty Top 10 hits.

Playin' Possum: My Memories of George Jones

Playin' Possum is written by Nancy Jones and Ken Abraham. In the autobiography, readers get an intimate look at Country music legend George Jones through the eyes of his wife of thirty years, Nancy Jones. Ask anyone who knows Country music, "Who was the GOAT--the greatest of all time?" and the answers will inevitably lead to George Jones. Millions of people know the name of the iconic Country music artist, George Jones.

But few people know that behind the man and his golden voice was a strong, feisty woman who not only saved his life from cocaine addiction, alcoholism, and other abusive and self-destructive behaviors, but also was instrumental in saving his soul. Legends, half-truths, and downright lies abound about the iconic singer, but what secrets do people not know about him? What was it like to live with him through the darkest shadows and in the brightest of lights?

Married for more than thirty years to the greatest Country music singer who ever lived, the man Frank Sinatra had whimsically referred to him as "the second-greatest singer in America." Nancy Jones knew George Jones better than anyone else on earth - the good George and the bad George, the horrendous, and the hilarious. George and Nancy married March 4, 1983, and with her help and encouragement, he quit his wild and wicked ways - for a while. Nancy soon learned, however, that the demons held a strong grip on the man she loved, and they were not about to release him without a fight. But Nancy Jones is a tenacious fighter, and most people who knew "the Possum" credit Nancy with saving his life and rebuilding his career.

For the first time, in Playin' Possum, Nancy Jones reveals the true "insider" perspectives and little known poignant and as well as humorous stories about the Country music icon - his battles with cocaine, alcohol, abusive behavior toward her and others, his battles with himself, and most of all, his battles against the demons that sought to control him and ultimately destroy him. Nancy knew there was a good man inside George Jones, and she felt strongly that God had given her the assignment to help him, even if he hurt her. She refused to give up on Jones. Nancy Jones helped bring him to the Light. Together, they brought joy and light to millions of people.

Playin' Possum is published through Forefront Books and distributed through Simon & Schuster.



A photograph of James Payne, an older man with white hair and a goatee, wearing a dark, patterned shirt. He is holding a dark-colored electric guitar with a light-colored pickguard. The background is a dark, textured wall.

JAMES PAYNE

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*The ultimate Loretta Lynn tribute show featuring
EMILY PORTMAN as Loretta Lynn with The Coalminers*

By Robin Tanner

"Always Loretta" is a tribute show authorized by the Loretta Lynn family that includes all the greatest hits and shares intimate stories of Loretta's life through the eyes of those who knew her best. Loretta Lynn's band, The Coalminers, is joined by the talented Emily Portman who pays tribute to the Queen of Country Music in song.

After the unfortunate passing of Loretta Lynn on October 4, 2022, Emily Portman connected with Loretta's longtime backup band, The Coalminers. They agreed to join talents and collaborate to honor the memory and music of this true Country music trailblazer with "Always Loretta."

Emily began singing in church and learning to read music as a member of her high school band. Inspired by her parents' music, her influences were an amalgamation of Classic Country and Classic Rock, with a little '80s music mixed in. In college, she joined a choral group, learned the guitar, and began performing professionally at the Corydon Jamboree on the border in neighboring Indiana. However, when she covered the music of Loretta Lynn, people took notice.

She was told from an early age she sounded a lot like the Country music legend. She became a student of her artistry and pored over the singer's entire catalogue of music and began working to emulate Loretta's vocal style and her onstage mannerisms. In the summer of 2004, Emily entered a "Sing Like" contest at the Kentucky Opry and won \$1,000 for her portrayal of Loretta.

portraying her in some shows like variety/Hee Haw type shows for fun. I played Kitty Wells in the beginning because they had a Loretta Lynn girl. I got this gig at the Little Nashville Opry in Brown County Indiana. They would have the local acts on Friday and the big acts on Saturday. Lincoln Hamilton, who ran the theatre, invited me to meet Loretta Lynn. He knew I was a huge fan and made the arrangements. We arrived and they had caution tape around her bus with a big crowd of people standing around. Mr. Hamilton escorted me around to the venue, to the side of the bus where no one was standing. I remember looking up those bus steps with LL wrote beautifully in cursive and the mirror ceiling. I turned and saw Loretta standing there like she had been waiting on me. She stood there with her hands folded and she said, 'They told me you were coming so I went back there and brushed my teeth!' My anxieties went right up into the clouds. I felt



Emily Portman (as Loretta Lynn) with The Coalminers

Just a couple years later, after posting a video of herself performing a Loretta Lynn song on YouTube, she was discovered by Michael Twitty (eldest son of the great Conway Twitty) who cast her to portray Loretta in the nationally touring musical "It's Only Make Believe." The musical was instrumental in establishing Portman's career. Over the next two decades, her portrayal of the Coal Miner's Daughter would carry to the most prestigious stages (including the Ryman Auditorium and the Grand Ole Opry), where she would rub shoulders with some of the biggest names in the business, including George Jones, Archie Campbell, Vern Gosdin, Toby Keith, Chris Cagle, and even Loretta Lynn, herself, with whom she formed a close friendship.

Emily shares about the "Always Loretta" show and her friendship with Loretta: "This a dream come true for me. I never dreamed I would get to do this. I always enjoy singing. Many told me that I sang like Loretta Lynn which led to me

like I was among my very best friend. That was my first encounter with her. There was a lady sitting on the couch. She said, 'Loretta this is Emily.' I had met her at Loretta's ranch. I was looking for words to one of Loretta's songs because there were a couple of lines I didn't know. This lady on the bus was Betty and I asked did she have the words. She said sure and wrote all the words down and I learned it. She told Loretta about the song, and she told me the story about the song and sang it with me. There was a newspaper article from my hometown in Grayson County, Kentucky. The editor put me on the front page with my guitar and cowboy hat and it was titled, 'You Lookin' At Country.' It was about singing like Loretta Lynn, even though I had my own sound it compared me to her. I gave her a copy of the article. She said, 'Well honey, you look Like me in that picture. I'm gonna read it when we go down the road.' That was my first time meeting her."

Emily made frequent trips to Loretta Lynn's Ranch in Hurricane Mills, Tennessee. If you ever saw the two performers together, the connection they shared was obvious. Emily remembers a conversation the two ladies shared. "Loretta told me one time, 'Honey, I got me one of them Apples. I seen you singin' my songs.' I said, Loretta I hope you don't mind. She said, 'Honey, I think it's great. I used to be Kitty Wells!'"

"Over the years, I got to visit with her," Emily continues. "There were some instances that she could read my mind. She would look at me and say, 'Honey we got a real connection, don't we?' It was almost spiritual; we had a close intimate bond like she was a close relative. It was like a gift that God gave me to carry on what she has left us. Everybody is given gifts and qualities and sometimes they don't discover it as a gift from God. This gift was because of Loretta, my parents, and everybody that brought me up, and I am glad to be a part of this production."

Dave Thornhill was a part of the Coalminers Band for 55 years. When Loretta's husband died, the Coalminers were let go of their duties. Dave shares, "We did a reunion concert in 2013. I was working with the Sheriff's Department in 2017 when Loretta called and said, 'Can you play? My guitar player can't play for two weeks due to a family emergency. I said, 'When do I start?' She said, 'Tonight!' I worked with her the last two weeks before she had her stroke. My first engagement with Loretta was 1967 and my last was 2017."

Dave shares more insight and special moments with Loretta and the Coalminers Band. "One thing that the public doesn't realize was Mooney (Loretta's husband, also known as Doo) called all the shots. He was boss over everything in the business. I would go to Loretta about different things, and she'd say, 'Well honey, you will have to ask Doo.' I would have a conference with Doo and tell Loretta this is what we're doing. That was the way we operated."

"We played concerts in fifty states, eight provinces in Canada, and thirty foreign countries," Dave continues. "You can't name a place we haven't been. There are a few that stand out in my mind. We did Wembley Festival in London for five years in a row. It held 40,000 people. Then one 4th of July we were booked to play under the Arch of St. Louis, Missouri. There were half a million people sitting along the river there. That was the biggest crowd I ever seen anywhere."

When asked how it felt performing together with Emily, Dave replied. "It is like starting again in 1967, except Emily knows all of Loretta's songs! In the beginning, Loretta only had six or eight songs recorded back then. We played the hit records with cover songs. Of course, then she recorded several



albums and ended up with 600 songs. Our problem is we have forty songs we want to do and can't do all of them! Playing with Emily reminds us of playing with Loretta from day one. When we first got together over a year ago, I had a get together with the Coalminers Band for a jam session. When our friends got together, I had to rent a theater to get everyone in for our jam session. I called Emily and asked her to come sing four or five Loretta songs with the Coalminers. She came down and sang them great and the audience flipped out over it. We got together and said wouldn't it be great for the Coalminers and Emily to have some shows together. Well, it snowballed into what it is now." The "Always Loretta" show has been on a successful tour in 2023 with dates coming in for 2024.

Emily says, "The "Always Loretta" show is very special. I can

always connect with people in the audience and at meet and greets. The people respond to the show and reminisce, going back in time because the stories that are told and we present. A memory that stands out, we were at the Troubadour Theatre in Nashville and the Lynn and Twitty families were there. That was a real experience. I might have been a little nervous but when I got to the stage it was like an old friend."

The mother of six children, Emily and her family lives in South Central Kentucky. She says, "I love to sing! I like to write but I haven't done a lot on a record yet. I stay occupied with my family and the show. I love to work with horses and kids. I also teach school on the side. I love my family and have a supportive husband who works hard. He is my 'Doo' I guess!"

About three weeks before Loretta passed, her twin daughter Patsy called Dave Thornhill, stating Loretta wanted to see him. Dave recalls, "I called Bob Hempker. Bob went to work for Loretta after I did. Ken Riley became her road manager in 1975. I told them I was going to see Loretta, and they went with me. We walked in and Loretta was sitting on the couch. She gave us a hug and kiss. We sat there and shot the breeze and had a great time. Her mind was as sharp as a tack, and she was bringing up stuff that happened on the road 45 years ago. We all laughed and were having a grand time. I finally told Loretta that the Coalminer's Band and Emily Portman were rehearsing for the shows of her music. Loretta said, 'I tell you one thing, you better be rehearsing for my show. I'm getting ready to go back out on the road!' Of course, we all knew that would never happen. She was so happy we were doing her music. I made her a vow that we would carry on her music as such as we could. We got to

spend three hours with her and said our goodbyes, and that was it.”

Dave is writing a book about his travels and experience with Loretta. “Down through the years I have been approached to write a book. I am writing a book from the first time I seen her through the last three weeks of her life. ”55 Years - I was associated with Loretta Lynn” is expected to release in 2024.

The Coalminers

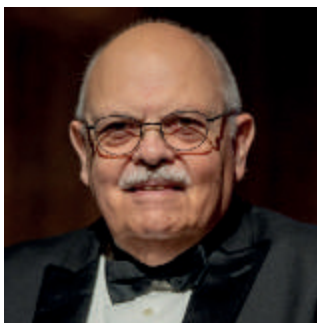


*Dave Thornhill
(Lead Guitar, Bandleader)*

Thornhill’s first performance with Loretta Lynn was in 1967 as the lead guitarist for The Country Playboys. The group served as the band for countless nationally touring Country artists (Jim Ed Brown, Little Jimmy Dickens, Lynn Anderson, Merle Travis, Carl Smith, including Loretta Lynn, who told the audience, “I’ve played all over the world, and this is the only band that did all my stuff just like the record. If I could ever afford a band, this is the only band I’d like to have.” Two years later, she hired all five musicians and her band, The Coalminers, was formed. Dave would serve as guitarist and bandleader for Loretta Lynn for 55 years (until 2017) and played over 10,000 shows with her (including her duet shows with the great Conway Twitty and serving as the band that backed Sissy Spacek in the movie “The Coal Miner’s Daughter”). Now, in his 80s, Thornhill is thrilled to renew his role as bandleader and lead guitarist for the Lynn family authorized tribute show “Always Loretta,” to extend the legacy of Loretta and his band, The Coalminers.

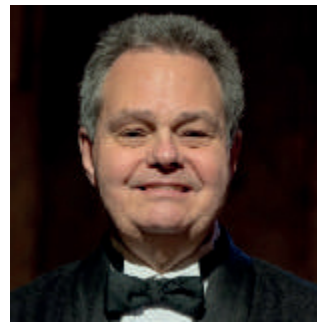
*Robert “Bob” Hempker
(Steel Guitar)*

Also one of the original members, Hempker began performing with The Coalminers at the age of 21. He served as Loretta’s steel guitarist for seventeen years. Bob also worked with Roy Clark and performed with him for eight years, and then did a two-year stint performing in Branson. Bob would reunite with The Coalminers in 2014 and stayed with the group through her retirement from the road in 2017.



*Dennis Digby
(Bass Guitar)*

Digby would perform alongside an impressive list of legendary performers, including Tex Ritter, Charlie Louvin, David Houston, Cal Smith, and the Osborne Brothers. He would join The Coalminers in 1982 and perform with Loretta Lynn for over seventeen years.

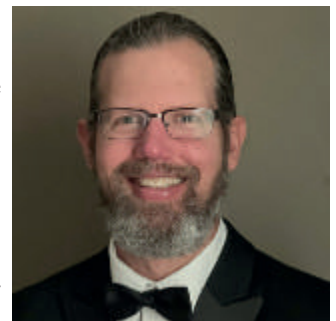


*Monty Parkey
(Piano/Keyboard)*

His resumé reads like a “Who’s Who” of Country music. His keyboard playing has supported a lengthy list of Country music notables, including Bill Anderson, Randy Travis, Alan Jackson, Darryl Worley, Sylvia, Tanya Tucker, Lorrie Morgan, and the great Loretta Lynn for three years in the mid ‘80s.

*Eric Kaberle
(Drums)*

Iowa native Eric Kaberle moved to Nashville in 1995 to pursue his dream job of playing drums for a major Country artist. He played the Opryland Theme Park, the General Jackson, the Grand Ole Opry, and Lower Broadway, in addition to playing regularly for several recording studios and also writing songs. In 2002, Kaberle got the call to play for Loretta and maintained that position for fifteen years until she came off the road in 2017. Since then, he has worked as drummer and background singer for John Conlee.



*Jean Anne Tarleton
(Vocalist)*



Jean Anne Tarleton has had an impressive career as a consummate triple threat - she is a singer, a dancer, and songwriter with enormous success in all three areas. As a vocalist, she has backed an innumerable list of legendary artists, including Perry Como, Robert Goulet, Sammy Davis Jr., Jimmy Stafford, Mac Davis, and of course, Loretta Lynn, for whom she worked for three years in the late ‘70s/early ‘80s.

www.alwaysloretta.com

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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Michael Ray Fain

By Robin Tanner

Michael Ray Fain was drawn to music at an early age while watching his family in the backyard picking and singing. He recalls, “I knew that’s what I wanted to do. I recall singing Hank Williams, Sr. songs and being able to appreciate his writing even in my early teens. It didn’t bother me that my friends weren’t into Hank at that time. I thought he was cool, and I still do!”

Michael credits, “Performing in church, getting to know and respect the art of making music with artists at all levels, and living life is what gives us something to write about, has shaped me into who I am.”

Fain says he could name a list a mile long of his musical influences. “Merle Haggard, George Jones, Don Williams, Randy Travis, and Alan Jackson are at the top of list of artists that have influenced me.”

One of Michael’s career highlights so far has been performing at the Star Theatre to a sold out, hometown crowd in Stuart, Virginia. He was privileged to have Redd Volkaert sitting in with the band, who also played guitar for Merle Haggard.

The recently signed Grace Records Nashville artist has released his latest project of original material, “Rye’s N Shine.” His current single, *America, I Love* was released to radio. The song is deeply rooted in Americana, faith, family and freedom.



“Sometimes the mind and heart disagree, but still, choices have to be made,” reflects Fain. “On a country backroad, Clint Black’s *A Better Man* came across the air waves. I’d heard the song a hundred times before. I made a choice to take a different path in life because on that one particular day, Clint was singing for me. We all have to make choices at some point. Some work out, some don’t. Be thankful for the ones that do and learn to live with ones that don’t. Life is a lesson but it’s also a blessing! With each new day comes the opportunity to be better than we were yesterday.”

Michael Ray has a passion to write and perform his music to reach hearts that have a need to feel something more than beats. He shares what a fan can experience at his shows. “Expect to be treated like family while listening to original honest Country music as well as covers from some of Country music’s greatest. I want fans to not only hear the music, but to feel it and leave the event feeling better than when they arrived.”



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The Story Behind the Song

USED TO BE'S

Christian Country artist Bill Baker believes and writes what he sings. The Oklahoma native is the front man for his band, Bill Baker & Country 3:16. Bill shares the inspiration behind his latest single, *Used To Be's*.

Written by William B. Baker
Recorded by Bill Baker

Staff, Cross Country USA Magazine



Used To Be's

Verse 1

*I ain't here for no righteous saints
The saved and the redeemed
I'm here for the outcast
The broken heart the broken man
You may think that I'm out of line
Talking this way
But I came in here
To see a sinner get saved*

Chorus

*I'm looking for the me's
The what I used to be's
Someone looking for a friend
Buried in sin, needin' a savior to pull them out
I know what I once was
'For I found God's love
I was lonely and lost
When I found the cross
I'm looking for,
The what I used to be's*

Verse 2

*They come from all walks of life
The perfect husband, the pretty wife
Good at hidden' the shame
Even better playing the game
You don't know it but they're really here
You can find them most anywhere
Or is it you
Setting right there*

Tag

*I was lonely and lost
When I found the cross.
I'm looking for,
The what I used to be's*

Bill got the idea for this song from his bandmate. "I wrote this song after I got a phone call from my pedal steel player, Tory Sweatman. He asked me if I'd heard a particular Country song and said we needed something with that same kind of feel to it. I happened to have a copy of that song and listened to it. A few days went by and I was driving down the road when the words and melody started coming to me so I pulled over and wrote it. Got home, grabbed a guitar, and that was that. It sounds nothing like the song he had in mind, but the song had that same feel."

"The words to *Used To Be's* are a little touch and go lyrically speaking," he adds. "I think sometimes we forget church people have issues too. We get so busy singing shouting songs, praise and worship music, that we don't sing gut check songs! This song does that, it calls people out and says here's the answer to your problems or issue, whatever word you want to use to describe it. It gets past the Sunday best and gets down to business."

Bill Baker & Country 3:16 has done outreach ministry both in the rodeo world and helping churches with community events. He says, "I have found this song to work in arenas, Saturday night events, and Sunday morning services. It's a great anthem and depicts what Bill Baker and Country 3:16 is all about - souls saved!"

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Look What I Found
KEITH BUCHANAN



Lovin' Me
GINA WHITE



Rest On The Waters
WINK KELSO



One More Time
TERRY DAVIS



I'm Good
STEVE ROBerson



Trent James is a native of East Tennessee in a small community outside of Kingston. His passion for music goes back to an early age. Beginning at age eight years old, his father gave him his first guitar. Trent was drawn to old Rock & Roll music and his favorite artist was Elvis Presley. Some of the locals would call Trent “Little Elvis.” He would sit on a soda icebox picking and singing at his parents’ local community grocery store and entertain the customers as they shopped.

TRENT JAMES

Going Higher

By Robin Tanner

Trent was greatly influenced by Country music and inspired by artists such as Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Ronnie Millsap, Conway Twitty, T.G. Sheppard, Don Williams, Travis Tritt, and George Strait, among many others. He writes and performs his own music along with paying tribute to the legends of Country music.

He didn’t start out with his own band or as a front man. He grew up singing in church and at sixteen he played drums with various Gospel groups touring all over the southeast region. He eventually decided it was time to focus on his own career as a performer and front man. He admits, “I love looking out and seeing people in the audience singing along and enjoying the shows. As an independent artist, I want to add pieces of my own footprints to my music legacy. I believe Country music will always be relevant because it connects with people and brings people together for the better. I want my music to have that kind of impact. I am writing new songs and I hope to get in the studio and get them recorded so I can share my music with everyone.”

He performs all over East Tennessee from small venues to large, and enjoys playing them all. Trent believes that music tells a story that people can connect with, from breakups to heartaches to falling in love, it connects people

and he wants his songs to have that kind of impact on people as they listen. When they leave his show, they see a real Country artist that is passionate about what he loves.

Trent has a busy schedule on the road performing ten months out of the year. He’s currently writing new songs for an album to be released next year. He shares a special song he wrote for his wife. “I wrote a song for my wife Andrea, *Like I Want You*.” I believe when people hear the song, they will be able to relate to the lyrics. If you have ever been in a relationship for a long period, this question is asked at some point. I am excited about this song, and I hope everyone will love it as much as I do.”

He has been fortunate to perform at Harrah’s Casino in Murphy, North Carolina. He also performed Memorial Day weekend at an amphitheater in Fairfield Glade, Tennessee to a crowd of over three thousand people. Recently, Trent emceed for East Tennessee Concerts introducing the Bellamy Brothers at The Country Tonite Theatre in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

A memorable event that is special to the Country artist was seeing Merle Haggard perform in Knoxville at the Tennessee Theatre. He recalls, “It was one of his last concerts and I feel blessed to have gotten to see him, it was a great

show and just seeing him made the hair on my arms stand up to see such a legend perform.”

Going back to his Gospel days, he finds inspiration in a song that means so much to him. “There is a song that comes to mind, *When God Unfolds the Rose*. This song has touched my life in so many ways that I can relate. There were times in my life when I have prayed and wondered if God had heard me, but I kept my faith and have been patient, knowing God is in control and waited like the rose bud in the garden for God to unfold the rose. To me this is powerful and has such meaning. It’s hard to be patient because we want whatever it is right then and there. Maybe the timing isn’t right, and I have become upset wondering why this hasn’t happened like I wanted it to.”

He continues, “I have to remember the lyrics in the song. *When God unfolds the rose he always gets it right. When the petals are in place, it’s such a beautiful sight. God knows when to hold on and the perfect time to let go, so let God have his way and watch God unfold the rose.* I encourage anyone who is going through troubled times to remember to have



faith and at that moment when we don’t understand just remember He said He’d never give us more than we could bear, so keep on praying and remember God knows when to hold on and the perfect time to let go so let God have his way and watch God unfold the rose.”

The aspiring artist wants to continue to take his career to the next level. His goals are opening for other artists at concert venues, having a single on the radio, and be nominated for awards, such as song/songwriter. He adds, “Being able to travel and perform my songs all over and people enjoying my music. When you attend one of my concerts/events, you can expect to have a great time! I will take you on a little trip down memory lane to hear some of the great Country classics that a lot of us grew up on, and singing my original songs. I hope to connect with the audience, and they sing along to their favorite songs and share a mutual love for Country music.

Facebook/Trent James Music



CRAIG MORGAN

GOD, FAMILY, COUNTRY

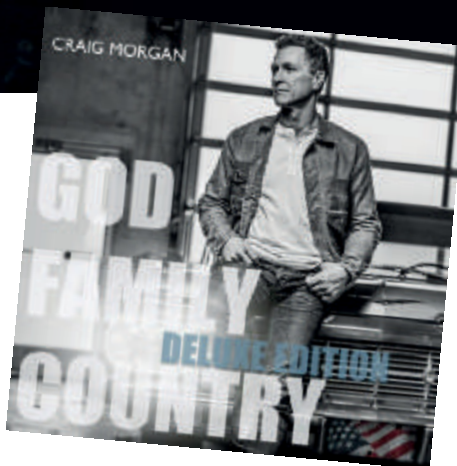
Husband, father, man of faith, Country music star, and Army veteran - Craig Morgan re-enlists in the U.S. Army Reserve. He says, "I'm an American country boy who loves his country, his family and his God, and all of those things collectively dictate who I am."

Staff, Cross Country USA

After twenty years as a successful chart-topping Country music performer and songwriter, Craig released his latest album aptly entitled, "God, Family, Country." The album contains several new songs with some of the most powerful tracks he's ever recorded, including *That's What I Love About Sunday*, *Almost Home*, and *God, Family, Country*. Craig has also released an autobiography of the same title. He has released Country radio classics like the four-week number one hit, *That's What I Love About Sunday*, the smash party anthem *Redneck Yacht Club*, and their fellow fan favorites *International Harvester*, *Little Bit of Life*, *Touch*, and *This Ain't Nothin'*.

Craig and his family have also known great loss: the death of their son Jerry in 2016. Instead of snuffing out Craig's artistry, however, the unimaginable tragedy led to him writing his most stunning song to date, *The Father, My Son and the Holy Ghost*. The achingly personal ballad topped the iTunes all-genre sales charts and is the centerpiece of both, "God, Family, Country" and of Craig's story itself. From the artist's official website, Craig shared about the song on the album. "It's a very tough song to sing, and sometimes I can't even look at people when I perform it, but it's amazing to know what God has done, and how He has used something so traumatic in my life for good."

Craig has always recognized a good song when he hears one. On "God, Family, Country," he offers his version of



Gavin DeGraw's *Soldier*. "I heard Gavin sing that and thought, 'Dang, that is my song,'" Craig says. "It truly exemplifies the personality and the character of a soldier, and I just had to record it. This album is based on everything that's happened in my life and my career." Other songs on the "God Family Country" Deluxe Edition include, *How You Make A Man*, *I May Drink A little*, *Ask Him*, and *Sounds Like Home*.

As a veteran, Morgan spent seventeen years in the Army and Army Reserve, serving the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions as an E-6 Staff Sergeant and Fire Support Specialist. Since then, he's remained an avid supporter of all of our service members. And now, he's stepping up to serve alongside them once again.

On Saturday, July 29, 2023, during an appearance at the Grand Ole Opry, Morgan was once again sworn into the U.S. Army Reserve, where he'll be assigned to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama as a Staff Sergeant and Warrant Officer candidate. His swearing in was performed by General Andrew Poppas, Commander of the U.S. Army Forces Command: "No matter who you are or where you're from, service in the United States Army is a unique, life-changing honor. Every Soldier who enters the Army has the opportunity to become the best version of themselves and Staff Sgt. Morgan is no exception. I look forward to seeing what he accomplishes and how he impacts other soldiers around the Army."



Gen. Andrew Poppas, commander of Army Forces Command, left, administers the oath of enlistment to Country singer Craig Morgan during a concert at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, TN Saturday, July 29, 2023.
(Screenshot of a livestream from the Nashville concert)

Craig said while he loves being a Country artist, his greatest honor is serving with our men and women in uniform: "I'm excited to once again serve my country and be all I can

be in hopes of encouraging others to be a part of something greater than ourselves. God bless America. Go Army."

"I realized that there's so much that I've missed - the friends, the feeling of the sense of accomplishment," Morgan said in a video explaining his decision. "I realized that I've missed it so much and I truly believe that I still have more to give."

Morgan has been a frequent presence at concerts for troops for years, performing in Afghanistan, Iraq and more recently at the Army garrison in Grafenwöhr, Germany, in December. "He's always out there, he visits soldiers everywhere, whether it's in the states, overseas," said Poppas, who administered the oath of service to Morgan. "I've seen him in combat locations and he's always engaging, he's always entertaining and he's always inspiring those that have put themselves in harm's way. He's a hell of a patriot."

Morgan will continue touring and releasing music while serving in the Army Reserve. He has begun his dual career as a musician and warrant officer. "Haven't sung in uniform in a long time," Morgan said during the Nashville concert, before launching into a song dedicated to his fellow soldiers.

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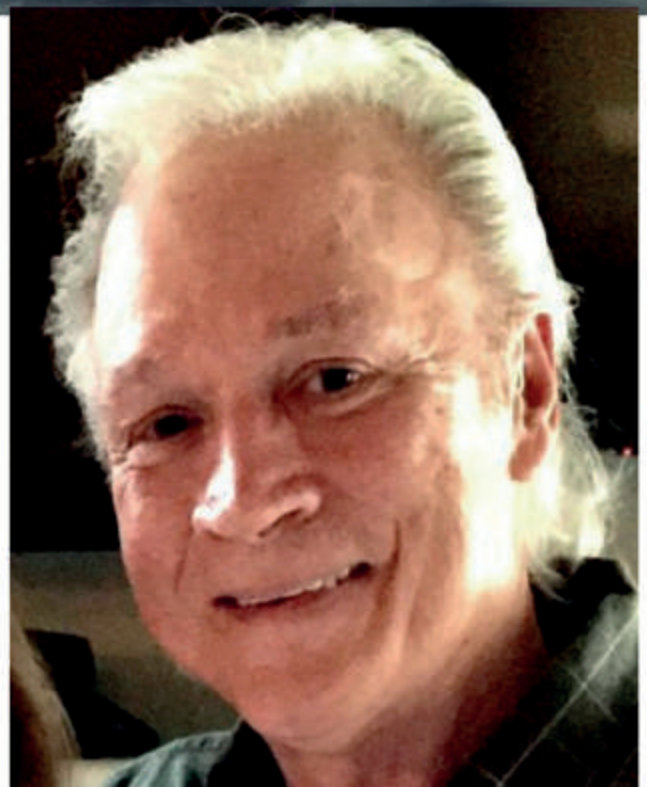


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The Music & Legacy of JAN HOWARD

One of the Grand Ladies of the Grand Ole Opry, Jan Howard was undoubtedly a lady of rare talent and determination who challenged life on a daily basis. Classy, sophisticated and compassionate are words used to describe this Country legend.

Grand Ole Opry member Jan Howard was born March 13, 1929, in West Plains, Missouri. As mentioned on her website, Jan was the eighth of eleven children of an impoverished farm couple. Her humble roots included attending a one-room schoolhouse wearing the homemade, feed sack clothes of a rural Depression-era child.

Jan married at the age of fifteen and had three sons before the age of twenty. After dealing with two divorces, she moved to Los Angeles, California in 1955 and worked as a waitress and a secretary. While living in L.A. she met an aspiring songwriter, Harlan Howard. The couple married in Las Vegas a month later.

One evening while Jan was washing dishes, Harlan came into the room and heard her singing for the very first time. Harlan persuaded Jan to make a demo tape of his song, *Mommy For A Day*, which became a hit for Kitty Wells. Jan later sang demos for other artists like Tex Ritter, Buck Owens, and others. She also recorded the original demo of the Patsy Cline classic, *I Fall To Pieces*. Backed by Wynn Stewart's band, Jan released Harlan's *Pick Me Up On Your Way Down* in 1959. She also recorded several duets with Wynn Stewart.

Jan scored her first solo Top Ten hit with *The One You Slip Around With* in 1960. That same year, the Howards moved to Nashville and Jan made her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry.

Jan was painfully shy and suffered from the psychological scars of her youth, as well as the anxiety of beginning a new adventure. She went into therapy to help cope with these anxieties. Her fans found her blunt, no-nonsense manner and stylish, no-frills look appealing. She won Billboard Magazine's 'Most Promising Country Female' Award in 1960, and she brought feminine spunk to The Nashville Sound.

In 1963, Jan had a Top 40 hit with *I Wish I Was A Single Girl Again*. A couple years later Jan's career really caught



fire. She released a string of gutsy hit songs in the 60s and 70s including *What Makes A Man Wander*, *Evil On Your Mind*, *Bad Seed*, *Roll Over And Play Dead*, *Count Your Blessings Woman*, *We Had All The Good Things Going*, *Rock Me Back To Little Rock*, *Love Is Like A Spinning Wheel*, and *Let Him Have It*. Several of Jan's songs reflected her troubled marriage with her husband, which ended in a 1968 divorce.

For the first time in her life, Jan's singing became an economic necessity. Between 1965 and 1973, Jan and fellow Grand Ole Opry member, Bill Anderson formed one of Country's hottest duos on the road, on his syndicated TV show, and on record. Their hits included *I Know You're Married*, *If It's All The Same To You*, and *Someday We'll Be Together*. Jan and Bill's 1967 recording of *For Loving You* stayed at No. 1 for four weeks on the Country singles chart.

Jan was a gifted songwriter. She penned the 1966 Kitty Wells hit *It's All Over But The Crying* and Bill Anderson's 1970 hit, *Love Is A Sometimes Thing*, as well as her own singles *Marriage Has Ruined More Good Love Affairs* (1971) and *The Life Of A Country Singer* (1981). Jan and Bill co-wrote Connie Smith's hit *I Never Once Stopped Loving You*. Together with Jan's son Carter, they co-wrote their own 1972 hit *Dis-Satisfied*.

Jan's proudest composition is 1968's *My Son*, a moving recitation that began as a letter to her son in Vietnam. Her plea for the safe return of her son Jimmy had been released for two weeks when he was killed. Thousands of letters from soldiers and their parents subsequently poured in to Jan. Recent world events had renewed interest in the song, which Jan performed in response to several requests. Four years after Jimmy's death in Vietnam, Jan's youngest son David

committed suicide. Jan softened the edges of tragedy with her strong faith in God and her belief that there is a reason for everything.

In 1987, Jan released her candid, compelling, and best-selling autobiography titled 'Sunshine and Shadow.' The outline for the book was actually a song called *My Story* which Jan composed during a low point in her life. "Never Let Yesterday Use Up Today" has been one of Jan's mottos for years. "You can't change the past," she explains, "so learn from it, cherish the good, and go on from there. This is not a rehearsal; this is the show and there are no retakes."

Throughout her career Jan accumulated many accolades for her recordings and songwriting, including several Grammy and CMA nominations. She received countless acknowledgements for her charitable contributions and took an active role working with Veterans groups across the United States. In West Plains, Missouri, the "Jan Howard Expressway" has been named in her honor. In 2005, she joined the Missouri Country Music Hall of Fame.

From 1960 through 1978, Jan placed thirty singles on the Billboard Country music charts. Her vocals can be heard on over twenty albums. A boxed set collection containing eighty songs and a twenty-page photo album was also released. Jan toured every state in the USA, along with twenty-one foreign countries. She made numerous television appearances on dozens of shows like Hee Haw, Family Feud, The Today Show, Nashville Now, Opry Live, and many more.

Jan Howard passed away on March 28, 2020, in Gallatin, Tennessee at age 91. She became a member of the Grand Ole Opry on March 27, 1971. For over thirty years she was a regular performer and a fan favorite on the Opry stage. "Jan Howard was a force of nature in Country music, at the Opry, and in life," Grand Ole Opry Vice President and Executive Producer Dan Rogers said in a statement. "We were all so lucky so many nights to hear her voice on stage and to catch up with her backstage. We're all better for having had her in our lives."


It's safe to say that few people have been through as many hardships and heartbreaks as Jan Howard. When someone once suggested to her that she'd make a good soap opera actress, Jan laughed and replied, "My life has been a soap opera."

Jan had the gift of communicating the emotions of life through her music. Her love of life touched everyone she encountered. She once stated, "It almost seems like an accident that I became a singer, but I'm so thankful for it."

So are we all. Thank you, Jan Howard for the music and the legacy that will continue for generations. Jan Howard truly was a Grand Lady!

To view the career and beautiful tributes to Jan Howard, visit www.janhoward.com

Photos and website information courtesy of Ron Harmon



MARVIN HARRELL







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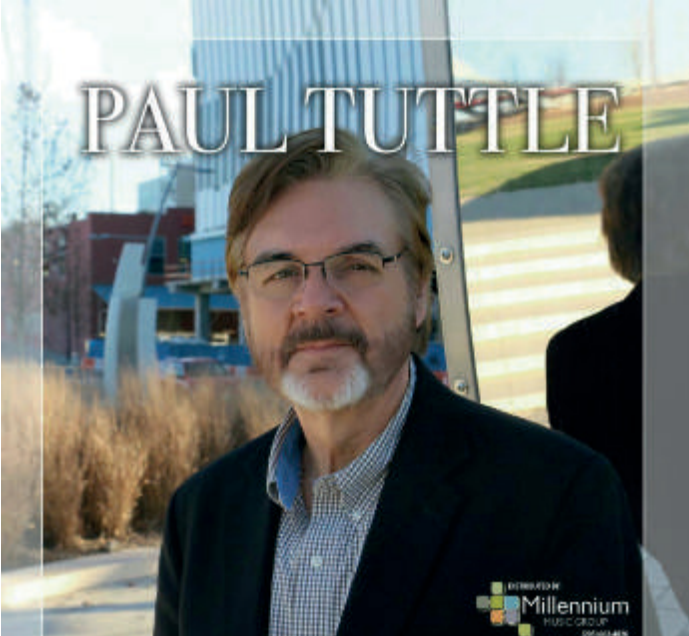
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Judy Charrier Murphy

I'm just a little Cajun girl raised by my grandparents in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, the ones who taught me of Jesus. I have sung gospel music since I was a very small child.

I moved to Jonesboro, AR in 1974 and married a wonderful man named TERRY in April of 1990. Terry received his angel wings in March of 2014. "REBORN" was a name chosen by Terry when the group was birthed.

I love being a blessing to others as we share in churches and at events, with a special anointing and energy. My desire is to be a willing vessel to be used by my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I have won awards, but nothing compares to the anointing of God and seeing people saved and blessed.

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CrossCountry **HOT 100**

OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN COUNTRY TOP 100 - SEPTEMBER 2023

TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST	TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	9	He Only Looks At The Lamb	Dan Duncan	51	78	Grew Up On That	Small Town Sunday
2	5	Thank God For The USA	The Murphys	52	53	Come On Down	Kenny Keith
3	6	Ain't No Grave	The Sawyer Family Band	53	64	She's Gone For Good	Mark Umfleet
4	4	A Country New Song	Mike Manuel	54	67	All Alone	Roy Morris
5	16	The Best Us	Corey Farlow	55	70	The Father's Hand	Suzzette Michaels
6	11	Hearts Of Stone	Heather Thomas Van Deren	56	43	When Jesus Swings The Wrecking Ball	Alan Bibey & Grasstowne
7	13	Dyin' Again	Donna Kilmurray	57	58	Beyond A Dream	Joy LaVallee
8	3	Cowboy Constitution	Curtis Grimes	58	74	Momma's Wall Of Fame	Michael Lusk
9	14	Appalachian War Cry	Lonnie Hardy	59	84	If Not For You	Chris Golden
10	19	Thankful, Grateful And Blessed	Richard Lynch	60	63	The Music Never Stops	Don Frost
11	26	Tear Off The Roof	Melissa Evans	61	65	House Built By The Blood	Mike Wellman
12	17	I'm No Stranger To The Valley	Dale Rochell	62	69	I Wished We Had A Little More Time	Harry Claytor
13	24	Home Away From Home	David Timms	63	45	I Need Your Grace	Joy Roberts with Johnathan Bond
14	15	She Waited	Lorraine Howard	64	71	Sins Dark Road	The Paul's
15	20	When I Didn't Have A Prayer	Sonshine Road	65	68	Jesus Has A Mountain	Danny Thomas
16	30	Go Burn That Plow	Troy Richardson	66	75	What A Friend We Have In Jesus	Cindy Hughlett
17	22	I've Been Delivered	Dave Turner	67	86	He's To Blame	Don Stiles
18	29	Mamas Endless Love	Steve Anthony	68	82	Speak To Me	Jeff Burns
19	1	What Ya Gonna Do	Bruce Haynes	69	81	Don't Hide Your Scars	Johnathan Bond & Young Harmony
20	10	That's The Truth	Golden Valley Crusaders	70	77	Between The Pulpit And The Pew	Ken & Kim Stull
21	35	Yes He Did	Jim Sheldon	71	72	Never Stop Believing	Tim Fulgham
22	55	Grace Led The Way	Michael Knight	72	94	I Need Your Grace	Michael Tetrick
23	28	I Felt God Today	Brooklynn Nicole	73	80	Surrounded	Jimmy R. Price
24	2	Enter Into Praise	Bruce Hedrick	74	87	Sweet Beulah Land	Gregg Walker
25	39	Johnny And June	Greg McDougal	75	79	I'll Speak For You	Jacky Jack White
26	37	Picture Frames	Randy Rogers Band	76	83	I'll Send It Up	Mike Haemmerle
27	32	When Heaven Crumbles	Tennessee River Boys	77	85	All I Really Need	Lindy Bryson
28	12	Through The Glass	James Payne	78	76	Man On The Middle Cross	Hunter Logan
29	36	I Met Jesus	Kesha Parish	79	90	What Does It Profit A Man	Carolina The Band
30	62	Used To Be's	Bill Baker	80	95	Just Call	Debbie Bennett
31	61	Let Him In	Chris Darlington	81	93	That's God	Trish England
32	7	He Didn't Leave Me	Deano Graham	82	99	Bring Back The Book	Brad Davis Family
33	46	I Saw The Light	Lee Newton & Rhonda Vincent	83	-	Take Up Your Cross	Mary James
34	21	A Resting Place Along Life's Way	Steve Warren	84	89	How Big God Is	Terry and Debra Luna
35	8	How Do You Know	T Graham Brown w/The Oak Ridge Boys	85	97	Hold On Jesus Will Come	The Journeys
36	38	Grace Always Goes Before	Trinity Heirs	86	96	I Want To Be Just Like You	Chosen Road
37	44	Rich In His Love	Bobby Jones Family	87	91	Gods Gonna Part The Water	Kenneth Hall
38	40	We Are Here Together	Jan Harbuck	88	-	How Great Thou Art	Doug Mathis
39	54	Broken Vessel	Marvin Harrell	89	100	Jesus' Name We Pray, Amen! Amen!	Melanie Walker
40	48	Help Is A Prayer Away	Kellie Longworth	90	92	Hello Mama	Sherry Damron
41	41	Diggin' Up Roots	Joe Richard	91	-	The Podigal Story	Jonathan Ray Smith
42	47	Jesus, Family & Rodeo	Nick Washburn	92	-	One More Time	Terry Davis
43	88	Heaven's Forever	Tommy Murdock	93	-	Turn My Eyes To Heaven	John Penney
44	52	Heavens Grand Tour	Wayne Atkins	94	-	Look What I Found	Keith Buchanan
45	27	Amazing Grace Was Just A Song	Gena Hamilton	95	-	In His Eyes	Katie Estes
46	51	Be Still	By Faith	96	-	That's What Really Matters	Paul Tuttle
47	49	This World Is Not My Home	Todd Brumley	97	-	From Afar	Paula Slow
48	50	Start Looking Up	Lorraine Andrusky	98	-	I'm Good	Steve Robertson
49	66	I Know The Man	Mike Lechner	99	-	Thanks To Calvary	Jerry Day
50	56	Piece of Wood	Shellem Cline	100	-	Rest On The Water	Wink Kelso



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By Tina Wakefield

A passion for music, God, and family combine to create a marvelous gift for the world to experience, and only God can bring those elements together. Who else could bring a man from Texas to marry a woman from England (brought up in Indianapolis,) a precious baby girl, and a baby boy from Russia together with such talents to work for the Kingdom?

Simple Gifts (The Sawyer Family Band) is comprised of David (dad) who plays acoustic guitar and sings lead vocals, Kathy (mom), spokesperson for the group along with harmony vocals, Leah (daughter) fiddle player and also sings lead, and David (son), who plays mandolin and is the all-around utility musician in the band. This wonderful family is based in Weatherford, Texas but has traveled the country from California to Virginia since 2013.

Music has always played a very important role to each member of the family. David (Dad), at age eleven, pursued the guitar and has never laid it down. He is also a gifted artist and is sought after for his caricatures. Kathy was born in England but grew up in Indiana where both church and school

choirs were part of her early years. After college, she spent several years touring with the International music group, 'Up With People.' Leah began playing fiddle at an early age and has always known music would be her profession. She graduated December 2022 with a degree in Music Business from Oklahoma Wesleyan University, spending her final semester at the Contemporary Music Center in Nashville, Tennessee. David is the brother Leah asked for, prompting the family to travel all the way to Russia to bring him home at sixteen months of age. He graduated high school in May of 2022 and continues to progress on the mandolin, upright bass, trumpet, and fiddle.

2008 brought change to David Sawyer and his family as he was worship leader at church and began to feel the draw to spread music with his entire family. He resigned as worship leader and began to take his family band from church to church. Their first invitation was to a Cowboy Church in the Fort Worth Stockyards, and this led to their nationwide travels.

2021 would bring a new project, "A Better Place," and their very first radio release entitled, *Where Could I Go?* Now charting is another release from the project entitled, *Ain't No Grave*. In addition to radio Simple Gifts (The Sawyer Family Band) has a television show, "The Simple Gifts Show" with 26 episodes recorded. It can be viewed on the band website or on demand at UANETWORK.TV. The band also had the privilege of performing for Gold Star Families flown into Texas from all over the country for the Wild West Show in their hometown of Weatherford, Texas.

When the pandemic started it presented a lot of challenges to groups and ministries, including this family. "What do you do when you make your living gathering together and people can no longer gather? But God also supplied our need, brought us work, and gave us time together as a family."

2021 would also bring a new meaning to their second release, *Ain't No Grave* as Kathy was diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer. Treatment has been difficult, but as David describes, "The Lord has shown Himself in so many ways. The doctors allowed chemo on Mondays with the hope Kathy could sing over the weekends. She did not miss an opportunity that was within three hours of home. Even without traditional insurance, astronomical bills have been paid. The power of prayer has become such a real thing as the saints have lifted the family up day after day. Though the battle continues, Kathy feels healthy and is now able to participate fully in the family schedule."

Success is an understatement when it comes to the awards this family band has achieved. Too numerous to list them all, here are just a few highlights: Inspirational Country Music Association's 'Bluegrass Band of the Year,' Two-time recipient of the International Western Music Association 'Group Harmony Award,' World Fiddling Champion – Junior Division (Leah), Texas State Fiddle Champion - Freshman Division (Leah), Academy of Western Artists 'Young Artist Award' (David, son), International Western Music Association 'Crescendo (Rising Star) Award' (David, son), International Western Music Association 'Male Yodeler of the Year' (David, dad), and Indiana State Fair Old Time Fiddler Champion (David, dad).

People are uplifted by seeing a family who loves the Lord using all their musical gifts to create a fully live, worshipful experience. During an event with Simple Gifts (The Sawyer Family Band) attendees will enjoy a mixture of old hymns, along with their own take on praise and worship and many original tunes.

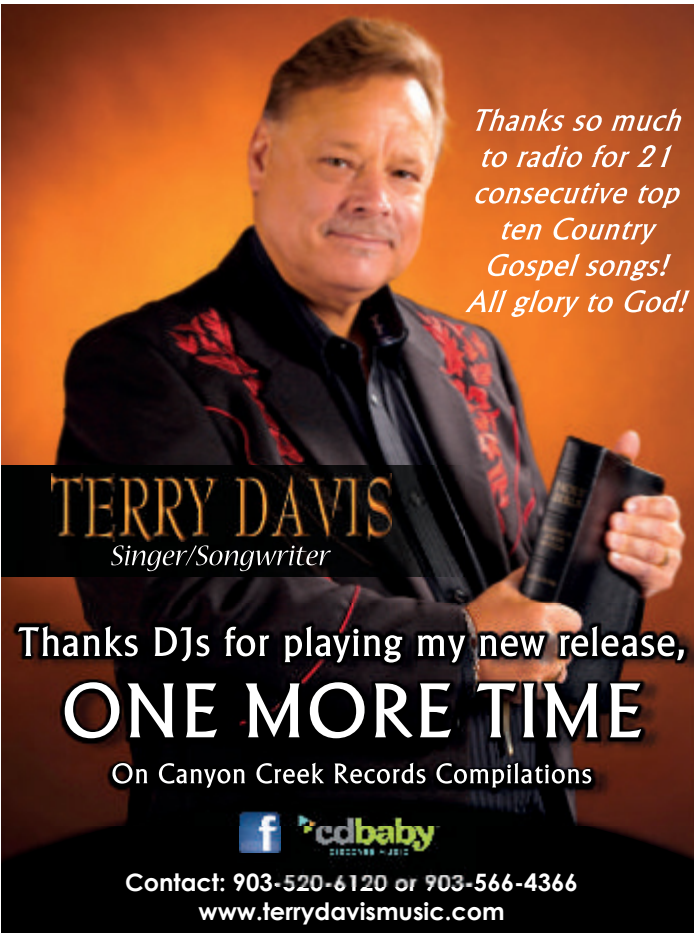
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MARK HUITT

*Sing Them
to Jesus!*

By Deborah Baliles

For over thirty-three years, Oklahoma recording artist Mark Huitt has been singing Gospel music. Musically influenced by Elvis Presley, Charley Pride, Roy Clark, Ronnie Milsap, and Jim Reeves, Mark's rich, deep baritone voice sets the stage for an audience to experience the passion and conviction of what he sings about. With a laid-back comforting style, he sings about that life changing message, simply, "Jesus Saves."

Whether it is the upbeat, *Blood Bought Church* encouraging believers to get excited that they belong to God's army of overcomers or the slow melodic invitation to *Come To The Cross* and give their hearts to Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior, or the Country/Gospel feel of *Long Time Comin'*, admonishing the urgency of salvation before it is too late - Mark's number one goal is to sing them to Jesus.

Mark has performed in nursing homes, churches, and events throughout Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri. As a teenager, he appeared on the Grapevine Opry in Grapevine, Texas. (He was the first ever to audition and get on the show the very same day). Mark has been a long-time guest singer at the Konawa Oklahoma Outdoor Singing; most recently, he has become the emcee at the Annual Seminole Gospel Sing, in Seminole, Oklahoma (the largest outdoor Southern Gospel singing in the state). He has appeared on Jammin' for Jesus in Branson, Missouri as well. Aside from

singing, Mark is the voice of Peter at The Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

For many years, Mark was the host of the Saturday morning call-in request show on the Ada, Oklahoma Gospel radio station 88.3 FM called The Saturday Morning Gospel Music Show; paralleled with a monthly network-wide show called The Gospel Station Spotlight Show, hosted by Mark and Tisha Todd. The latter venture provided many personal appearances and live remote broadcasts throughout the year in both Texas and Oklahoma, offering exceptional opportunities to interact with radio personalities and audiences to talk about The Gospel Station Network ministries.

However, a life-threatening illness in February of 2019 would force a crossroads in Mark's life and in his ministry. Prayers were lifted up from all over Texas, Oklahoma, and around the world for Mark and the illness that he was not supposed to survive. Those prayers hovered over him, God honored those prayers and brought him through. God was not

finished with Mark and his music, this was just a crossroads, not an ending.

Mark felt a strong moving back to his calling. Just a little talk with Jesus would remind Mark that he was called for full-time ministry way back on March 26, 1986. He was also reminded that he had been playing church for over thirty-three years; this was his last chance. With four months of both physical and spiritual healing, Mark resigned as sales manager of The Gospel Station Network, rededicating the rest of his life's work to full-time singing the Gospel.

Mark is unwavering to carry out his ministry call. His ministry is one of reconciliation. "I am here to tell you that God is a God of love, grace, peace, healing, mercy, and restoration. He is a God of second, third, and seven times seven chances, no matter where you have been, or what you may have done. God is ready and willing to forgive you and save you, and to work a healing in your life. You just need to ask Him to!"

"I know something about what I am talking about," he continues. "Having faced the pain and sorrow of a divorce at a young age, then facing a grim illness, my message is of hope



and a new beginning. You may feel that you are not worthy of God's love, but God wants to have a personal relationship with you. The world will fail you; family will fail you; friends will fail you, but God will never fail, nor forsake, you. Trust Him to forgive your sins, your failures, your guilt, and the fears that have gripped your life and held you captive."

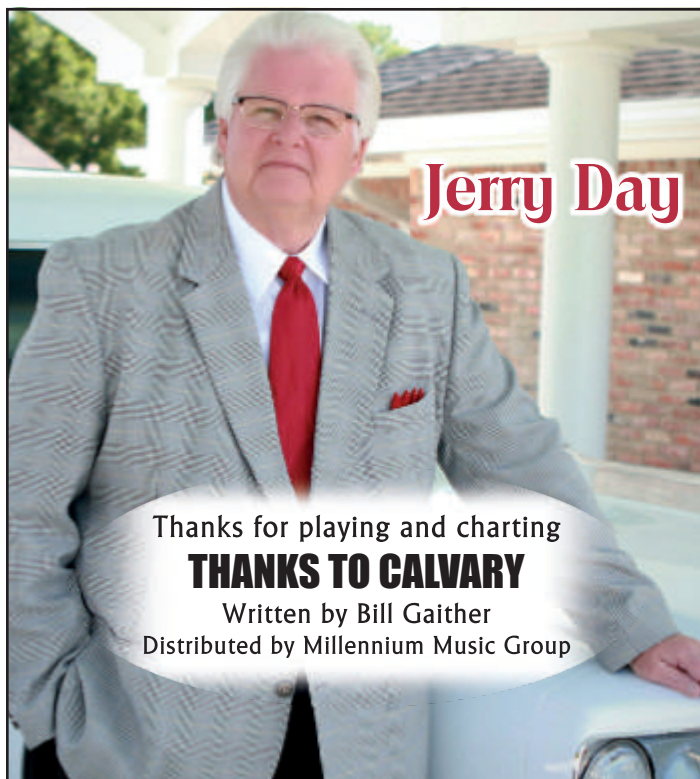
Written by renowned songwriter, Sandra Knight, *Even John Couldn't Tell* It is Mark's latest radio single. His previous single, *Imagine A Mansion* is told through the thoughts of a man trying to envision Heaven and what it will look like. *Even John Couldn't Tell* It is a fitting follow up

in that it reminds us that John, even with his heavenly visions while on the isle of Patmos, could still never adequately describe all the wonders and beauties of Heaven.

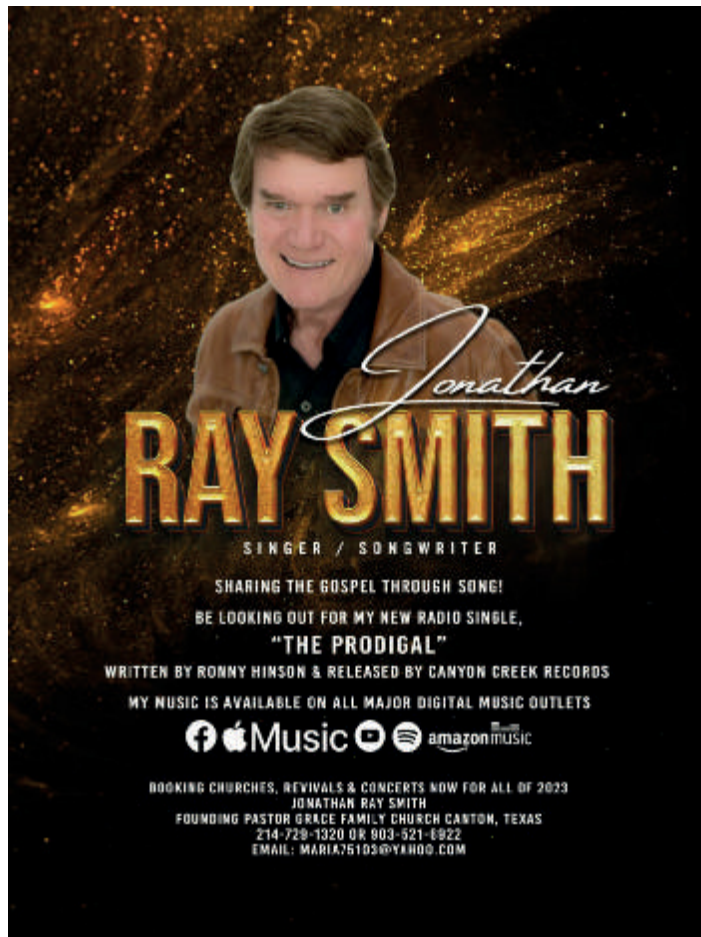
Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. - 1 Corinthians 2:9

This is what Mark Huitt Ministries is all about - directing people to Heaven, singing them to Jesus.

Facebook: Mark Huitt Ministries



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