

APRIL 2025

CrossCountry^{USA} magazine

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&
Maryann
Evans**

Grace Wins

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Gearing Up for the 11th Annual Event**

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APRIL 2025

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From the Editor

This month we are celebrating Resurrection Sunday. It's a wonderful time enjoying Easter weekend with our family and friends, watching the little kids hunt Easter eggs and dressing up in our Sunday best. That is always fun but that is not the reason we celebrate. We celebrate the Resurrection power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He deserves all the praise and the glory for taking the cross up to Calvary's hill and giving His life for all our sins. You can rejoice in knowing that on the third day Jesus was resurrected and through Him we can live in Heaven for eternity if we accept Him as our Lord and Savior.

When Jesus was sealed in the tomb, I am sure it felt like all their hope was gone. But all their hope was not lost when Jesus came out of that grave. Also, when Lazarus was raised from his tomb, Mary and Martha thought their hope was lost. Jesus gave life back to Lazarus and their hope was restored.

Maybe you feel like your situations and problems are sealed in a cold dark tomb and you need to experience the Resurrection power of Jesus. Whether the needs in your life are financial, physical, spiritual, or mental, Jesus can raise you up out of that tomb of depression, sickness, unforgiveness, stress, sin and addiction. Your circumstances do not have to keep you bound without hope. You can break free of everything that has tried to hold you down. The Lord can make a way when all seems hopeless. Give every need to the One who can raise the dead and give life more abundantly. Your Friday may feel sad and difficult but hold on to your faith - Sunday's coming!!

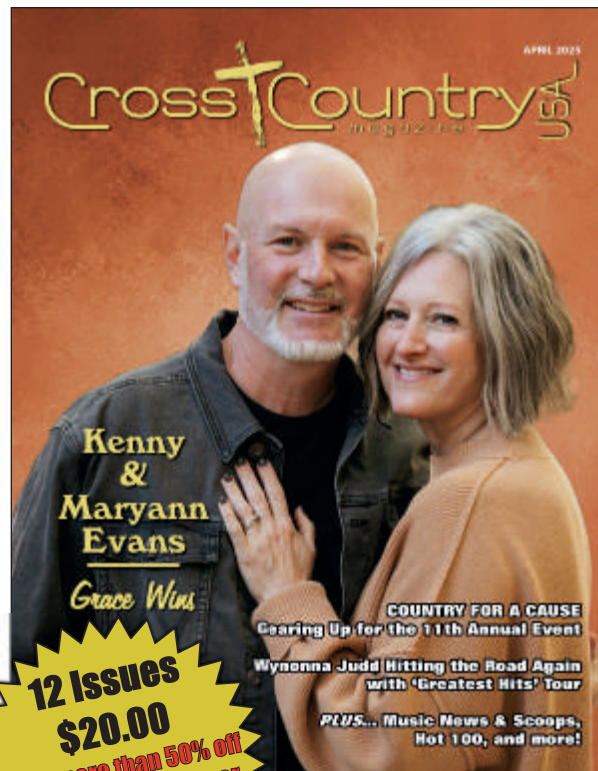
Cross Country USA Magazine will be on the road in the next few months. We will be at East Kentucky Gospel Fest, Louisa Kentucky, April 25-26th. Then Gospel Music Fan Fair, in Fayette Alabama, May 8-10th. Also, Sunday Mornin' Country at the Grand Ole Opry House, Nashville, Tennessee on June 8th along with more concerts and events throughout the year. For more information on these events, check out the links on our Facebook page.

Robin

Robin Tanner, Managing Editor

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and connect with us on Facebook!*

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A circular portrait of a woman with blonde, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a grey t-shirt with the word "Blesse" written on it in white cursive. The background of the portrait is a dark blue oval.

Gina White

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By Robin Tanner

HEAVEN BOUND

The Hackett Family from Eastern Kentucky is known as Heaven Bound. The family group includes four siblings - Cheyenne, who is twelve, Steven is eleven, Morgan is ten, and Charlotte is nine years old. The siblings have the love and support from their family and close friends who have shaped their lives in many ways.



Their dad Todd Hackett is their sound tech and provides vocals. Their mother Jamielee Hackett sings lead and plays the mandolin. Close family friend, Landon Mullins provides vocals and plays rhythm guitar and Steven plays guitar, ukulele and mandolin with his family and sisters. Steven says, “I am very thankful God gave me the talent to play the guitar.” The kids take turns sharing the lead vocals on different songs. Jamielee mentions, “When we are booked, the children will do most of the singing. Occasionally depending on the event, the adults will also sing.”

Mom, Jamielee recalls, “I was raised in Eastern Kentucky, going to church with my parents. Both of my parents were illiterate. Yet the Lord gave them the ability to understand the bible. My father was given the talent to play the guitar. I grew up on Hank Williams’ Gospel music. *I Saw The Lght* was my father’s favorite song and mine as well.”

Todd’s mother, Sandra Hackett and sisters sang Gospel in multi-states as the Short Sisters. Grandma Hackett has been a big inspiration to Heaven Bound. Grandma shares her pride for her grandchildren. “I am very proud of my grandchildren, especially for the work they do for the Lord.” Their dad Todd adds, “I enjoy watching our group sharing the Gospel through testimonies in song.”

Jamielee shares their story. “We decided to foster children in 2020 due to our youngest child Cheyenne who was seven years old at the time was being raised as an only child. All her siblings had moved out on their own. On March 13th,

2020, three little children stepped on our porch, wanting to call us mom and dad from the very beginning. We became family from that moment in our hearts. Steven was six, Morgan was five and Charlotte was four. We started teaching the children how to depend on Jesus and to let Him help them with the abuse they had suffered. After a couple of years fostering and hoping to adopt and keeping them grounded in Christ, our three younger ones gave their lives to Christ and were saved and baptized in the Fall of 2022. Cheyenne was saved and baptized in the Fall of 2019.”

The Hacketts raised their growing family on a love for church and the old Bluegrass Gospel songs. It was at a little church where God would direct their path to singing. Mom remembers, “In Spring of 2023, Cheyenne kept asking an elderly man named Aulta Frazier to sing *Old Blind Bartimaeus*, at our church. One Sunday, he agreed to sing it only if she would help him sing it and she agreed. The following week the same thing happened except all four children sang with him. So, I tell everyone now that ‘Old Bartimaeus’ is what got Heaven Bound started.”

Heaven Bound member, Landon Mullins who played guitar for Aulta Frazier, asked them to bring the children to a practice and let them learn some of the backup vocals to his old Bluegrass Gospel. She mentions, “We agreed, and the children sounded amazing singing backup vocals.”

In April 2023, Landon asked them to come to Baker’s Chapel for Songfest. It’s a little country church in the hills of Kentucky with a great spirit. The children sang backup on a

few Bluegrass Gospel songs. Jamielee admits, “Everyone loved it and many were blessed at their boldness as they sang about Jesus. The Songfest at Baker’s Chapel allowed us to get several appointments to other churches and sing.

She continues, “In December 2023, Aulta Frazier decided he was not able to sing due to health issues. Landon Mullins urged us to keep singing and he came up with the name Heaven Bound. I knew instantly this is what our group name should be called.”

Landon proudly states, “Out of all the groups I have played and sang with I get the biggest blessing playing with these children.”

Heaven Bound recorded their first CD in February 2024 and debuted the CD in April at the East Kentucky Gospel Fest. Those kids captured the hearts of all the attendees and received a blessing from God with their anointed singing. When they sing and minister at churches, their most requested song is *Easter Hallelujah* which Cheyenne, Morgan and Charlotte sing accapella.

Cheyenne shares her favorite song to sing. “*Your Cries Have Awoken The Master* is my favorite song because I believe Jesus always hears me.” Middle sister, Morgan says, “I enjoy singing and pray God gives me more talent. Charlotte who is the youngest says, “I love singing and enjoy learning new songs.”

The siblings have participated in their school talent shows and have won the last two years. Their mom mentions, “The most important thing about the talent show is not because they won, it’s that it inspired other children to sing Gospel music. In 2023, our children were the only ones that sang a Gospel song in the talent show. In 2024, many other children choose to sing Gospel as well.”

Last year was a busy year for Heaven Bound. They sang at 194 appointments including traveling to Missouri to do a live Gospel radio show. They made the front page of the Big Sandy News, a local newspaper, twice. But December was the most important time they were front page news because it was the most important day of their lives. Jamielee gleams with joy, “Finally, on December 2nd, after 1849 days in foster care, we became an official family when Stephen, Morgan and Charlotte’s adoption became final!”

“Our goal for 2025 is to visit as many churches as possible to share the Gospel of Jesus in song. We pray many will receive a blessing and many souls will come to be saved as we minister in songs. We also pray the children’s testimonies how Jesus rescued them from abuse and changed their lives will inspire other children to pick up His Cross and carry it to all nations.”

Along with the guidance of their family, they have been inspired and encouraged by several Gospel music artists. The family shares, “Rick Moore and Spiritual Echoes, which we met at Baker’s Chapel at Song Fest; we bought their CD and we learned every song on it in very little time and purchased tracks to them so we could take the lead on some of the songs. Living Water continues to encourage and inspire us along with James Adams with *Pardoned By Grace*. James always helped Steven with guitar and learning new chords. Also, Mike and Tina Hazelbaker of *Called* inspired the girls to keep on singing. All these groups have helped us tremendously in the last two years.”

Cheyenne, Steven and Morgan are on the school’s academic team. Cheyenne and Charlotte play basketball and Cheyenne, Charlotte and Morgan cheer at their school. All of them keep an honor average with Cheyenne and Steven maintaining straight A’s.





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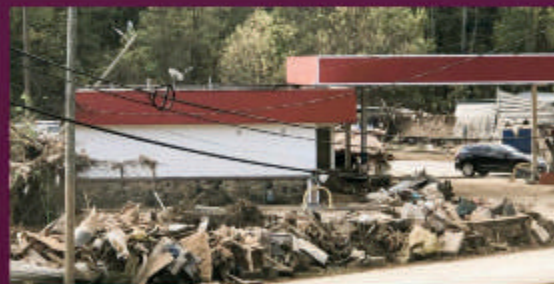
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Recently, we've been serving in Western North Carolina, providing medical care to those in difficult and stressful situations. Thanks to a dedicated team of volunteer doctors, PAs, nurse practitioners, and nurses—who selflessly gave their time—we were able to serve many patients, addressing their physical needs and sharing the hope and love of Jesus. Our new medical trailer was a tremendous blessing and with your



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giving, we were able to minister to both body and soul, offering care and compassion that we pray will have a lasting impact on their lives.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you. Together, we are making a difference, one person at a time.



-Dr. Pete Kunkle, Executive Director

A portrait of Debbie Bennett, a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a black jacket over a black top and blue jeans with brown boots. She is sitting and looking towards the camera.

Debbie
Bennett

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Hosted by T.G. Sheppard
and Kelly Lang

Returning to Nashville for 11th Annual Event

Staff, Cross Country USA

This year, Country for a Cause returns once again to Nashville's 3rd & Lindsley with a star-studded line-up. Artists slated to appear include The Oak Ridge Boys, Mandy Barnett, John Berry, T. Graham Brown, Trey Calloway, Lacy J. Dalton, Jimmy Fortune, Billie Jo Jones, The Malpass Brothers, Makenzie Phipps, Mark Wills, Michelle Wright, Billy Yates, and more. Hosting the June 4th event will be T.G. Sheppard and Kelly Lang along with Devon O' Day.

Presented by Gus Arrandale and Springer Mountain Farms, the Country with a Cause event benefits the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. Tickets are now on sale for general admission.

"We are beyond excited to host Country For A Cause once

**Gus Arrandale
and**



Meredith "Mamie" Shepherd, Senior Program Manager for Seacrest Studios at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. "T.G. Sheppard and Kelly Lang have been incredible champions of the patients and families seeking treatment and care at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. Thank you to the incredible team that unselfishly puts on such a special night each year! We are most grateful for the talent, generosity and love on display for this event. It's a reminder of how healing music can be."

Country For A Cause is an annual concert held just before the CMA Music Festival in Nashville. Artists who have performed throughout the years include Crystal Gayle,

again," says T.G. Sheppard. "It's truly incredible to see such a diverse lineup this year - our most varied yet. From Country and Bluegrass to Americana and more, we're bringing together legendary artists, rising stars, and even a few surprises. This is going to be an unforgettable show!"

Sherri Forrest, Country For A Cause President, states, "We're thrilled to present the 11th Country for a Cause concert, the "unofficial" kickoff to CMA Fan Fest. After selling out of VIP tickets in under a minute last year, excitement is already building for this year's show. Once again, we're bringing together an incredible lineup, including Grand Ole Opry and Country Music Hall of Fame members, CMA winners, legends, and fresh new faces, ensuring an unforgettable night. Over the years, we've raised thousands for Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, thanks to the generosity of Gus Arrandale, Springer Mountain Farms, our artists, volunteers, and the incredible support of our audience - who continue to amaze us year after year."

"How lucky we are to have the support of Country for a Cause in our Nashville community," said



Lee Greenwood, The Bellamy Brothers, Ty Herndon, Doug Supernaw, Baillie and the Boys, Collin Raye, Billy Dean, Jeannie Seely, Jan Howard, John Rich, Jody Miller, Lulu Roman, and countless others. In 2018, Country For A Cause teamed with Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt as the sole beneficiary of proceeds raised. In total, over \$200,000 has been raised!

About Gus Arrendale and Springer Mountain Farms

Gus Arrendale is the President of Springer Mountain Farms. Springer Mountain Farms is a family-owned company in northeast Georgia that has raised chickens for over 50 years. Springer Mountain Farms chickens are responsibly raised on local family farms on a high-quality diet of pesticide-free, 100% American-grown grains without any antibiotics, hormones, steroids, or animal by-products, and they are certified by the American Humane Association. Fresh and frozen, ready-to-cook, and fully cooked chicken products are available at select grocery stores and served in restaurants across the country. Go to SpringerMTN.com to locate, learn more, or follow on social media @SMFchicken.

About Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt is one of the nation's leading children's hospitals, treating and helping to prevent a full range of pediatric health issues from colds and broken bones to complex heart diseases and cancer. In 2024, Monroe Carell was again named among the nation's "Best Children's Hospitals" for the 18th consecutive year by U.S. News & World Report. Additionally, the hospital earned the distinction of being the No. 1 pediatric hospital in Tennessee and shares first place in the Southeast Region for the fourth consecutive year.

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

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



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The Story Behind the Song

INK STAINS

Recorded by David House

Staff, Cross Country USA

Written by Mike Owens and David House



Mike Owens



David House

A blank sheet of paper and a pen can become a wonderful work of art when a songwriter writes down lyrics to their songs. It can go from words on paper to a chart-topping hit song that can be heard for generations. More importantly, it can be a song that changes someone's life when they hear it that leaves an impact that will last a lifetime. Songwriter, Mike Owens shares his perspective on his song, *Ink Stains*.

"*Ink Stains* is a writer's song. I am only a writer. I do not perform nor sell products; so, my desire is to write a song that will really make a difference in someone's life. I pour my soul into every line and I'm always thinking of a better way to say what's been said a thousand times before. As a writer, I want the lyrics to leave the page and penetrate the heart of the listener; to touch the emotions and move them to action. As the song says, 'What good are these words stuck here on this page if they never find a soul in need of Your grace.' As a writer, I know I just hold the pen. I pray for God to send the words that will bring a soul to Him."

Considering who might be best to record the song, Mike shares, "When I finished writing *Ink Stains*, I began to think of someone who could most effectively deliver the message. David House was the obvious choice. I met David and his wife, Barbara, at ICGMA and heard him sing. I called him and he agreed to look over the lyrics. In a few days, he responded and told me he loved the song and wanted to

arrange it and record it. He developed the melody, put his smooth voice on it and it really came to life. David is a very humble man with a sweet spirit and that really makes the song special."

The writer mentions the lyrics in the first verse. "*They look real good on paper, these lyrics that I write. I wonder, do they make a difference, will they change a life? Will they help a weary soul find a little faith? And can they make this troubled world be a better place?*" God says His Word will not return void but will accomplish His will. My prayer is that my songs make Him smile and draw people closer to Him."

Ink Stains

VERSE 1:

*They look real good on paper, these lyrics that I write
I wonder, do they make a difference, will they change a life
Will they help a weary soul to find a little faith
'N can they make this troubled world be a better place*

CHORUS:

*I'm praying that the ink stains drying on these lines
Will somehow find their way to calm a troubled mind
What good are these words stuck here on this page
If they never find a soul in need of Your grace*

VERSE 2:

*I'd like to write a song to chase away your blues
And maybe cause you to remember what God has done for
you*

*I know that I'll rest easy if my words are enough
To help you count your blessings and feel God's love*

CHORUS:

*I'm praying that the ink stains drying on these lines
Will somehow find their way to calm a troubled mind
What good are these words stuck here on this page
If they never find a soul in need of Your grace*

BRIDGE:

*Let me write for You Lord, 'til my journey ends
I know You send the words and I hold the pen*

TAG:

*What good are these words stuck here on this page
If they never find a soul, if they never find a soul
Lord help them find a soul in need of Your grace
I know You'll make them more than ink stains on a line*



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Denise Edwards is a singer/Songwriter trained in classical piano from Brandon, SD. She has recently released her 4th album of all original material this year 2024. She has charted multiple times on the CMA European charts through promotions by TRIPLESTRAND PRODUCTIONS and received a Certificate of Eligibility from IAIRA for her Christmas CD, “OH, WHAT A GIFT!” She plays keyboard and organ for several local churches and continues to write Christian music.

Booking: lynn@alliancecom.net



LUKE HENDRICKSON



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Music Makers Making a Difference

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**AUTISM
AWARENESS
MONTH**

Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. It is characterized by difficulties in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviors. Although autism is becoming more widely recognized, there is still a lack of understanding and awareness surrounding the disorder. As a result, many individuals and families affected by autism struggle to find the support and resources they need. We are spotlighting a music event and a podcast during Autism Awareness Month that offer support to those dealing with Autism.

The Country Music Autism Awareness Foundation

The Country Music Autism Awareness Foundation harnesses the heart and soul of Country music to champion autism awareness, advocacy, and support. Through live performances, educational initiatives, and community-driven programs, we create meaningful connections that inspire understanding and inclusion. Their mission is to use the power of music to amplify voices, provide vital resources, and build a compassionate, supportive community for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. Together, they're turning awareness into action - one song at a time.

The Country Music Autism Awareness Foundation was founded in 2024 by Christian Country singer-songwriter Doug Mathis. The 2024 inaugural event raised more than \$6,500 for Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (VKC TRIAD). It was sponsored by Gus Arrendale and Springer Mountain Farms and hosted by Devon O'Day. Performers included T. Graham Brown, John Berry, Wade Hayes, Jimmy Fortune, Doug Mathis, Dillon Massengale, Steve Anthony, and Darryl Worley.

"The performances were stellar, the crowd was incredible, and we were able to interact with and provide resources to many families with autistic loved ones," said Pablo Juárez, co-director of VKC TRIAD on 2024's inaugural event. "We can't thank Doug and Debbie enough for their generosity, coordination, and recognition of the importance of TRIAD's work with families."

Due to increased demand, the Country Music Autism Awareness Foundation (CMAAF) relocated their 2nd Annual fundraising event, 'An Acoustic Evening For Autism' to Country music landmark Nashville Palace in Nashville, Tennessee. The event is set for April 1, and proceeds raised will benefit Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (VKC TRIAD) in Nashville.

"Given last year's successful launch, we moved our largest fundraiser event to a larger venue, to accommodate a larger crowd," CMAAF Founder and Christian Country singer-songwriter Doug Mathis said. "Beyond that, the Nashville Palace is a legendary Country music venue that also will increase our production capabilities as we plan to grow this into an annual event."

Their 2025 event features acoustic performances by Country icons Darryl Worley, T. Graham Brown, John Berry, Jamie O'Neal, Minnie Murphy, Doug Mathis, Dillon Massengale, Faron Hamblin, and a few surprise guests. The special concert is once again sponsored by Gus Arrendale and Springer Mountain Farms and hosted by Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame personality Devon O'Day.

The Country Music Autism Awareness Foundation will focus on raising funds within the Country Music community to help organizations like VKC TRIAD. "The Country Music community has always been a giving group," Mathis mentions. "Whether it's one individual's time, artistic efforts,

or financial support, we know we have the support of a loving community.”

Country Music Autism Awareness Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose board members consist of Music Row veterans Debbie Randle, Chuck Rhodes, Atlanta business entrepreneur David Branch, and Doug Mathis.

Why Not Me the World Podcast

Beginning in April, commemorating the start of Autism Acceptance Month, veteran Nashville based music producer and podcast host Tony Mantor will launch Humanity Over Handcuffs: The Silent Crisis, a special series on his chart topping Why Not Me the World podcast on autism. The series will feature exclusive in-depth conversations with U.S. law makers, police officers, psychologists, judges, attorneys, and more.



[(L-R) Stuart Dill, SVP & Chief Marketing Officer at VUMC; Debbie Randle, Doug Mathis Music/D&D Promotions; Jeffrey Neul, VKC Director; Doug Mathis; Pablo Juárez, co-director of VKC TRIAD; Alacia Stainbrook, VKC TRIAD co-director



During his recent address to the U.S. Congress, President Trump cited the rising prevalence of autism diagnoses which have risen from one in 10,000 children, to one in 36. More specifically, how Autistic people have been historically treated in the legal system will be Mantor’s specific focus on the special series. Autism and the legal system is undoubtedly a relative topic and societal challenge that has been recently reported on by NPR, Salon, The Marshall Report and ABA Journal. Mantor’s new series seeks to revitalize a conversation around the highly sensitive topic to bring about solutions.

“The series purpose is to refrain from assigning blame, and instead focus on developing solution driven strategies,” Mantor said about the new podcast series. “I just think we need to do more to acknowledge and be empathetic enough to find solutions on how the justice system deals with autism or other mental health issues, versus just arresting them and treating them as criminals. Not only here in the United States, but worldwide.”



The Humanity Over Handcuffs series will take a deep dive into stories and cases of autistic people's experience by both the law enforcement and legal system from thought leaders. Since launching in 2023, Mantor's Why Not Me The World podcast has been downloaded more than 900,000 times

across 85 countries and more than 1,500 cities worldwide. It has topped various mental health podcast charts worldwide including Spotify's Top 200 chart and Apple Podcast's Mental Health charts in the U.S., Great Britain and Canada. Leading podcast search engine Listen Notes consistently rates the podcast among the top 0.5% of podcasts worldwide.

Veteran Nashville music producer Tony Mantor wrote and recorded a song in 2021 titled, *Why Not Me*, as a tribute to individuals with Autism. Why Not Me The World podcast aims to bridge that gap by providing valuable information and insights into autism, fostering empathy and understanding, and promoting acceptance and inclusion, Nashville based Music Producer Tony Mantor explores the remarkable impact his guests make by empowering their voices in spreading awareness about autism and helping break down the barriers of understanding.

Join Mantor and his guests as they delve into the world of autism and explore topics such as diagnosis, treatment, research, and personal stories from those in the autistic community. Together, we can create a more informed and compassionate society for individuals with autism. Why Not Me The World is streaming now on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon, iHeart Media, or at TonyMantor.com.



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I am a singer-songwriter. The name of my ministry is 'It's Time to Heal Ministries' and ministers to women who have suffered the aftermath of an abortion through song and the Word of God using a post-abortion Bible Study called, "*Forgiven and Set Free*" by Linda Cochrane. I share my story of my pain, guilt, shame, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness and how God healed me and is still healing those places that still need healing. I also share the love of Jesus to these women and to others so they can be saved, healed, delivered and set free so they can finally walk in the fullness of God and walk in their purpose and the plan that God has planned for them. It's not about fame or fortune, it's all about Jesus and bringing others to Him through these songs that I sing. I want to give God all the praise, glory, and honor for all that He is doing in my life and has done in my life and is doing and all He's going to do.

I secondly want to thank my precious and loving husband, Neil, for his love and support and for always pushing me to step out with my singing. He always says "God has given you a gift and there is a special anointing that God has given you and when you open your mouth and begin to sing and speak that lives are saved, healed, delivered and set free."

I want to also thank Dennis Coker and HeartSong Pigeon Forge Music Group (HPFMG) for helping make this a reality. A huge thank you to Randall Wilds with Wilds and Associates for giving this opportunity to work with him and being able to minister in song at the 2025 Gospel Music FanFair in Fayette, Alabama.

I would like to give a HUGE THANK YOU to all the DJ's for playing and charting my song, "**Lets All Get Together.**" I also have five CD's available for purchase for \$20.00 each or get all five for \$65.00. I want to always walk in love and be led by the Holy Spirit and walk by Faith in all the doors God wants me to walk through. It's all about Him. We are nothing without Him and He makes all things new. He makes the impossible possible and He chose me, anointed me and called me for such a time as this. (Psalm 139:13-18 NLT); (Amos 9:13-15 MSG)

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CrossCountry Report

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MUSIC NEWS & SCOOPS

New Ray Stevens Album, Say Whut?, Available Now



Comedy music genius Ray Stevens is bringing back the laughs with his latest album, "Say Whut?," now available via CabaRay Records and digitally distributed by Curb Records. It's also available for radio programmers via Airplay Direct.

Chock full of Stevens' trademark humor, the eleven-track album includes songs such as *The Boom-Boom Gentlemen's Club*, a story of a waitress in Oklahoma who has ambitions of stripping and *Since Bubba Changed His Name To Charlene*, which addresses a certain controversial current event. Other tracks include *If It Walks Like A Duck, I Dropped My Wallet In The Toilet*, *Everybody's On The Telephone* and *The More You Cry*, among others.

Though Stevens has wrapped up live performances at his Nashville-based CabaRay Showroom, the Country Music Hall of Famer has no plans to stop recording. The two-time GRAMMY® winner is proud of his latest work. "I just finished this album of eleven original songs," he explains. "It's called 'Say Whut?' and I think you're gonna like it!"

Aside from recording in the studio, Stevens still plans to perform occasionally "in some old familiar places," as he puts it.

The Gatlin Brothers Kick-off 70th Anniversary Celebration Tour

It's a GRAMMY® Award-winning legacy that's been celebrated throughout the world for decades. Larry, Steve & Rudy: The Gatlin Brothers have officially launched their 70th Anniversary Tour. The kick-off celebration took place on Saturday, March 8 with a concert in their hometown of Abilene, Texas. That's the exact date their storied musical journey began in 1955 when Larry was six, Steve was four and Rudy was two-years-old.

Larry says fans can expect more great things to come. "For the last 70 years, I have been greatly blessed and highly favored to make music with my two best friends, Steve and Rudy," he explains. "It's been a great run and it ain't over, boys. Let's keep doing this until just before we start stinkin' up the joint and not one minute longer. See y'all at sound check. Love, Larry Wayne."

The 70th Anniversary Tour is set to make stops in cities across North America including Myrtle Beach, SC; Rocky Mount, VA; Marietta, OH; Beaumont, TX; Santa Fe, NM; Arlington, TX; Branson, MO and many more. Recently, the iconic Country singers were featured on *Fox & Friends* in honor of their latest milestone.



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Dolly Parton Releases New Song in Honor of Late Husband, Carl Thomas Dean

If You Hadn't Been There is Dolly Parton's tribute to nearly 60 years of marriage to her late husband. Dolly released an emotional ballad honoring her late husband Carl Thomas Dean, who died on Monday, March 3rd at the age of 82.

Parton announced the release of the single on an Instagram post. "I fell in love with Carl Dean when I was 18 years old. We have spent 60 precious and meaningful years together," Parton said. "Like all great love stories, they never end. They live on in memory and song. He will always be the star of my life story, and I dedicate this song to him."

The ballad looks back on the love and support Parton received from Dean throughout their nearly six decades of marriage.

"If you hadn't been there / Where would I be? / Without your trust / Love and belief / The ups and downs / We've always shared / And I wouldn't be here / If you hadn't been there," Parton sings in the touching ballad.

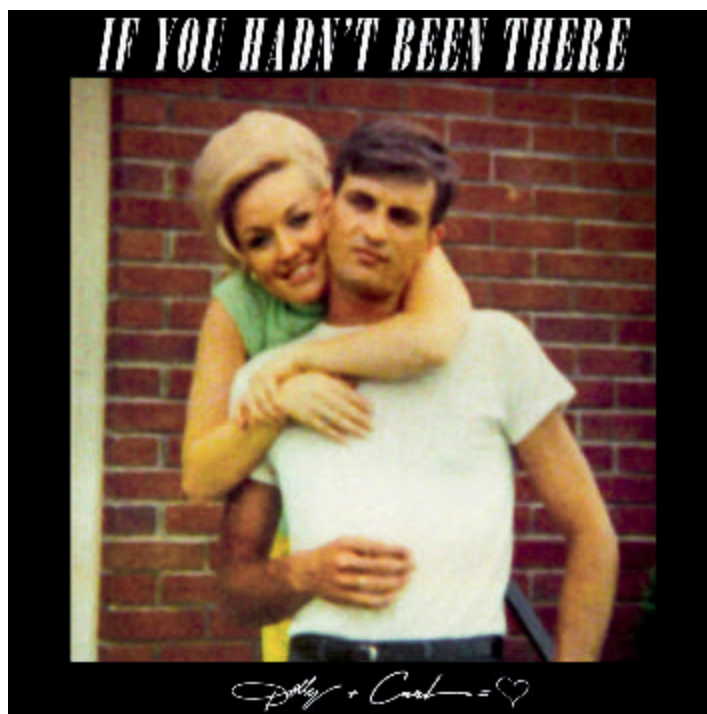
"If you hadn't been there / Well, who would I be? / You always see the best in me / You're loving arms have cradled me / You held me close, and I believe," she adds to the second verse.

The release of this song follows an outpouring of love Dolly has received over the last month. She released a statement on Instagram to express her gratitude. "This is a love note to family, friends, and fans. Thank you for all the messages, cards, and flowers that you've sent to pay your respects for the loss of my beloved husband Carl," Parton said. "I can't reach out personally to each of you but just know it has meant the world to me. He is in God's arms now and I am okay with that. I will always love you"

"Carl and I spent many wonderful years together," Parton wrote. "Words can't do justice to the love we shared for over 60 years. Thank you for your prayers and sympathy."

Carl Dean was a private man who kept a low profile. In a 2020 interview with Entertainment Tonight, Dolly said her husband had never wanted to be in the spotlight. "It's just not who he is. He's like, a quiet, reserved person and he figured if he ever got out there in that, he'd never get a minute's peace and he's right about that."

Carl Thomas Dean was born on July 20, 1942, in Nashville to Virginia Bates Dean, known as Ginny, and Edgar Henry Dean, according to Dolly Parton's 1994 autobiography, "Dolly: My



Life and Other Unfinished Business." He lived in East Ridge, Tennessee, as a child. He pursued a quiet life owning an asphalt-paving business.

The couple met outside the WishyWashy Laundromat the day she moved to Nashville in 1964, when Dolly was 18 and Carl Dean was 21. Dolly and Carl got married on Memorial Day in 1966 in Ringgold, Georgia, and they renewed their vows 50 years later in 2016. The couple lived on a farm outside Nashville for decades.

Vince Gill Announces 2025 Summer Tour

Vince Gill, the 22-time Grammy winner and highly-acclaimed musician, songwriter, vocalist, and producer, announced he will embark on a 30+ city summer tour, beginning May 8 and wrapping in August with four nights in Nashville at the Ryman Auditorium. There is much anticipation, as this summer's tour will have Gill returning to some cities where he has not performed with his band in many years.

Cross Country Report continued on page 29 > > >



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Gill has spent most of the last eight years as a touring member of the Eagles. The iconic band is currently in the middle of a lengthy run, performing before sellout crowds at Sphere in Las Vegas.

It was officially fifty years ago this summer when Gill left his home in Oklahoma and began touring. "I left home fifty years ago to try and become an accomplished musician and perform in front of whoever would show up. All these years later, it feels as special today as it ever did."

As always, Musicians Hall of Fame member Gill will be joined on stage by a stellar cast of musicians. The eight-piece band features: Jim "Moose" Brown (keyboards), Tom Bukovac (guitar), Eddie Dunlap (steel guitar), Jedd Hughes (guitar, vocals), John Jarvis (keyboards), Wendy Moten (vocals), Jimmie Lee Sloas (bass), Billy Thomas (drums), and Jeff White (guitar, vocals).

For more information: www.vincegill.com.

Moe Bandy Releases Album, 'Songs I Missed'

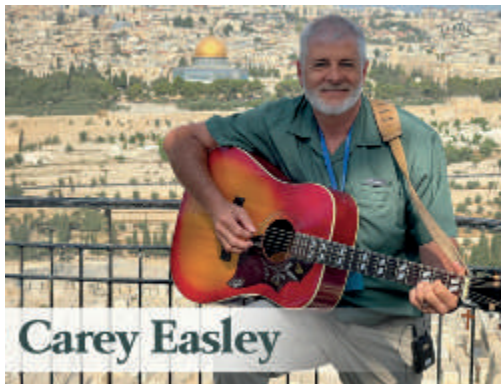
Country music icon Moe Bandy releases his newest single, *Pure Love*. Written by Eddie Rabbitt, *Pure Love* became a #1 Country hit for Ronnie Milsap back in 1974. The song premiered exclusively on *Cowboys & Indians* and is the lead single from Bandy's forthcoming album, "Songs I Missed." The collection of Bandy's renditions of timeless Country classics will be released on May 2, 2025, via StarVista Music.

"I have had the opportunity to record some of the best songs ever written in Country music. However, like everyone else, there are some I wish I could have gotten first," laughs Moe Bandy. "*Pure Love* is one of them. That will be on my new album, along with *He Stopped Loving Her Today* and *Heartaches By The Number* - all groundbreaking songs that have stood the test of time. I am happy to have finally gotten the chance to record them, and I hope you enjoy them as much as I have through the years."



One of America's all-time leading classic Country music artists, Moe Bandy's long string of hits includes *Bandy The Rodeo Clown*, *Hank Williams*, *You Wrote My Life*, *Till I'm Too Old To Die Young*, *Americana*, *It's A Cheatin' Situation*, *Just Good Ol' Boys*, *Barstool Mountain*, *I Cheated Me Right Out of You*, *I Just Started Hatin' Cheatin' Songs Today*, *Rodeo Romeo*, *You Haven't Heard the Last of Me*, *Holding The Bag* and dozens of other chart-toppers.

Whether writing, recording new songs or traveling the world performing, Moe keeps one of the busiest schedules in show business. He has amassed 10 #1 hits, 40 Top Ten hits, 5 Gold Albums, won the ACM Song of The Year, the ACM Most Promising Male Vocalist of the Year award, the American Video of the Year, and both the ACM and CMA Duet of the Year award.



First of all I want to thank my Lord and savior Jesus Christ for saving my soul and changing my life. I also want to thank Don Stiles for inspiring this song with his testimony. Thank you to Tommy Swindle at 3rd Avenue Sound for doing a great job producing it and all the musicians who played on it. And thanks to Tommy Smith with Canyon Creek Records for doing a great job of promoting my song "Because He Changed Me". And a special thanks to all the DJs that played it and all the people who requested Because He Changed Me

Thank you

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Shenandoah Announces 50-City 'The Extra Mile Tour' 2025



Legendary GRAMMY® Award-winning Country group Shenandoah announced their The Extra Mile Tour 2025. The national roadshow pays homage to the band's 1990 album of the same name.

The first leg of the 50+ live concert tour includes Rock The Country and Rock The South with Nickelback and Kid Rock, Country Thunder with Jelly Roll, as well as Cattle Country 2025, Country Stampede and more.

"Big goings on in the Shenandoah camp," says Shenandoah frontman Marty Raybon. "Looking forward to getting into the New Year and playing the big stages with our friends. It's never a bad thing taking the 'Extra Mile' and getting to see fans and friends alike across the country. It's going to be a blast and a great year."

Shenandoah recently made headlines with a newly recorded version of *Sunday in the South* featuring Jason Aldean and Luke Bryan (via 8 Track Entertainment). Upon the release on the music video last December, the song soared to the Top of the iTunes All Genres and Country Charts, landing Shenandoah its 16th No. 1 Single. Within the first 48 hours of release of the music video, it amassed over eight million views across social media platforms and was the #9 trending music video on YouTube.

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

For more information, visit www.shenandoahband.com.

Randy Travis Biopic Forever And Ever Amen

Veteran film producer Eric Groth (Ethan Hawke's "Wildcat") and writer/director Andrew Hyatt ("Paul, Apostle of Christ" from Sony Pictures) of Sacred Arthouse and Zach Dasher and Korie Robertson of Tread Lively, the team behind the record-breaking film "The Blind" and upcoming series "Duck Dynasty: The Revival" together announce the new film "Forever And Ever, Amen" about the life of music legend Randy Travis. Andrew Hyatt will direct off of his own script. Travis and his wife Mary Travis will executive produce, alongside Country music star Clay Walker. "Forever And Ever, Amen" marks the first film for Sacred Arthouse.

"Forever And Ever, Amen" is currently being cast by Anne McCarthy, Kellie Roy, and Morgan Robbins at Engine Casting and production has established that Randy Travis will be



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played by three actors of different ages. Country star Clay Walker will play Travis in his 40s and 50s in addition to serving as Executive Producer. Engine Casting is on the lookout for young actors to play a young Randy Travis around 9-12 years old and another at 20-30 years old. The search should net two new rising stars.

"We've been approached many times through the years about doing a movie... but the timing or team has never felt quite as good as it feels right now. With Clay on our side, and the creative direction he and the producers have, I feel good about telling my story through this medium," said Randy Travis.

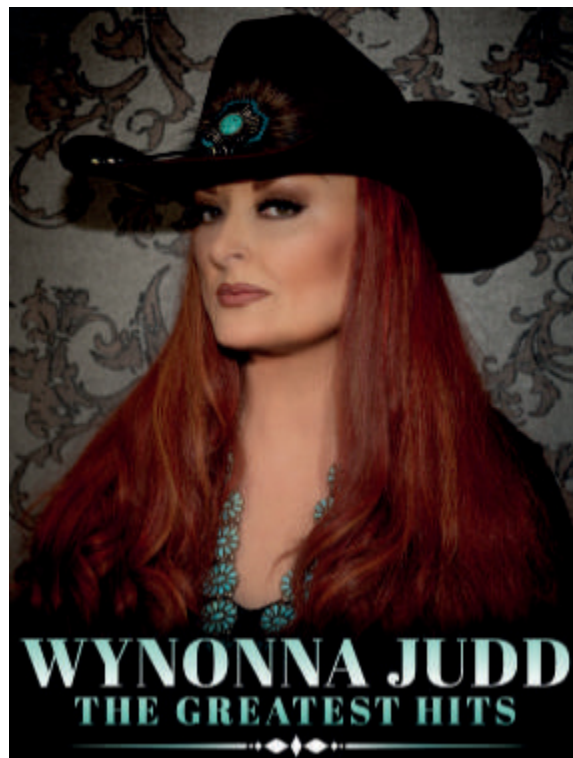
"Randy Travis is the voice of a generation and one of the greatest Country singers of all time. I am truly honored to be a part of this project and cannot believe I get to play one of my heroes," said Clay Walker.

Much of the success of modern Country music can be traced to one man: Randy Travis. His arrival signaled the start of the "new country" sales explosion of the 1990s. Travis is a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame with 23 #1 worldwide hits, 7 Grammy Awards, 11 ACM Awards, 10 American Music Awards and 5 CMA Awards. The film's titular song *Forever and Ever, Amen* earned CMA awards as Single and Album of the Year when it debuted in 1987. It went on to be certified quintuple platinum. Almost 12 years ago, Travis suffered a debilitating stroke, but he continues to release original music with the aid of new technologies.

On March 5, the Grand Ole Opry played host for the announcement of the biopic alongside performances by friends of Randy Travis' including Clay Walker, Collin Raye, Lady A, James Dupré, and more. The evening opened with Travis' friend and mentee, Dupré, introducing his mentor during an emotional rendition of *Where That Came From*, featuring Travis' vocals on half of the song - evoking a standing ovation from the audience. Clay Walker capped off the night following his own hits with Travis' iconic *I Told You So*, reintroducing Travis and his wife Mary to make the announcement of the movie in development. The evening closed out with Walker performing Travis' iconic *Forever and Ever, Amen* which included a special "amen" from Randy Travis himself at the end.

Wynonna Judd: The Greatest Hits Tour

Multi-Platinum Country music icon, Wynonna, is hitting the road once again, this time to celebrate four decades of chart-topping hits with "Wynonna Judd: The Greatest Hits"



Tour. Kicking off June 13 in LaGrange, GA, her first-ever greatest hits tour will honor Wynonna's remarkable career, spotlighting unforgettable songs from her time as one-half of the legendary duo The Judds, along with her powerhouse solo accomplishments.

From Judds chart-toppers like *Mama He's Crazy*, and *Grandpa (Tell Me 'Bout The Good Old Days)*, to solo anthems *No One Else On Earth* and *Tell Me Why*, Wynonna's commanding voice and fearless artistry have solidified her as a trailblazer in American music. "Wynonna Judd: The Greatest Hits" Tour promises fans a night of nostalgia, soul, and the raw energy that only Wynonna can deliver.

"I continue to marvel at the fact that I still get to do what I love, after all these years. I feel incredibly blessed to have experienced so many chapters of my career, which is constantly evolving," Wynonna shares. "I've been pouring my heart into new music, and I cannot wait to share it with you! And right now, it's time to celebrate my musical journey, and honor the songs that shaped who I am."

For concert information, visit Wynonna's website, www.Wynonna.com.



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LISA DAGGS

By Robin Tanner

Lisa Daggs has been delighting and encouraging audiences for over 35 years. The award-winning singer, songwriter, and author shares her own story of loss, redemption, and hope to inspire everyone she meets.

Growing up in California Lisa was raised around a musical family. “My brother, Larry had a beautiful voice and an all-boy band, called the Intruders while I was growing up. He was ten years older than me, so I thought that was the coolest thing ever. My dad also had a very beautiful voice. I never tired of him singing *Fly Me to The Moon* in the arrangement of Tony Bennett. I began singing in church. I was blessed to have a big speaker and a microphone at home, and I rehearsed along with Linda Ronstadt’s records. I loved her songs, and her range was the same as mine, so it exercised my vocal cords perfectly. (I’m an alto)”

Lisa’s influences range from Bonnie Raitt, Wynonna, Faith Hill and of course as she stated, Linda Ronstadt and the great Motown singer, Gladys Knight. She remarks, “I know that’s a vast spread of genres, but if you listen to my voice and the library of songs, you’ll hear what I mean. I’m a little bit Country, Soul and Blues. You can listen to all my music on any of the streaming stations. Just remember, if you would, CD’s have a much higher quality of sound than the streaming stations do. (Just a reminder, you help the artist out when you buy direct).”

Lisa launched her career by moving to Nashville in pursuit of her dream. She worked as a studio vocalist and sang in numerous showcases for local Nashville songwriters. Lisa later left the Nashville scene to connect with new audiences on the West Coast.

After struggling through the challenges and temptations of an entertainer’s lifestyle, Lisa worked to rediscover the inner peace she had lost. “I was full of self-will, running my own show, and believing I knew what was best for my life,” she recalls. She struggled through the process of overcoming the severe consequences caused by her previous lifestyle. She turned her life over to the complete care of God, trusting Him for strength and guidance.



In a career that spans over three decades, Lisa has experienced many memorable moments. She was awarded ‘Entertainer of the Year’ at the Ryman Auditorium by the Christian Country Music Association (CCMA). Lisa recalls what made this award so special for her. “Both of my parents were in the room! They had already announced ‘Female Vocalist’ in which I was also nominated, and I thought all chances were gone. There were only male soloists and boy bands up for the biggest award of the night. Then they called my name! What an honor!! And all in front of my mom and dad.”

Lisa was invited to travel with Bill & Gloria Gaither and the Homecoming Friends for several years. Many of their videos have hit gold status on the Billboard charts. She has 35 number one radio singles. The very first number one was *Be Like Noah* and it charted on the CCM Magazine’s Country chart. More hit singles include *Hands On the Plow*, *You Are My Ministry*, *Forgiveness is a Powerful Thing*, *Well Worn*,

Regardless, *The Light* and *You Are Enough*, which gained 64K views in two weeks on the YouTube video.

She was awarded 'Country Artist of the Year' presented by The Diamond Awards in Nashville, Tennessee. The most prestigious award was 'Entertainer of the Year' from the Inspirational Country Music Association (ICMA) on the Grand Ole Opry Stage in Nashville. After that night, Lisa received a book deal through Salem Communications, entitled "No Turning Back, Regardless."

Lisa's current single is *Dear John*, which she co-wrote with her husband, Ronnie Horton and Gerald Crabb from the brand new CD project, "You Are Enough." Lisa shares details on the single: "John the Baptist is a prominent force listed in the bible and this song describes his character, (rugged and odd), his relationship with Jesus, and his ultimate sacrifice of being beheaded. This song has a little throwback to the great Dusty Springfield, also one of my favorites. I was born on the West Coast and my parents loved music and often played Dusty Springfield, John Gary, Andy Williams and Tony Bennett. Most people reading this, unfortunately, won't remember these incredible artists."

The California native shares how God spared her life on numerous occasions. "There are so many stories I could share with you. I was supposed to be born a blue baby. I fell out of the crib at eight months old. I fell out of a moving car at the tender age of three. I almost drowned in the Sacramento River caught in an undertow, even though I swam on the swim team and was a strong swimmer. The miracle rescue is in my book,

"No Turning Back, Regardless." I was robbed at gunpoint not once, but twice. Obviously, the enemy was trying to take me out, but he lost. I've been in full-time ministry for 35 years! Thank you, Lord! Also, my sweet mama was a huge influence in my life. I dedicated chapter five to her, 'Queen Ilene.'"

Lisa's main goal in music and ministry is to keep going. "I want to continue to write great songs with excellence in production as well as a strong and encouraging message. I made a promise to God to share the greatest news ever, until my final breath."


What can one expect at a Lisa Daggs concert? She says, "A lot of energy and truth! Raw truth about my life and where I went wrong along with how God saved me and turned my ashes into beauty. Many songs have been cowritten by me and some amazing talent to weave my story throughout the evening."

Lisa enjoys traveling with her husband, Ronnie Horton, harmonizing and ministering to all churches, all venues, and seeing lives changed through their testimonies. She mentions, "He has an amazing voice. I have 35 years clean and sober, and I share my story weaving the songs in between for more impact. Ronnie, never having tried ANYTHING, say's we have something in common: we all need a Savior."

Lisa is now a proud mother to a wonderful daughter, and a tireless ambassador for hope, renewal, and God's love.


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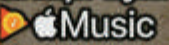
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A man and a woman, Kenny and Maryann Evans, are standing in front of a red brick wall. The man is on the left, wearing a black baseball cap, a black button-down shirt over a black t-shirt, and black pants. The woman is on the right, wearing a black sweater over a patterned top and blue jeans. They are both smiling and looking at the camera. The woman has her arm around the man's waist.

Kenny & Maryann Evans

Grace Wins

By Malik Riaz

Few love stories capture the power of redemption and grace quite like that of Kenny and Maryann Evans. Their journey, filled with love, faith, and transformation, has touched thousands across America. From humble beginnings to the spotlight of the Country music scene, from struggles with addiction to the healing power of forgiveness, their story is a testament to the amazing grace of God.

A Love Story That Began with a Burger King Date

Born and raised in the Bible Belt of East Tennessee, both Kenny and Maryann grew up with Sunday church services and strong Christian values. However, life led them down different paths before fate brought them together in 1993.

At the time, Maryann was a young single mother to her baby boy, Tyler. She had married at just 17 years old, hoping to build a stable family, but soon found herself trapped in a dangerous world of drugs and crime due to her husband's lifestyle. Fearing for her safety and that of her son, she made the courageous decision to walk away and start over.

Kenny laughs as he recalls their first date, saying, "Yep, Burger King and she had to pay! But looking back, that night was the start of something incredible. I wasn't just falling in love with Maryann; I was also stepping into a life I never expected, one that would change me forever."



The van Kenny was driving when he experienced a head-on collision with a drunk driver in 1999.

Fame, Temptations, and a Life Spiraling Out of Control

Just three months after their wedding, Kenny's music career took off. A booking agency from Orlando, Florida, discovered his talent, launching him into a whirlwind of concerts and tours. Performing at venues like Walt Disney World and Nashville's WildHorse Saloon, he found himself sharing stages with 90s Country music legends like Kenny Chesney, Charlie Daniels, and Sara Evans. It was a dream come true but beneath the surface, things were spiraling out of control.

The fast-paced life of a musician brought temptations that Kenny couldn't resist. Alcohol, drugs, and infidelity became part of his reality, while Maryann was at home, raising their

growing family. By 1997, they had welcomed another son, Tanner Lane, and Maryann was shouldering the responsibility of motherhood alone. Meanwhile, Kenny was losing himself to a destructive lifestyle, blinded by the thrill of fame.

A Moment of Confession and an Act of Grace

Then, in January 1998, everything changed. One night, a deep conviction settled in Kenny's heart - he realized he had never truly been born again. Overcome with guilt, he confessed everything to Maryann. He admitted to his infidelity, his addictions, and the darkness that had consumed him. It was a heartbreaking moment, but instead of turning away, Maryann did something extraordinary. Through her tears, she whispered, "I love you, and I forgive you."

Those words became the turning point in Kenny's life. The following Sunday, at Beech Park Baptist Church, he walked to the altar and surrendered his life to Christ. That moment set him free, breaking the chains of addiction and guilt. However, his journey was far from over.

A Near-Death Experience and a Calling from God

Despite his newfound faith, Kenny continued touring, still holding onto his Country music career. But in August 1999, fate intervened once again. While on tour, Kenny and his band were nearly killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. The crash, at 70 mph, left him with life-threatening injuries, including a lacerated liver. Maryann, just 27 years old, flew across the country in the middle of the night to be by his side in a South Dakota hospital. She



The Evans Family



Kenny Evans with Kenny Chesney - 1996

never left his bedside, praying for his recovery and trusting that God had a plan.

Lying in that hospital bed, Kenny knew God had been calling him for years, and he had been running from it just like Jonah. That near-death experience became his moment of complete surrender. He finally accepted that his purpose was not in the Country music industry but in serving God through ministry.

A New Life in Ministry

Since then, Kenny has dedicated his life to preaching and sharing his testimony through music. For the past 21 years, he has been a Christian country singer-songwriter and evangelist, traveling across the U.S. with 150-160 speaking and concert events every year. He has also performed for 25 seasons in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, in an Oldies/Classic Country show, where he shares his powerful testimony with audiences.

Maryann is a teacher at Legacy Christian Academy in Kingston, Tennessee, and speaks at women's conferences and events across the country. Through her words, she inspires thousands, sharing her story of faith, forgiveness, and God's unshakable love.

Impacting Lives Across America

Kenny is also an avid sportsman, serving on the National Pro Staff for Mossy Oak, Wildlife Research Center, and TenPoint Crossbows. He frequently speaks at Men's Ministry events and Sportsman's Banquets, using his passion for the outdoors to connect with people on a deeper level.

Through their journey, Kenny and Maryann have witnessed countless lives transformed. Marriages have been restored, addicts have been set free, and hearts have been turned toward Christ. Their mission remains clear: "to share God's grace and remind people that no one is too far gone for redemption".

Kenny's latest album, "People Like Us," is available on all streaming platforms, and his new single, *We Need Jesus*, is set to hit Christian radio soon. His concerts are more than just music; they are a celebration of faith, love, and second chances.

Reflecting on their journey, Kenny says:

"The end goal at any event, whether a concert or speaking engagement, is to see lives changed by the amazing grace of our loving Father. We've seen marriages restored, addicts set free, and sinners saved and that's what keeps us going."

Maryann, when asked about her decision to forgive, simply says:

"I knew at that moment that forgiving Kenny wasn't about me, it was about showing him the same grace that Christ had shown me. And that changed everything."

Kenny adds:

"We believe that saved people should have fun and celebrate the risen Savior! Expect to laugh, have fun, and rejoice at a Kenny Evans concert."



Kenny & Maryann Evans with Lonestar - 1997

A Story That Continues to Inspire

Their story is one of faith, redemption, and the power of grace. From Burger King dates to a life-threatening crash, from betrayal to forgiveness, from running away to surrendering to God's calling, their journey is a living testimony of how God can restore even what seems broken beyond repair.

If you ever get the chance to hear Kenny & Maryann Evans in person, don't miss it. Their story might just change your life too.

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NASHVILLE *SUPER PICKERS*



For the greatest musicians in Nashville who play on sessions, record producer Rick Schweinsberg coined the title “The Nashville Super Pickers.” This story features one of Nashville’s finest.

Joe Cook Guitar

By Teresa Schweinsberg

Born in Dallas, Texas, with a father involved in the Texas music scene playing guitar, Joe Cook was destined to be a musician. “My dad played in honky tonks and bars, but I loved watching him play at home. My parents divorced when I was four, and I moved with my mother to Texarkana, Arkansas. There was no YouTube back then, so I started playing guitar at ten years old through looking at a Mel Bay Guitar Chords book my dad had given me. When I started playing, my mom started praying I would not go to the bars like my dad,” shares Joe.

He continues, “I went to high school with Bobby Bowen, vocalist and bass player for Midsouth. In June of 1984, a young pastor came to our little church and took a liking to me. He spent time with me, and witnessed to me a lot. He led me to the Lord and then baptized me in the cattle pond on our property in Arkansas. When Bobby heard I got saved, he called me to come and audition for the band in 1985. I started playing guitar for Midsouth in 1986 and stayed until 1993. The five of us traveled on a bus together. We had to take turns driving, and I didn’t like it when it was my turn,” he laughs.

Midsouth were somewhat pioneers in the field of Christian Country and just a little ahead of their time. After previously playing as Midsouth Quartet and changing to a new style, the Southern Gospel fans did not know at first what to think. They were somewhere between Alabama and Restless Heart, but with a message in the lyrics still very much Christian. However, the young people loved them. Their impact in Christian Country is still strong today, with parents playing Midsouth for their children and introducing them to their grandchildren at reunion concerts.

“There was no social media back then. Now it is really coming to light how much people loved us. It’s great when people contact me about what an impact Midsouth had on them,” Joe shares.

Originally signed with the Eddie Crook Company, John May of Word Records came calling. John had been tapped to start a new Christian Country division of Word called Canaan



Records. At that time, late ‘80s, early ‘90s, Country music was exploding as ‘90s Country became the hottest music around. With groups like Diamond Rio, Alabama, and Restless Heart singing clean lyrics, Christians began listening as well. Joe had moved to Nashville with Midsouth in 1989, and saw many of his friends playing for Country bands. “My friends were not driving the bus, and were making a lot more

money than me,” he laughs. I felt like it may be time for me to leave the band and make the move to Country music.”

Joe started touring with Billy Joe Royal for two years. Next, he toured with Terri Clark. Terri was asked to be the opener for the George Strait tour, and Joe was playing sold out arenas. He says something people do not know about Terri is she is a great guitar player, entertainer, and very genuine. She loved allowing Joe to just be Joe and add his energy to the concerts, jumping off amps and other things on stage, unlike when he did a Chuck Berry guitar hop across the stage of the National Quartet Convention and felt the judgement of the elderly in the crowd. He really enjoyed getting to play for Terri for ten years. He also made many connections while out with her on George Strait’s tour.

Joe moved from Terri Clark to Dusty Drake, Chris Cagle and then to Joe Diffie. After that, he played for Alan Jackson, then Tanya Tucker for a short time. His list of tour credits is lengthy and impressive. He has toured with David Lee Murphy, Mark Chestnutt, Buddy Jewell, George Ducas, Ray Scott, Bellamy Brothers, T.G. Shepherd, and Doug Stone. Joe also does studio work, sometimes in his home to add guitar parts while he is off the road, and sometimes does studio sessions. He is not yet ready to come completely off the road and only do sessions.

All touring artists have funny road stories to share. Sometimes, a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) prevents them from sharing some, but there are always ones that forever stay in their memories. Here are a few of Joe’s:

“In Midsouth, we were playing in Sheridan, Arkansas. Donny, Bobby and I loaded up in my VW Beetle. A little way down the road, we had a flat tire. We needed to get to a gas station to fix the tire and started walking. A couple of guys stopped to pick us up as we walked. We didn’t think too much about it, other than we wouldn’t have to walk all the way. We all got in the backseat, and realized we were sitting on glass. The back window was busted out. We all looked at each other without saying anything, realizing these guys had stolen the car we were riding in. Then, I saw that one of them had a gun. We were so scared, we started shaking and talking about Jesus. Then we started praying. God protected us, because they took us to the gas station, got the tire inflated and took us back to my car,” Joe shared.

Another time with Midsouth, the bus stopped at Shoney’s. While standing at the salad bar, two long haired guys asked, “Who’s on that bus?” Bobby jokingly responded, “Wrestlers.” When the Midsouth guys got ready to pay their bill, they realized the two long-haired guys were waiting on them at the cash register. “That’s when one guy cornered Bobby, and they began scuffling. I saw the other guy start to come up

behind Bobby to grab him, too, so I ran to help. The police had been called by an employee. The two guys took off as soon as they knew the police were coming. Fortunately, everyone saw what happened and the police believed our story. They wanted Bobby to go to the hospital to get checked out for the bite on his side from one of the guys. Bobby refused to go, and someone said, ‘You need to go. This guy just ate at Shoney’s breakfast bar, then bit you! You probably need a tetanus shot!’ That week, we were on Nashville Now with Ralph Emery. Ralph had us retell that story on the show!” Joe laughed.

Joe’s last story was about playing the Houston Astrodome with Terri Clark. “For this concert, it is tradition for the artist to ride on horseback and circle the arena waving after playing their last song. Terri told them she didn’t want to ride a horse,

so they put her on the back of a convertible. As she waved, the band stayed on stage and continued to play her out. The fans were coming down and getting closer and closer to the car and her. They started trying to give her high-fives as she went around. Suddenly, we saw her fall, much like the video of JFK’s assassination. We could not hear with the loud music and didn’t know if she had been shot. The convertible went flying out of the stadium with her in the floor. We threw down our instruments and took off after her. They took her to the hospital. We found out one of the fans had grabbed her hand instead of smacking it, and as the car was moving, they had pulled her arm out of socket. She was in so much pain,” Joe offered. “It was scary!”

When asked what advice he would give a young guitarist who wanted to become a “Super Picker” in Nashville, Joe

responded, “In Nashville, connections are very important. Musicians get hired by word of mouth, not by auditions. If I could tell any young guitarists today what I would do to become a Nashville player, I would tell them to always realize your gift comes from above. It is going to come out, no matter what instrument you choose. Though God gives you the gift, it’s up to you to improve it. Practice! Practice! Practice! Play with other musicians. Play with musicians who are better than you to make you better. If you do get an opportunity to play with someone, always keep your focus on God. Keep your unsolicited opinions to yourself. And when you get that opportunity, give it your all, because you never know who is watching. Knowing my gift comes from God, I know He has always opened doors for me and will, as long as I keep my focus on Him. Know that you are going to fail, but God will always be there to catch you. There will always be another gig.”

You can catch Joe Cook on tour presently playing for Darryl Worley.



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JON MICHAELS

A Life in Music, Resilience, and Inspiration

By Malik Riaz

Jon Michaels is more than just a singer-songwriter; he's a storyteller, a survivor, and a musician who has spent decades crafting songs that touch the heart. From his early days touring with the legendary New Christy Minstrels to writing songs for Country music icons like Clint Black and Tracy Lawrence, Jon's journey has been anything but ordinary. His latest work, *Let The People Who Love You, Love You*, is more than just a song; it's a heartfelt anthem born from his battle with throat cancer.

A Musical Journey Rooted in Storytelling

Jon Michaels' career began with the New Christy Minstrels, the Folk group that also launched legends like John Denver and Kenny Rogers. Reflecting on those early years, Jon describes them as his training ground, a place where he learned the craft of storytelling through music.

"I've always admired artists like James Taylor and Jim Croce," Jon says. "They had this incredible ability to tell stories that felt personal yet universal. That's what I've always aimed for in my own music."

Jon's debut album, "Stones," was a critical success, described as "one of the most poignant and beautiful CDs heard in a long time." His second album, "I Am Who I Am," showcased his artistic maturity, while his third, "I Hear A Clock," deepened his reputation as a songwriter with a rare ability to connect with listeners on an emotional level.

“Jon Michaels is one of the great singer-songwriters in recent memory.” - Andrew Gold (Nationally Known Singer, Songwriter, Producer)

From Writing Hits to Winning an Emmy

Over the years, Jon’s songwriting has been recognized by some of the biggest names in Country music. His compositions have been recorded by artists such as Tracy Lawrence, Michelle Wright, Ray Herndon, Michael Peterson, and Ty Herndon. He even co-wrote the Tennessee Titans’ radio theme in 2000.

Then, in 2013, Jon’s career hit another high note when he won NBC’s Today Show Theme Song contest, judged by the legendary David Foster. “That was a surreal moment,” Jon says with a smile. “Getting that kind of recognition from David Foster. It was validation that I was on the right path.”

His accolades don’t stop there. Jon has won an Emmy and six Telly Awards, cementing his place among the most respected names in the industry. performing with or opening for music legends like Keith Urban, Michael McDonald, Paul Williams, John Sabastian and The Kingston Trio to name a few.



A Battle That Changed Everything

Jon’s journey hasn’t been without its challenges. In recent years, he faced one of the toughest battles of his life: throat cancer. It was a diagnosis that shook him to his core, but he found strength in the people around him.

“The love I felt from family, friends, and fans was the strength that pulled me through. I realized that healing isn’t just about medicine it’s about connection, love, and support,” Jon shares.

During this difficult time, Jon leaned on his music to help process his emotions. The result was *Let The People Who Love You, Love You*, a song that has struck a deep chord with listeners. Written with longtime collaborator Paul Jefferson, the song is both a personal reflection and a universal message of hope.

Hit songwriter Jimbeau Hinson, one of Jon’s mentors, once shared with Jon, ‘If you want to help yourself, help someone else.’ “That was never so evident during my cancer journey,” Jon says. His experience has inspired him to use his music to bring comfort to others facing similar struggles.

A Message of Hope Through Music

Jon describes *Let The People Who Love You, Love You* as his most meaningful work to date. “Thoughts and prayers are how caring people let you know they are praying for you,” he says. “I wanted this song to be a reminder that none of us are alone in our struggles.”

“Jon, I love your music! It’s Chicken Soup for my soul.” - Jack Canfield (Coauthor Chicken Soup For The Soul Series)

As Jon returns to performing, his concerts have taken on a new level of depth and intimacy. Fans can expect heartfelt performances filled with raw emotion, personal storytelling, and of course, the timeless melodies that have defined his career.

Continuing the Journey

Despite the challenges, Jon Michaels continues to inspire through his music. His resilience, talent, and ability to connect with people make him a true artist in every sense of the word. Whether he’s writing songs for Country legends, winning awards, or performing for audiences who hang on every lyric, one thing remains clear; Jon’s music isn’t just something you listen to. It’s something you feel.

According to Jon’s point of view: “Music is about connection. It’s about making people feel something real. If I’ve done that, then I’ve done my job.”

And there’s no doubt that he has.

Jon’s focus and goal with his new single is to connect with people struggling with cancer or caring for someone with cancer and to know that people want to help - so let them.

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JOHNNY PAYCHECK

Johnny PayCheck is considered by many within the Country music industry and arts to be one of the founders of the Outlaw Country music movement during the 70s. That said, his soulful sound and phrasing made him a legend amongst the honky-tonk crowd and his peers. Even to this day new fans are discovering the depth of his musical talent far exceeds his mega-hit *Take This Job And Shove It*. His musical career spanned over forty years and included a massive catalog of songs and performances.

Born Donald Eugene Lytle on May 31, 1938, in Greenfield, Ohio, PayCheck was playing in talent contests by the age of nine. Billing himself as 'The Ohio Kid,' he left home in his teens and played bar gigs and clubs around the country.

He later moved to Nashville where his considerable talents did not go unnoticed, and Music Row executive Buddy Killen signed PayCheck to a songwriting deal with Tree Publishing (now Sony/ATV Music Publishing) and landed him a Decca Records contract. Using the stage name Donny Young, the singer recorded four singles for the label that failed to make a dent on the charts. PayCheck went to work for some of the top bands in Country music, including those of Porter Wagoner, Ray Price, and Faron Young. From 1962 to 1966 PayCheck was the front man and bass player for George Jones' band, the Jones Boys. The singer re-invented himself as Johnny PayCheck,

A pair of singles, *A-11* and *Heartbreak Tennessee*, on the tiny Hilltop label produced some chart activity during the course of the next three years. PayCheck enjoyed his first Top 10 single in 1966 with *The Lovin' Machine* and quickly followed up with *Motel Time Again* and *Jukebox Charlie*. In December 1966, Tammy Wynette placed her first single on Billboard's chart with her recording of PayCheck's song, *Apartment #9*. Sharing co-writing credits with Fuzzy Owen and Bobby Austin, the song was named the Academy of Country Music's 'Song of the Year.' Ray Price had a Top 5 record with PayCheck's *Touch My Heart* in 1966 as well.

Billy Sherrill signed PayCheck to a contract with Epic Records. By the end of 1971, PayCheck was back on the charts with *She's All I Got*, which peaked at No. 2. Paycheck followed up his success in the spring of 1972 with *Someone to Give My Love To*, which also reached the upper registers of the charts. For the next five years, Johnny maintained a presence on the record charts with varying degrees of success.

During the Outlaw movement of Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson that took hold of Country music in 1976, PayCheck had a fairly good run on the charts. Beginning with



1977's *Slide Off of Your Satin Sheets* and *I'm the Only Hell (My Mama Ever Raised)*, which both went Top10. In June 1977, *Take This Job and Shove It* entered the charts and provided PayCheck with his sole No. 1 song. Written by David Allan Coe, what was intended to be a song about a bad relationship, *Take This Job* was adopted as a battle cry for dissatisfaction in the workplace.

PayCheck lived a life that included many high points, but one that was also wrought with despairing depths. After he received some long overdue success based on the strength of his 1977 recording, *Take This Job and Shove It*, his stormy personal life - and subsequently his career - suffered. Problems with drugs, alcohol, and legal difficulties made it difficult for PayCheck to enjoy his good fortune.

PayCheck's personal life continued its downward spiral. Chronic financial woes and problems with the IRS forced him into bankruptcy a few years earlier. On a trip back to Ohio to visit family for the holidays, PayCheck had his final and most serious run-in with the law. He was sentenced to prison, and while going through the appeals process, PayCheck was signed by Mercury Records and scored a Top 20 single with *Old Violin*. After exhausting all of his appeals options, PayCheck was sent to the Chillicothe Correctional Institute. While incarcerated, PayCheck's old pal Haggard performed a show for the inmates, and the pair recorded an album that, to date, has not been released.

PayCheck served two years in prison and upon his 1991 release, emerged clean and sober. He also made good on the conditions of his parole. He kept his life on a straight course and gave anti-drug talks to young kids around the country as part of his required community service.

To his credit, and with an uphill battle ahead of him, PayCheck returned to the music industry and tried once again to resurrect his career. The singer resumed his touring career, which included appearances in Branson, Missouri, and he recorded for Playback Records. In 1996, the Country Music Foundation released a collection of PayCheck's early recordings for Little Darlin' that found favor with young fans of Classic Country music.

Present day, you won't find much said about Johnny PayCheck in the Country music history books or historical documentaries. You won't find a big exhibit honoring him in Nashville. You must look close to find where his mark was made on Country music. His brass placard still hangs backstage at the Opry. You can find autographed pictures still remaining at Tootsies and the Ernest Tubb Record Shop. You can find his 'Shove It' guitar at the Country Music Hall of Fame along with a few of his gold records. For the most part though, it is the fans who keep his music and memory alive while an industry still profits from the entertainer they would rather forget.

His peers would come from backstage and stand in silence just to hear him sing *Old Violin*. Today those same peers will tell you how they loved him and how he was an amazing vocalist and writer. It is an industry that has forgotten, not the fans or the musicians he worked alongside. Some leave him out of the pages of history due to his controversial missteps, others don't know his history even though his name reappears constantly alongside his peers that were more careful with their careers, but Johnny PayCheck is still a musical force to take notice of even today. As a matter of fact, his powerful and poignant song, *Old Violin*, from His "Modern Times" album, celebrates its 38th Anniversary since the release in March, 1987 by Mercury Records.

Despite *Old Violin* only peaking at #21 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart in 1987, along with being PayCheck's only self-written song on the album, the song is widely considered to be one of his signature songs, second only to *Take This Job And Shove It*. Other notable Country

artists who've recorded *Old Violin* include George Strait, Daryle Singletary, and Creed Fisher.

PayCheck received several accolades and awards during his career including Lifetime Achievement Award from BMI, six gold albums and numerous platinum albums. He was awarded the ACM Songwriter 1966 for *Apartment #9* and the ACM Career Achievement Award in 1977. This has only been presented three times in history. He won CMA 'Male Vocalist of the Year' and CMA 'Vocal Duo of the Year' w/Jody Miller in 1972, CMA 'Single of the Year' for *Take This Job and Shove It* in 1978, and CMA 'Album of the Year' for "Armed and Crazy - Epic." He received Grammy nominations for his songs, *She's All I Got*, and *Take This Job and Shove It*.



His career was stained by his outrageous behavior at times. His life after his mistakes proved to be one that showed he had learned some hard lessons and did his best to repair the damage which did earn him a home at the Grand Ole Opry and at Sony Music. He is a true honky-tonk legend, an outlaw musician, and a husband and father which few saw outside his true friends and family.

Johnny PayCheck was a side man that outshined many of his counterparts at times but could never get out of his own life lessons till it was too late in his life. He died on February 19, 2003, following a lengthy illness. His legacy will be remembered by his fans. His son John Paycheck is forging his own path in Country music while still honoring the legacy of his father.

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NORTH AMERICAN COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION, INT'L

Hall of Fame

CLASS OF 2025

By Robin Tanner

The North America Country Music Association's International Hall Of Fame honored their Class of 2025 Inductees - Billy Dean, Mark Wills, Marty Raybon, William Lee Golden & The Goldens - on March 15th, at Country Tonite Theatre in Pigeon Forge Tennessee.

The ceremony was co-hosted by Country Legend and songwriter and NACMAI Hall of Famer, Leona Williams and multi award-winning broadcast professional in television and radio, Jennifer Herron. Leona Williams kicked off the great night of music with *Working Girl Blues*.

Billy Dean performed a few of his hits: *Billy The Kid*, *Somewhere in My Broken Heart* and *Only Here For A Little While* to the enthusiastic crowd prior to his induction.

Mark Wills performed his first hit, *Jacob's Ladder*, followed by the fan favorite *Don't Laugh At Me*. Then the crowd sang along to his mega hit, *19 Something*.

Marty Raybon got the crowd going with *Church On Cumberland Road*, a soulful acoustic version of *Sunday In The South*, and then took the audience to church with the fan favorite, *Sweet Beulah Land*.

More great music filled the auditorium as William Lee Golden & The Goldens took the stage with several memorable moments - William Lee singing *Thank God For Kids*, his Granddaughter Elizabeth Golden performed *You'll Never Leave Harlan Alive* with dad, Chris Golden and Billy Dean. The Goldens brought out Billy Dean, Mark Wills and Marty Raybon to join them on Elvira. Then closing out with *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* as a tribute to Rusty Golden.

The finale had the crowd on their feet singing along with all the artists on *I Saw The Light*.

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Marty Raybon



William Lee Golden & The Golden



Billy Dean




Mark Wills



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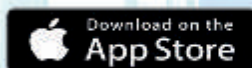
OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN COUNTRY TOP 100 - APRIL 2025

TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST	TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	8	Going Home	John Penney	51	79	There Is Someone	The Murphys
2	7	Only You	Bruce Minchey	52	47	That's What Really Matters	Paul Tuttle
3	13	Cast Your Cares	Jimmy R. Price	53	62	The Hand Of The Man	Ed Bruce
4	9	When Jesus Comes	Jonathan Ray Smith	54	76	Heaven Help Me	Aaron Partridge
5	11	Thank You	Todd Lee	55	99	Ain't No Future In The Past	Fortner Brothers
6	12	I Wouldn't Be Surprised	Keith Buchanan	56	42	Bring Me Home	John Michael Farrari
7	18	Sin Is Color Blind	Jim Sheldon	57	80	Thin Blue Line	Kevin Kappler
8	15	God And Trump	Richard Lynch	58	65	My Lord	The Gospel Friends
9	16	Let's Get The Devil Outta Here	Chuck Hancock	59	64	Forever Your Praises	Michael Walsh
10	14	Home	Dale Rochell	60	67	Jesus Saves	Cooper Alan
11	17	Washed	Debbie Mills	61	73	Things That Didn't Work	Judy Bailey
12	5	Plenty Of Time	Gayla Earlene	62	70	I've Overcome	Lester Feltner
13	32	Friendly Fire	Angela Seng & Marty Smith	63	72	There's Power In His Name	Gene Higgins
14	4	Going Down To The Church House	Terry & Debra Luna	64	56	Impossible	Debra Camp
15	30	Grace Never Has Failed Me	Kesha Parish	65	-	Stand	Anne Wilson
16	24	Another Day	Wings Of Love	66	77	Trust In The Lord	Dan & Julie Krolow
17	1	Because He Changed Me	Carey Easley	67	71	Let's All Get Together	Melissa Couch
18	28	Jesus Isn't Done Yet	Kenny Evans	68	87	God's Love	Marty Deroche
19	3	Joy When The Sun Goes Down	Luke Hendrickson	69	-	They Laughed	Steve Warren
20	10	I'm Going Home	Richard Sprayberry	70	96	What Did I Do Today	Bill Baker
21	35	Broken	Scott Peacock	71	86	Wake Up Call	Cyndi Reynolds
22	33	Hold The Line	Victoria Steelman	72	82	Urgent	Darin Kinse
23	2	Ink Stains	David House	73	85	Ain't Gonna Lay It Down	Linda Lanier
24	27	Jesus What Does That Name Mean To Me	David Smith	74	78	Redneck Lens	Lonnie Hardy
25	34	When I Pray	Donna Kilmurray	75	83	I Don't Have To Go This Way Again	Wink Kelso
26	22	Just A Country Boy	Ricky Paul	76	-	I'm Gonna Love You	Cody Johnson & Carrie Underwood
27	31	His Church Went Marching On	Troy Richardson	77	97	Saving My Place	Jason Welch
28	38	Big Jesus Train	Brother Daniel	78	92	If I Don't Have Love	Jennifer Sides
29	40	Grandma's Bible	Debbie Bennett	79	-	Alone	Kevin Woody
30	6	The Humble Cottage By The Sea	Eddy Man	80	-	String Of Pearls	Eddy Mann
31	19	Hell Don't Stand A Chance	Paula Slow	81	94	The Well	Michael Lee
32	39	Gonna Be A Party	Michael Tetrick	82	98	When The Son Comes Down	Sonshine Road
33	75	Spending Time With You	The Hammond Brothers	83	90	Saved By Grace	Ray Hollis
34	43	Dead Man Walking	Paul Staggs	84	89	Too Much To Gain To Lose	Rusty Gilliam
35	48	Jesus You Are Everything To Me	The Masseys	85	93	Better Felt Than Told	Brandon Rowell
36	41	I Stand	Ashley Collins	86	-	Ready Asnd Waiting	Chosen 4:13
37	26	God Did That	Cody McCarver	87	-	What A Gift	Gena Hamilton
38	23	When All The Saints Get Home	The Journeys	88	-	A Little More Sunday	Danny Hebert
39	49	Horses In Heaven	Woody Winn	89	-	Pray For Me	Shellem Cline
40	20	Goodness Of God	Greg McDougal & Barry McGee and Friends	90	-	I Surrender It All	Luke Hendrickson
41	45	Outrun The Rain	James Lann	91	-	Tell It Over And Over Again	Gennie Ruth Cheatham
42	66	It's Not Fool's Gold	Mike Leichner	92	-	Kind Words And Cool Water	Timothy Ernest Rogers
43	69	Blues And The Badge	Corey Farlow	93	-	Porch Swings In Heaven	Ma Bell
44	53	Nothing Short Of A Miracle	The Pauls	94	-	I Don't Need A Mansion	Mary Fay Jackson
45	88	One Heart	Felicia DeRamus Paul	95	100	Hardwood Church Pew	The Kendricks
46	50	Dash	Joe Arview	96	-	Be That One Today	Johnathan Bond
47	63	Preacher Mans	Marcus Ellis	97	-	Little Simple Things	Midsouth Band
48	55	I Wanna Be Found Faithful	Thomas Brown	98	-	Jesus and Bocephus	Richard Lynch
49	54	Do You Remember	Joy LaVallee & Johnathan Bond	99	-	Hey God It's Me Again	Chase Rice
50	-	Bright New Morning	Marty Raybon	100	-	No Fishing	Royel Clark



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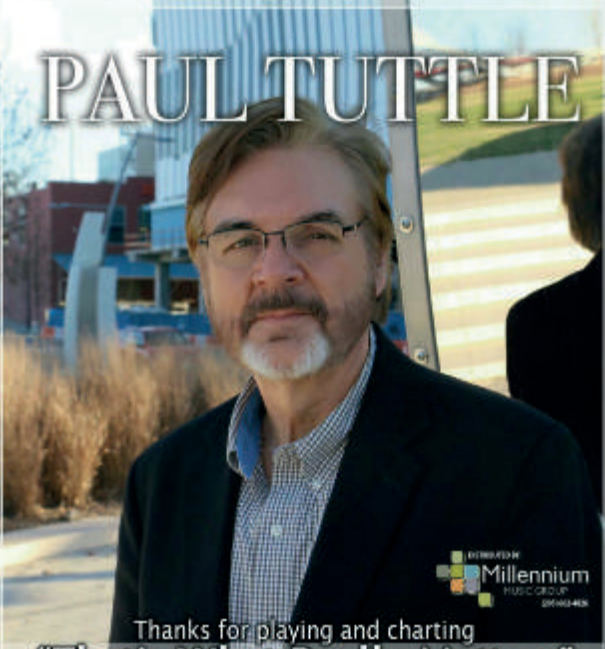
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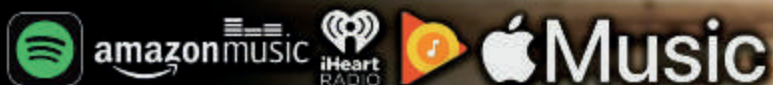
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Bruce Haynes

Without a Song... A Tribute to our Songwriters

By Teresa Schweinsberg

Today's story could be about an artist who is a band member, or a soloist, or an amazing songwriter, or a legend in Christian Country music, Mr. Bruce Haynes. Bruce was originally with the band White River. If you were around when Christian Country was born in the '80s and '90s, when artists like Del Way, Ken Holloway, Susie (McEntire) Luchsinger, Midsouth, Dennis Agajanian, Susan Ashton, and Bruce Carroll were playing, then you will surely remember White River. You probably remember their songs *What Ya Gonna Do?*, *Goin' Away Party*, *I Like My Gospel Country*, and *Rodeo Preacher*, but did you know when Bill Traylor signed them to the Christian Country label Cheyenne Records, he asked if they could have ten songs ready to record in three weeks? Bruce wrote all ten of them. Their first two #1 songs, *Vacation* and *No One Worships There Anymore* were on that album. Their second album, "Heavenly High," saw four of Bruce's songs reach #1.

Over the years, more than 100 of Bruce's songs have been placed with artists to record. He received a Dove Award when Jeff & Sheri Easter recorded his song, *Goin' Away Party*. Jeff & Sheri have recorded fifteen or sixteen of Bruce's songs and *Praise His Name* reached #1. They have also recorded *Morning's Coming* and *Learning to Dance in the Rain*.

What has prompted Bruce to continue writing through all these years? Divine inspiration from the Lord and the feedback people give him who have been impacted by one of his songs. Their stories touch his heart.

"People come up to me and say, 'Your song got me through another day,' or 'Your song got me through a divorce.' That blesses my heart," Bruce says. "There have been four or five people contact me and say, 'I was going to take my life when I heard your song.' That is amazing," Bruce continues. He was quick to share a very personal story about a farmer in South Dakota.

Bruce begins, "The farmer shared with me he was going to have to sell the family farm due to hardship. After his wife went to bed one night, he went out to the tractor shed to take his own life. He laid out a suicide note, and put a gun to his head. The radio was on in the shed, and the D.J. suddenly said, 'Somebody is getting ready to take your own life. Just



give me three minutes of your time.' Then, the D.J. put *Praise His Name* on. The farmer said he laid down the gun, tore up the suicide note, fell to his knees, and cried out to the Lord for help. The next morning, he went to the store and bought Jeff & Sheri's CD with the song on it. He told me he plays it every day. He came to see me in person, because he wanted to tell me the story. 'Your song saved my life!' He walked away, and then turned back to say, 'and we didn't lose the farm,'" Bruce continued. "I wrote the song in 1999. He told me the story in 2010. God gave me the song eleven years before he knew that farmer in South Dakota would need it."

Bruce became a solo artist after his tenure with White River. He continued traveling five more years, then went back to Presley's Country Jubilee in Branson. Next, he went to lead worship at his dad's church. Bruce had been running from preaching for twenty years, but became the senior pastor at the church after accepting the call. He still sings every Sunday and has the privilege of planning a song which goes with the sermon God has given him.

Bruce shares, “*Praise His Name* and a Lyndel Cooley praise and worship song he wrote called *I Need You More* are still his two most requested songs, though he has written songs for over one hundred artists - Christian Country, Southern Gospel, and Praise and Worship. He also co-writes songs and has written three with Nashville Christian Country’s David Timms; *Get Right or Get Left*, *I’m the Potter*, and *I Know a Man*.

Bruce ended with one more incredible story which took place when he was singing at Presley’s in Branson. He sang *Praise His Name* every night there. After the show one night, a man came up to him to say “Your song saved my little boy’s life!” The little boy looked about four-years-old. The father went on, “Two years ago, I bought your CD here. My son was two-years-old then. He had lost his appetite and was stumbling every time he walked. The doctor told us he was full of cancer, and there was nothing they could do. He told us our son had maybe six months to



live. We went home and gave him some toys in the floor, while we sat down and felt like life was over.”

The man said God told him to put in the CD from Branson. When it got to *Praise His Name*, the boy stopped to listen and raised both hands, then looked to the sky. They left the CD on repeat, and each time it got to the song, their son raised his hands to Heaven in praise. Anytime he heard the song in the next few days, the toddler did the same thing. They noticed over the following weeks, their son was not stumbling anymore and told them, “I’m hungry!” He started eating again. They took him back to the doctor.

There was no sign of cancer. The father told Bruce, “We came back to Branson to tell you our story and thank you. We want to take a picture of you with our son. Bruce sat the boy on his lap and took some pictures for the parents. After sharing the story, Bruce had the following to say:

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I want to give thanks, with a grateful heart, to Jesus Christ my King. I also want to give a huge thanks to Randall Wilds, DJ's, and FANS for playing, requesting, charting and making **"IMPOSSIBLE"** #3 across this nation!

"IMPOSSIBLE" was written by Mike Owens, melody written by Debra Camp, and it was produced by Christian Hutton.

Be watching for new music coming out in 2025.

"IMPOSSIBLE" at Radio now and available at all major digital music outlets



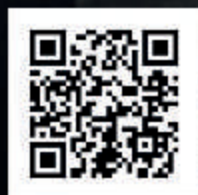
For booking and CD sales:

debra@debracamp.com | www.debracampministries.com

RICKY PAUL

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To contact Victoria Steelman
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