

FEBRUARY 2025

# CrossCountry<sup>USA</sup> magazine

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Through Christ*

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***Through Christ***  
By Chloe Wright

**FEBRUARY 2025**

### CROSS COUNTRY USA MAGAZINE

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## From the Editor

Happy February! - the month of love, romance, candy, cards, flowers and special gifts. These are all sweet gestures, but if it's not heartfelt or doesn't go beyond Valentine's Day, sadly it doesn't mean anything. When the flowers fade, candies are gone, and the cards are put away, love is here to stay! Love is unconditional, let's use it wisely!!

There is a poem I heard as a child. Here is the story behind it and the lifetime impact it made. One evening many years ago, just before Broadway star Mary Martin went on stage in "South Pacific," she was handed a note. It was from Oscar Hammerstein, the famous lyricist. At this particular moment, he lay dying. The short note read: A bell is not a bell 'til you ring it. A song is not a song 'til you sing it. Love in your heart is not put there to stay. Love is not love... 'til you give it away.

That night, after her performance, many friends rushed backstage and exclaimed, "Oh, Mary! You did something to us tonight. What was it?" Unfolding the note, Miss Martin read it to her friends. Blinking in tears, she said, "Tonight, I gave my love away."

Love is action. Love is giving of yourself without thinking how much it will cost you. The actress starred in "The Sound of Music." She kept that note and had the poem cross stitched on a pillow to see as a reminder.

Have you ever thought if not for love we would not be here? God's love, the love of our families, love of husbands and wives, love of friends, and love of our church families is enough love to last a lifetime.

In a time of division and hardships we need to show love more than ever before. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" if everyone showed love and kindness, this world would be a better place. Let's show God's love first, then our love for relationships, families, and friends will fall in place.

Cross Country USA Magazine, along with our partners at Cashbox Magazine, look forward to seeing you at several events this year. We always enjoy seeing artists, friends, and meeting our subscribers out on the road. We are privileged to be a part of the North American Country Music Association International Hall of Fame again this year. This year's inductees are William Lee Golden & The Golden's, Marty Raybon, Mark Wills, and Bily Dean. The event is held at Country Tonite Theatre in Pigeon Forge, TN. You can get tickets and more information at easttennesseeconcerts.com. This is just one of several events we are attending this year. We look forward to seeing you. We will share more events in the coming months.

*Robin*

**Robin Tanner, Managing Editor**

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### TRINITY & MACKENZIE WATTS

Trinity and Mackenzie Watts are sharing their singing and songwriting talents alongside their dad, Rodney Watts, to audiences everywhere. Trinity, nine years old, and younger sister, Mackenzie, age eight, is making their mark on the music scene.

By Robin Tanner



The two siblings, along with their father Rodney and mother Katie live in Indiana. Trinity and Mackenzie share what they like about singing. “Performing with our dad on stage has been a great experience for us. We have been singing with him since we were about two or three years old. This has helped us to kind of learn how to write our own songs that we have out on CD now. Our biggest influence is our dad, we love to learn from his writing and performing.”

The Watts Sisters have been privileged to experience some memorable moments and highlights already in their young career. “We performed our new song we wrote, *Sisterly Love*, together at North American Country Music Association International (NACMAI), then winning ‘Country Duo of the Year.’ We were so honored.”. These young ladies were amazing and deserved to win as they performed their songs to the delight of the audience at the Country Tonite Theatre in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. In addition to winning ‘Country Duo of the Year’ for NACMAI in 2023, they also won ‘Song of the Year’ for an original song they wrote called *Paw Patrol Christmas* and other wins and nominations.

Both sisters have released music separately as well as performing together. Trinity’s latest single is called *Just Like My Mom*. She says, “I wrote this for my mom being a hero.” Mackenzie shares, “My latest single is called *Let Me Be* written for a little girl that was being bullied in my class.” With the Important message of the song, it was shared and picked up by four news stations. The video can be found on

Youtube. Mackenzie has also released an EP which includes their original songs *Let It Be*, and their duet *Sisterly Love*.

Trinity and Mackenzie graciously mention, “Never give up on your dreams, we always pray before our show, giving thanks to God for all his blessings.” Their main goal is to keep writing great songs that inspire people in their everyday lives. Their Fans can expect a high energy show with a lot of laughs and excitement.

These talented young ladies are blessed to have the love and support of their family. Their mom, Katie says, “They are a true inspiration to everyone.” Also, their dad, Rodney Watts is a retired U.S. Army Veteran. Through his life between the military and following his musical journey he’s traveled extensively all over the world. Rodney stated, It’s a highlight for me to get to perform with my daughters Mackenzie and Trinity Watts right next to me for every show.”

For more information on Trinity and Makenzie Watts and their family, follow them on facebook/RodneyWattsMusic.



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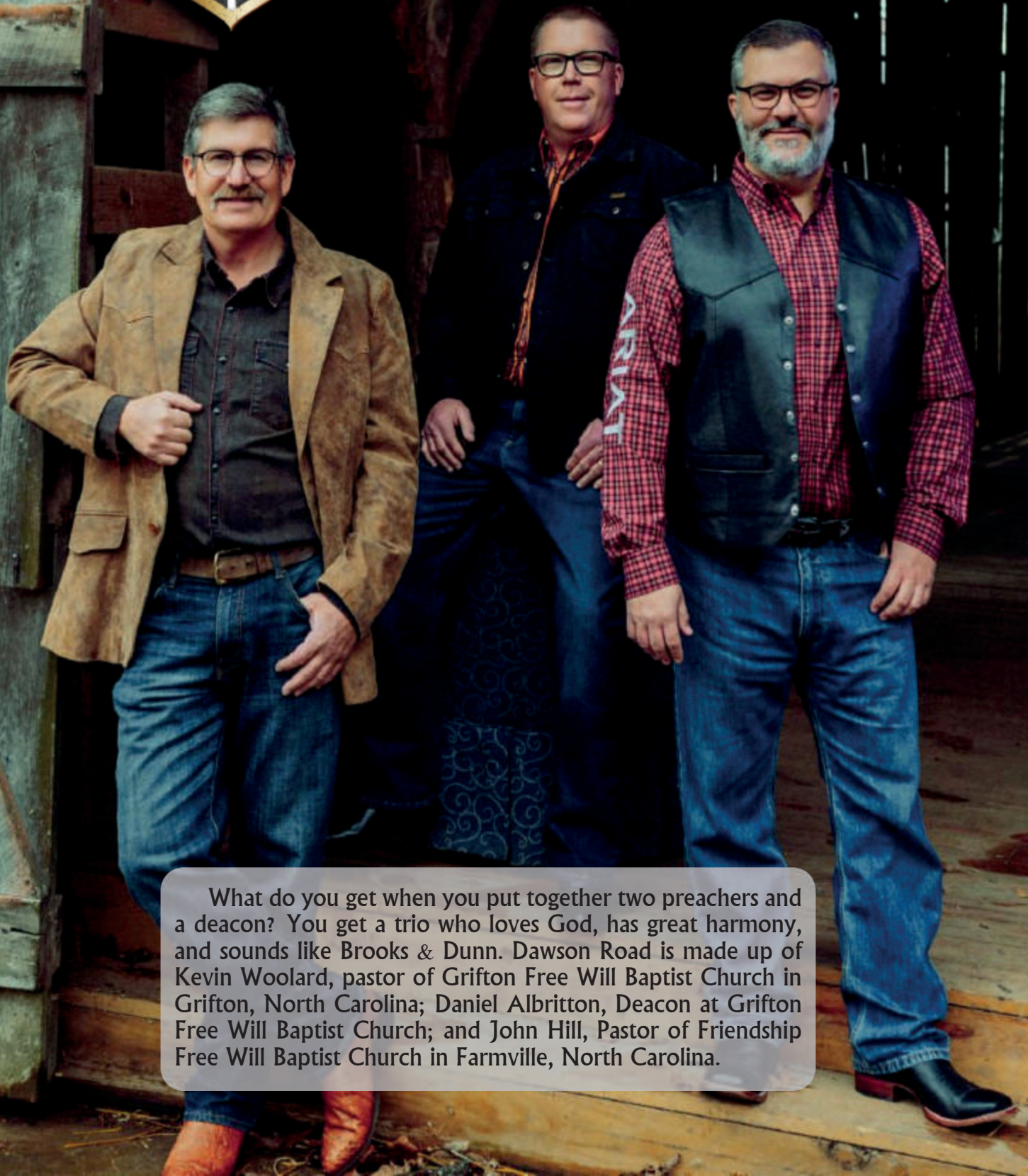
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## NASHVILLE CHRISTIAN COUNTRY'S NEW TRIO



What do you get when you put together two preachers and a deacon? You get a trio who loves God, has great harmony, and sounds like Brooks & Dunn. Dawson Road is made up of Kevin Woolard, pastor of Grifton Free Will Baptist Church in Grifton, North Carolina; Daniel Albritton, Deacon at Grifton Free Will Baptist Church; and John Hill, Pastor of Friendship Free Will Baptist Church in Farmville, North Carolina.

By Teresa Schweinsberg

**T**hough churches and their love of music brought them together, their backgrounds and interests cover a wide range of focus. Kevin has a background in law enforcement, as a Sergeant in the Beaufort, North Carolina Sheriff's Department. Daniel is a building contractor and enjoys making furniture and woodcrafts in his home woodworking shop. John is the President/CEO of the Free Will Baptist Press and works with Free Will Baptist Missions. He is also an avid scuba diver and instructor, traveling all over the world.

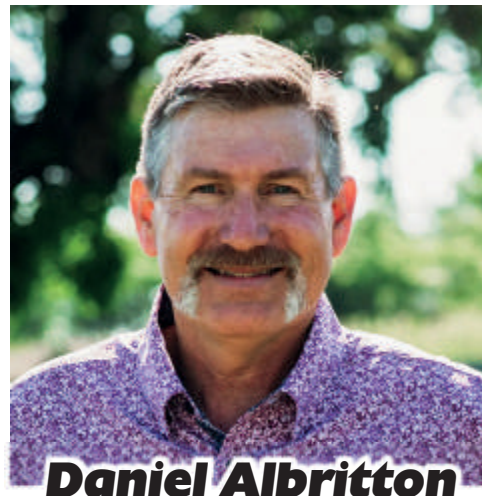
While Kevin, Daniel, and John have such different interests, their love of music is what brings them all together. All three have their stories of how they got into singing. Kevin found out as a senior in high school he did not need a band, but could buy some soundtracks and do solos at his church. Daniel had three older brothers, two of whom were twins. Being the youngest, he watched his brothers play guitars together and sit around jamming and singing their favorite Country songs. Not being able to play anything, he was envious. At one point, like Grandpa Jones, he picked up an old jug and tried to blow on it. "I never could get that puff of air to sound just right and never on pitch," laughs Daniel. He eventually learned to play the bass and even sang with the Greens.

Daniel says he started attending Grifton FWB, where Kevin was pastoring. Kevin asked him to lead the choir, something he had never done. "It seems like God always put me in situations where music was involved." It was not long until Kevin and Daniel started singing together and looking for a tenor singer. That is when John stepped in, and the duo became a trio.

John does not remember a time when he was not singing. His whole family took piano and guitar lessons, and had classical training for voice. He has also traveled extensively with two Southern Gospel groups. However, the more the trio sang together after their first project was finished, all three found a common bond in their love of Country music. They wanted to express their music in a more Christian Country style. They found producer Rick Schweinsberg and landed at Watershed Recording Studio in Nashville to do their first Christian Country project and got just the sound for which they had been looking. Their first single release off that project, *Daddy Never Worked on Sunday*, is out this month. They were welcomed into the Nashville Christian Country family and fit right in with all the other artists on the NCC label as long lost cousins.

As with any group who has traveled, they have some great road stories. At one church a while back, they were singing the song, *I Can't Even Walk*. As they sang, they noticed a young man with Down Syndrome on the front row worshipping with everything in him, even falling to his knees in worship. It touched them so much, they wanted the audience to be able to see his heart. They brought him up on stage. He said that song was his favorite song. As they began to sing again, he sang every word with them. He did not just sing it, though, he acted out the entire song and was feeling it all over. Again, he fell to his knees in worship. Dawson Road says it was one of their most spiritual times in ministry, seeing someone absolutely worship with their whole heart and gave this young man and the audience there a moment they will never forget.

Not all moments are of the spiritual kind. Kevin says Daniel is their usual RV/bus driver, but he was at a training out of town. It was determined that an inexperienced Kevin would drive to the concert in the mountains with John on board. Then, Daniel would drive and meet them the next day. They meticulously packed all of the equipment, product, clothing, etc., in the back so they could walk through and keep everything inside neat and orderly.



**Daniel Albritton**



**John Hill**



**Kevin Woolard**

Kevin says, "I got so scared and slammed on the brakes so many times, everything we had packed fell into the aisles and all over the back. It looked like we had been ransacked and robbed by the time we got there. What a mess!"

Kevin is not the only one who can make a mess. At a church in Florida, they went a little early, and with the church's permission, parked in the parking lot overnight. They had taken their small table top grill and thought they would have a nice cookout for dinner. They realized they didn't have anything to set the grill on. Daniel remembered they had their merch table and proceeded to get it and place the grill on top. Daniel laughs, "I wasn't even thinking about a hot grill on a plastic table. It didn't just melt it a little. It destroyed it! Guess who was out trying to find a new table before the morning service the next day."

Shortly after becoming a trio, the three members were driving behind Grifton church one day and saw a road sign that said "Dawson Road." Immediately, it stuck and they have been Dawson Road ever since.

Dawson Road is lovingly supported by their family members, Kevin and his wife Sherry have two daughters, Kristin (& Brandon) and Hannah (marrying Colton in May). Daniel and his wife Deidre have three children, Katie (& Grant, who plays bass for the Kingsmen) and their children Nathan and Isaac; Kayla (& Taylor, who plays guitar in a Christian Rock band) and their daughter Jovie, who has her

grandpa's heart; and Ben, who works at the construction company with his dad.

John has a very unique story. He and his wife Joy have been international travelers and decided before marriage they would have one child of their own and then adopt internationally. Their daughter Emily was premature and sadly, stillborn. Eleven years ago, they adopted three boys from Brazil, Luiz, Erinaldo, and Alex, who are now ages 22, 19, and 17, all biological siblings adopted on the same day. John shares, "When we went to Brazil to adopt the boys, they did not speak any English, only Portuguese. We stayed in Brazil fifty days to acclimate them. Joy and I held school with them each day, teaching them English and other things about America before bringing them home."

As one can see, booking Dawson Road for a concert at a church or venue brings not only great music, but a lot of fun, spiritual services, and background stories that will warm your heart.

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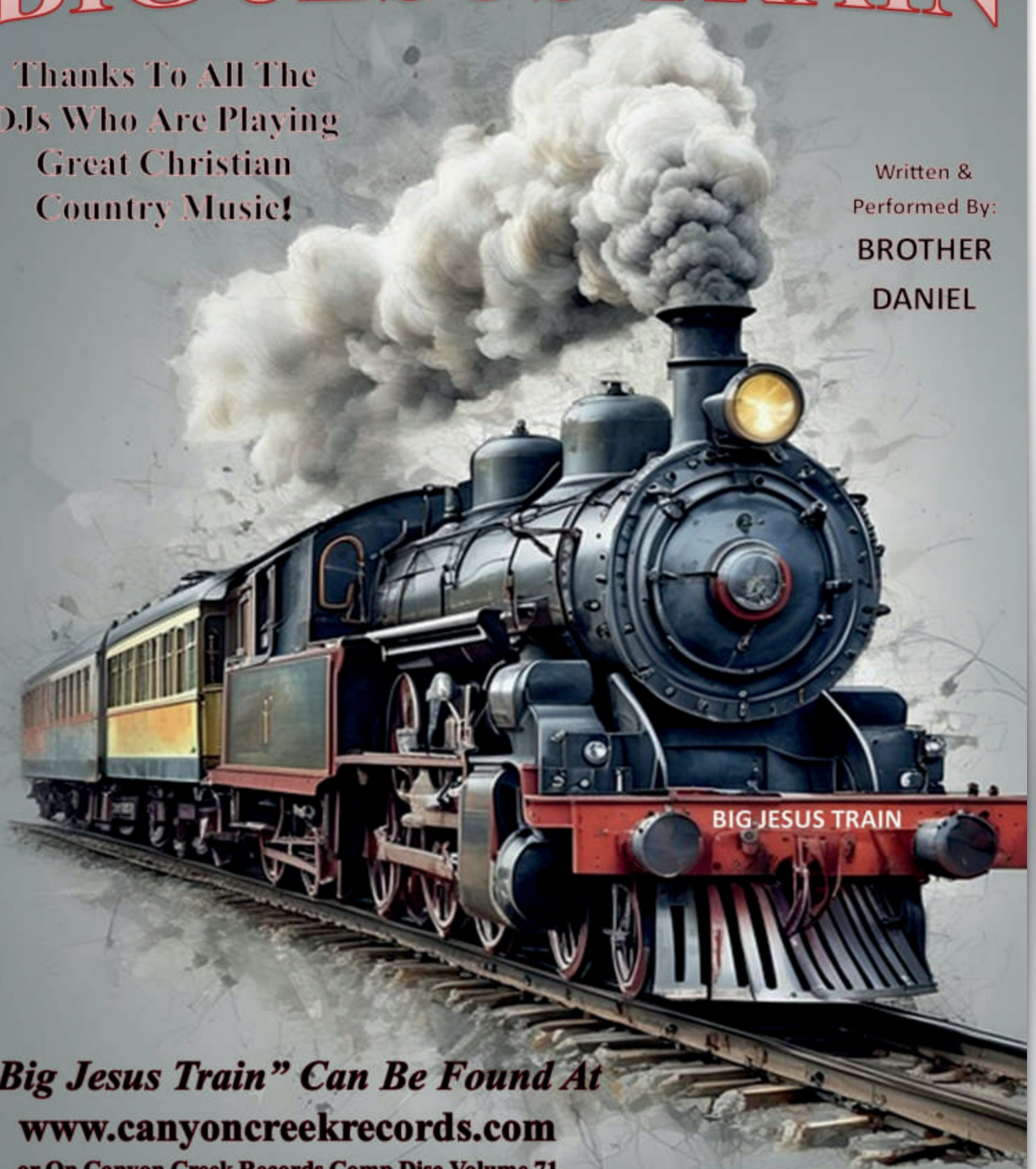
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## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

### WINSTON FOX

By Chloe Wright

Raised in the small town of Soddy Daisy, Tennessee, but born in Scottsboro, Alabama, Winston Fox's musical excursion is every bit as earnest and heartwarming in spirit as the Country songs he loves to sing. Intensely grounded in faith, family, and an abiding passion for music, Winston's contagious enthusiasm took flight from the choirs of the church and landed on the record label of Grace Records Nashville LLC, embarking on a promising stage of his professional career.

Winston's love for music began around childhood, under direct influence coming from his church's music director and the trumpet. As time went by, he learned to play the French horn and the baritone. He sang in the choir of the same church. He served fifteen years in the U.S. Army and kept his love for music alive by singing karaoke and playing at gatherings. The fact that he moved from karaoke nights to embarking on a professional recording career in September 2024 is proof of his love of his musical career.



Winston's first single, a cover of Rick Trevino's *Running out of Reasons to Run*, pays tribute to Country greats like George Strait, Alan Jackson, and John Michael Montgomery. "These artists shaped the sound of 90s Country that I grew up with. Their music takes me back to the simpler days, and I hope my music will do the same for others," shares Winston.

Performances by Winston promise energy and connection. "You can't have a normal event without dancing and singing along with the crowd, having a good time. You know I've got work to do if I don't see people boot-scootin' or clapping," he says.

Although Fox has not won an award yet, that does not define him as an artist. For him, music is not just about medals, it is about the experience of touching lives. "My goal is to continue singing and observe people enjoying my music," he explains.

Winston draws inspiration from more than just music, it also comes from life lessons learned along the way and from spiritual direction. He cites his mother being there as a strong hand, along with motivational words of Jim Rohn: "If you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse" as guiding pillars that have made him a man, a husband, a father, and now, an artist.

As Winston Fox sets up for his first steps into the Country music scene, fans can wait for music that gives joy and nostalgia. Sharing a sound that is kept in a 90s Country treat and an unbridled passion for it, Winston will surely make a mark on Country music.



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**-Dr. Pete Kunkle, Executive Director**

# The Story Behind the Song

## GOIN' DOWN TO THE CHURCH HOUSE

Recorded by Terry & Debra Luna

Written by Marvin Morrow

Staff, Cross Country USA

When legendary singer-songwriter Marvin Morrow penned *Goin' Down to the Church House* for his 2010 project, "I Found the Cross," he likely never imagined the song would find new life, years later, in the hands of another Country Gospel duo. For Terry & Debra Luna, the decision to include the track on their latest album was nothing short of divine inspiration.

"Even though we typically write most of our own songs, we thought we should reach out to a handful of songwriters for material for our new project," Terry shared. "Once we heard *Goin' Down to the Church House*, we knew we wanted to include it."

The song's timeless message about returning to the heart of worship, salvation, and the altar resonated deeply with the duo, but it wasn't until their album photo shoot that the project's direction became clear. Award-winning photographer Mac Brown suggested an historic country church in Giles County, Tennessee, as the backdrop for the session. The quaint church, with its tall steeple and traditional design, seemed to embody the spirit of the song perfectly. Standing in that setting, the duo felt a confirmation in their hearts: their new project's title track had to be *Goin' Down to the Church House*.

When it came time to record the song, they turned to producer Mike McClain at McClain Recording in Garland, Texas. Mike gathered his top-notch pickers including himself, Milo Deering, and Billy Williams to record the track. The recording session brought a bit of unexpected inspiration. While tracking the vocals, Terry spontaneously added a playful yodel during the bridge. Thinking it was just a fun ad-lib, he asked for it to be removed in the final mix. McClain, however, insisted otherwise. "Oh no, we must keep the yodels!" he exclaimed. It turned out to be the right call. Tommy Smith, CEO of Canyon Creek Records agreed, he felt the song should be the first radio single from the new album. The charming, throwback Jimmie Rodgers-style yodel



**Terry & Debra Luna**

became one of the song's most memorable elements, delighting listeners both on the radio and in live performances. It's a nod to Classic Country music that makes the track stand out in a modern world.

As Terry & Debra continue to share the message of *Goin' Down to the Church House* across stages and the airwaves, it's clear that this song is more than just a track on an album - it's a heartfelt reminder of the joy and community found in gathering at the church house and prayer at the altar. As the lyrics say, we all need to "Go down to the Church House, get down on our knees and pray, thank the good Lord up in heaven, and give Jesus all the praise!" Thanks to Marvin Morrow's timeless songwriting and a little impromptu yodeling, it's a message that keeps resonating with audiences everywhere.



The song is currently tracking on several charts and at number 6 in Cross Country Magazine USA for February 2025. *Goin' Down to the Church House* is available on Canyon Creek Records, Volume 70.

***Goin' Down to the Church House***

Verse 1

*All my life I've been rowdy,  
never done the things that's right.*

*All my life I've been rowdy,  
never done the things that's right.*

*I know where I'm headed, I can't sleep at night*

Chorus 1

*I'm going down to the church house,  
get down on my knees and pray.*

*I'm going down to the church house,  
get down on my knees and pray.*

*Ask the good Lord up in heaven to wash my sins away*

Verse 2

*Now ever since I met Jesus,  
things ain't been the same.*

*Now ever since I met Jesus,  
things ain't been the same.*

*Now the joy that I'm feeling, I just can't explain.*

Chorus 2

*I'm going down to the church house,  
get down on my knees and pray.*

*I'm going down to the church house,  
get down on my knees and pray.*

*Thank the good Lord up in heaven,  
for making me feel this way*

Verse 3

*Now let me tell you sinner,  
just what you need to do.*

*Now let me tell you sinner,  
just what you need to do.*

*Get on down to that church house,  
have a little talk too*

Chorus 3

*I'm going down to the church house,  
get down on my knees and pray.*

*I'm going down to the church house,  
get down on my knees and pray.*

*Lift my hands up to heaven, give Jesus all my praise!*

Words and Music by Marvin Morrow/Old Ship Music/BMI

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# CrossCountry Report

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MUSIC NEWS & SCOOPS

## Lee Greenwood Announces 2025 American Spirit Tour



Country music icon and Grammy Award-winning artist Lee Greenwood is set to bring his patriotism and chart-topping hits to fans across the country with the announcement of his 2025 American Spirit Tour. With initial performances spanning 17 cities from Florida to Michigan, and Arkansas to Pennsylvania, Greenwood promises an unforgettable experience for fans of all generations.

Best known for his legendary hit, *God Bless the USA*, Greenwood's tour kicked off on January 22 at the Seminole Casino in Immokalee, Florida and will continue throughout 2025 with many more shows to be added. Audiences can expect to hear a mix of his timeless classics, including *I.O.U.* and *Dixie Road*, alongside other fan favorites that celebrate the spirit of America.

"The American Spirit Tour is a celebration of the values and pride that make this country great," said Greenwood. "I can't wait to hit the road and share these special moments with fans from coast to coast."

With over 40 years of success in the music industry and countless accolades, Greenwood's performances continue to inspire and unite audiences. Don't miss your chance to be part of this patriotic musical journey in 2025.

In August 2024, Greenwood was honored on the Grand Ole Opry stage by Helping A Hero for his decades-long support of veterans and active-duty service members. Known for his unwavering patriotism and commitment to the U.S. military, Greenwood has been honored with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's National Patriot's Award and has entertained troops on more than 30 USO Tours.

More information is available at [www.leegreenwood.com](http://www.leegreenwood.com).

## A Ronnie Milsap Biopic Is Coming Soon

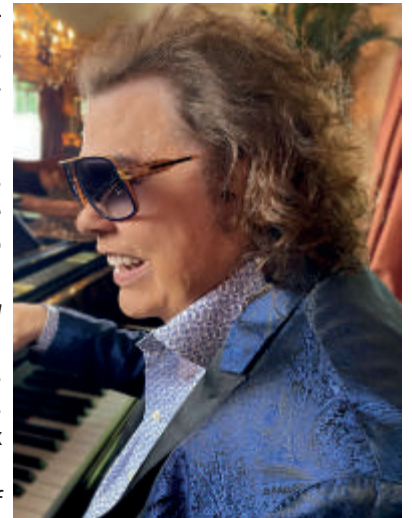
A film based on the life of Country Music Hall of Famer Ronnie Milsap is officially in the works, according to Variety. The biopic will be inspired by his 1990 autobiography, "Almost Like a Song."

Ronnie Milsap is one of the most successful Country crossover artists and pianists in history. He is known for blending Country, Pop, and Soul into his music.

Born blind due to a congenital disease, Milsap overcame his disability to leave an incredible mark on music history. He rose to fame in the 1970s and 1980s with hits like *It Was Almost Like a Song* and *Smoky Mountain Rain*. He has also achieved an incredible 40 No. 1 songs on various Country charts. Over his career, Milsap has won six Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2014.

Currently, there isn't much information about when filming will begin or a projected release date for the untitled biopic. However, what we do know is who will be portraying the music icon. Spencer Boldman is set to take on the starring role.

Boldman is known for his appearances in the Hulu limited series *Welcome to Chippendales*, Disney Channel productions



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Zapped and Lab Rats, and 21 Jump Street. Milsap himself will help produce the project.

It's no doubt that this opportunity is very special for Boldman to take on. It has even been reported that he spent time with Milsap at his Nashville home in preparation for the film and has received Milsap's blessing to portray him.

For more information go to [ronniemilsap.com](http://ronniemilsap.com).

### The Malpass Brothers Road of Memories Tour 2025

Marking their 25th year of touring, The Malpass Brothers have announced the first leg of their Road of Memories Tour 2025.



These modern-day traditionalists have been mentored and credentialed by the biggest legends of Bluegrass and Country music, including Merle Haggard, Doyle Lawson and many more. The brother duo delivers new, yet traditional music for modern times (complete with pearl-snap shirts, Manuel/Nudie suits, over-shaped cowboy hats, and pompadour coiffure). Their firm "traditionalism" has captured the attention of the industry and traditional Country fans, leading to worldwide notoriety, including appearances on syndicated television, the iconic Grand Ole Opry, and now, their own television series on the RFD-TV network.

The Malpass Brothers made their Grand Ole Opry debut in December of 2018 and have been asked to return to the hallowed

circle well over a dozen times since. The brother duo has headlined international tours and festivals in Ireland, Switzerland, and in Scotland, and been featured on multiple national television shows including TBN's "The Huckabee Show" and RFD's "Country's Family Reunion" and "Larry's Country Diner" - and compilation of performances from the latter was released last year.

Visit [www.themalpassbrothers.com](http://www.themalpassbrothers.com) for more information.

### Guitars4Cops.com To Help Raise Funds For Police Officers In Need

Some of Country music's biggest and brightest stars have come together to help raise money and awareness for the Las Vegas-based national law enforcement organization, The Wounded Blue, which helps improve the lives of injured and disabled officers. Cody Johnson, Zach Top, Ronnie Dunn (of Brooks & Dunn,) Travis Tritt, Craig Morgan, LeeAnn Womack, Tracy Lawrence, Riley Green, Martina McBride, Chris Young, Jon Pardi, Marty Stuart, Ernest, Lorrie Morgan, John Anderson, Neal McCoy, Steve Wariner, Crystal Gayle, Dustin Lynch, Larry Gatlin, Uncle Kracker, Aaron Lewis, Jamey Johnson, Justin Moore, Randy House, Trace Adkins, Deana Carter, Gabby Barrett, Billy Currington, Mark Wills, Mark Chesnutt, Drew Baldridge, Bryan White, Gary Morris, and more have all taken the time to autograph multiple Epiphone acoustic guitars for this fundraising effort. Fans, corporate partners, or anyone supporting law enforcement can purchase any of these signed guitars for \$1,000 each by going to [guitars4cops.com](http://guitars4cops.com).

The law enforcement profession has always been inherently dangerous in terms of physical safety, but the current climate in terms of violence, anti-law enforcement rhetoric, agenda-driven politicians, and societal issues has created a far more dangerous environment for America's police.



"These wildfires are horrible and everyone is in disbelief of the devastation," says Neal McCoy. "Not only are our firefighters in danger, but so are all of our first responders including law enforcement. If signing guitars helps give those in need some comfort, it is the least that I can do. Our prayers are with all those affected by these wildfires."

*Continued on page 24 >>>*



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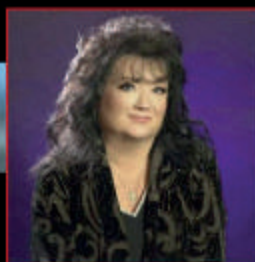
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<<< *Cross Country Report, continued from page 21*

Recognizing that approximately 50,000 American law enforcement officers are assaulted every year in the United States, with even more injured in traffic accidents, training accidents, and other assorted misfortunes while on duty, it was clear that help was needed. Additionally, many more are affected by PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Injury). The term PTSD as opposed to PTSO (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is used because the condition is often treatable to the point of it NOT becoming a "disorder," but in many cases it, too, becomes an incapacitating injury. Most Americans seem to assume that in the event of sustaining on-duty injuries, law enforcement agencies and the local, county, and state governments that employ them would be responsible for taking care of them financially, medically, and psychologically, as these injuries are incurred while serving the people they swore to protect. Unfortunately, the reality is often quite different. Officers who are hurt often lose a major portion of their salaries during their healing process (if the injuries are only temporarily disabling) and also often lose the ability to earn enough to feed their families.

All of this has led to Randy Sutton's creation of The Wounded Blue. The Wounded Blue Mission: To improve the lives of injured and disabled law enforcement officers through support, education, assistance, and legislation. The Wounded Blue was founded to help injured law enforcement build and administer an Emergency Financial Aid Fund, create a system of effective and caring peer support, be a resource for competent and effective legal counsel, and advocate for stronger laws and protection for the American law enforcement officer, all while remaining an advocate for the positive public perception of law enforcement.

**Music City Christian Fellowship Presents The 43rd Annual Sunday Mornin' Country**

The tradition continues as Music City Christian Fellowship presents their 43rd Annual Sunday Mornin' Country at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tennessee. This special event has always blended the top Country music artists and your favorite Gospel music together for a time of celebration and Inspiration.

Sunday Mornin' Country is the longest running named Country/Gospel event associated with the week of CMA Music Fest/Fan Fair. It's sponsored by the Nashville-based nonprofit, Music City Christian Fellowship. For over four decades this legendary event always leaves fans and guests feeling uplifted and encouraged with memories that last a lifetime!

Many of your favorite artists and familiar favorites will grace the Opry stage again. Many members of Music City Christian

Fellowship come from all over the United States and Canada to sing in a ninety voice choir known as the Country Chorale to lift their voices in song. Many performers and updates will be announced soon.

Sunday Mornin' Country's past artists and performers have included Brenda Lee, Charlie McCoy, Connie Smith, The Oak Ridge Boys, Cowboy Joe Babcock, Lulu Roman, Ronnie McDowell, Barbara Fairchild, John Berry, T. Graham Brown, Rhonda Vincent and many more.

The 43rd. Annual Sunday Mornin' Country is slated for June 8, 2025. Visit [www.musiccitychristianfellowship.org](http://www.musiccitychristianfellowship.org) for more information and updates.



**The Oak Ridge Boys Announce New Dates On Their Extended 2025 American Made Farewell Tour, More Coming Soon**



GRAMMY® Award winners and Country Music Hall of Fame inductees The Oak Ridge Boys are thrilled to announce additional dates for their extended American Made Farewell Tour. The tour, named after one of their most beloved hits, celebrates their decades-long career and supports their latest album, "Mama's Boys," which was released in November of last year via Lightning Rod/Thirty Tigers. Known for their timeless harmonies and



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captivating performances, the group is taking this opportunity to say thank you to all their fans and friends for their love and support.

Despite the farewell tour, The Oak Ridge Boys aren't slowing down completely as they plan to head back into the studio later this year to record a new album, continuing their legacy of creating music that resonates with fans old and new.

"We've had so much fun touring from city to city and getting to see everyone," shares William Lee Golden. "The response we received from the new album has been wonderful and we hope you love it as much as we do. Keep checking our website as new dates will be added soon!"

"Mama's Boys," the Oak Ridge Boys' fifth collaboration with GRAMMY-winning producer Dave Cobb, was recorded at the iconic RCA Studio A and Blackbird Studios in Nashville. Leading up to its release, the group built anticipation with standout singles like the heartfelt *I Thought About You, Lord* featuring Willie Nelson, the soulful *Come On Home*, and the nostalgic *That's The Way Mama Made It*. The album also marks a special milestone as the first to feature Ben James as tenor. Since joining the group over a year ago, Ben has captured the hearts of Oak Ridge Boys' fans.

### The North American Country Music Association International Hall of Fame Announces Their 2025 Inductees

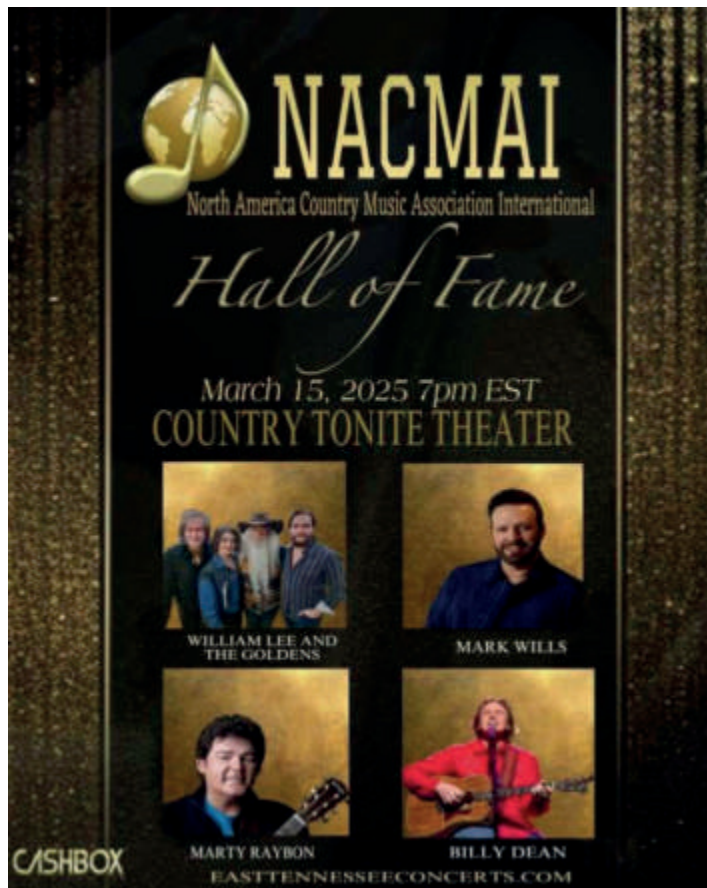
The North American Country Music Association International Hall of Fame announces their impressive 2025 Inductees - William Lee Golden & The Goldens, Mark Wills, Marty Raybon and Billy Dean.

The North American Country Music Hall of Fame ceremony will be held, March 15, 2025. The event takes place at the Country Tonite Theatre, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee in the beautiful Smokey Mountains.

Fans are invited for an evening filled with music, memories, and legendary moments as these incredible artists are inducted into the Hall of Fame. This is more than a concert - it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience honoring the voices that have defined generations of Country music.

The North American Country Music Hall of Fame ceremony is presented by East Tennessee Concerts and Cashbox Magazine. For more information visit [www.easttennesseconcerts.com](http://www.easttennesseconcerts.com).

The North American Country Music Association International was birthed by Ms. Peggy Franks in March of 1997. During the



past 27 years, more than 130 music professionals have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. It's a place to honor and pay homage to the true legends of Country Music, as well as to keep Country music close to its roots.

For more information visit these websites: [www.nacmai.org](http://www.nacmai.org), [www.easttennesseconcerts.com](http://www.easttennesseconcerts.com), [www.cashbox-magazine.com](http://www.cashbox-magazine.com).



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# Remembering...

## BUCK WHITE

December 13, 1930 – January 13, 2025

Staff, Cross Country USA

**B**uck White was born on December 13, 1930, and grew up in Wichita Falls, Texas. As a young child, he changed his name to Buck to be like the cowboy actor, Buck Jones. He grew up listening to the radio and he loved all genres of music. He enjoyed going to the movies, watching Gene Autry and especially Roy Rogers with the Sons of the Pioneers.

As a teenager, he fell in love with the mandolin while listening to Bill Monroe. After graduating high school in 1948, he and some of his close friends auditioned to be the house band for The Hillbilly Circus in Abilene, Texas. Their band was called the Blue Sage Boys. While in Abilene, he met his future brother-in-law, Bob Goza, who introduced him to the love of his life, Patty Goza. Buck and Patty married and moved to Wichita Falls, Texas where he began working as a plumber and playing music on the side.

In 1962, Buck and Patty moved the family to the country in Arkansas. While there, they formed a Bluegrass band with their two older daughters, Sharon and Cheryl.

For over 25 years, his full-time trade was plumbing. In September of 1971, he and his family moved to Nashville and settled in Hendersonville. He continued to work as a plumber for several years before finally becoming a full-time musician.

Playing an acoustic style of music, Buck, Patty, Sharon and Cheryl formed the band, Buck White and the Down Home Folks. They were considered to be a Bluegrass band with a Country swing. They recorded five albums on independent Bluegrass labels before signing with Curb Records in 1982 and changing their band name to The Whites.

After having five hit songs from their first commercial album, Buck realized a dream come true when they were invited to become members of the Grand Ole Opry in 1984.



They celebrated their 40th anniversary as Opry members on March 2, 2024. That was Buck's last official performance. Buck is known all over the world for his unique style of mandolin playing and his authentic style of swing piano playing.

The most important things in life to Buck were his faith in God, his family, and his music. Buck was a father figure and mentor to many. His daughters were told on numerous occasions, "thank you for sharing your daddy." During their 50 years of marriage, Buck and Patty loved and encouraged many people, sharing the love of Jesus with them.

At age 94, Buck passed away January 13, 2025.

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## **Rocky & Tamie Smith**

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## By Chloe Wright

Rocky's music career started at an incredibly young age. "I began playing drums for my father when I was only three years old," he stated. By seven, young Rocky produced his first vocal album, and while only ten years old, he was off on tour with the legendary Easter Brothers. Career-wise, he went on to be a session player in Nashville, joined with several bands, and worked with various national artists throughout those years.

Tamie's journey is equally interesting. "I started singing at eight and was always in vocal training," she said. Those early days laid the groundwork for much that followed, eventually landing her a full-fledged career with the Gospel group, Amazed. She was with select groups like Solid Rock, a youth Gospel group that toured nationally. In 2000, she joined Amazed, recording several albums under the Morningstar label of the Eddie Crook Company for ten years. "I continued solo work until I met Rocky, fell in love, and married him on December 1, 2024," she added.

"We have had some of the greatest influences from Southern Gospel/Christian Country/Bluegrass artists such as Jeff and Sheri Easter, Grace and Joseph Larson, Daryl Singletary, and Rhonda Vincent," they said. With their unique blend of heartfelt worship and traditional Gospel, they create a sound that's profound for their audience.

Rocky has been a part of the family of Grace Records Nashville LLC and has recorded numerous artists since the debut of the record label in May of 2023. Tamie signed in September 2024 along with Rocky who signed to officially become a radio release artist. They are both very thankful for CEO/owner Debbie Bennett and her husband Junior Bennett for allowing them to be involved with this family of artists. Despite being a new duo, Rocky and Tamie are well seasoned. 2018 was a turn during which The Christian Voice Gospel Music Fan Awards named Rocky 'Favorite Musician' - a testament to great talent and a close connection with audiences. He has been nominated 'Producer of the Year' many times, and he was the person responsible for crafting such music as *The River Runs Red*. In fact, the piece he not only co-wrote, but he also orchestrated with instrumentation and provided harmonies that contributed to that song receiving 'Song of the Year.' At the same time, Tamie's vocal abilities were put on display as *Even On Monday* reached the Top 40 on the Singing News chart and her solo single, *You Gave Me Mercy* keeps running up charts for eight long months.

Their latest single, *He Keeps the Son (Shining)* written by Angela Fulkerson, owner of music ministry/family band, Psalm 101, represents their common faith and artistry. "Her opinion matters so much to us," they said. Fulkerson applauded their performance: "Wow!!! Love the fact that you turned it into a duet! Definitely has that Country flare, and I love the fact that you put your own spin on it...definitely original! Great job! Love it!" (More information about Psalm 101 at [www.psalms101music.com](http://www.psalms101music.com).)

They are based on deep individual experiences of loss and such redemption that form the background of their music and message. For instance, testimonies from Rocky regarding the deaths of his sons Dylan and Zack find their way into songs to give comfort and hope again to those dealing with their struggles. Likewise, Tamie's journey of faith and perseverance punctuates her stirring performances, making the ministry one of immense hope and encouragement to the audience. Following these events, Rocky passed through the tragedy of losing both of his sons, Dylan and Zack, in 2011. "We each faced disastrous divorces, and frankly, we thought our ministries might be over," they state. "God was not finished with us," adding that two separate godly people told them "to move forward, to put on the whole armor of God, to not look back...that God would part the waters ahead of us and destroy the enemy behind us."



The Smiths wish to reach and minister to all kinds of people by proclaiming that "God can use them in spite of their circumstances or their past." Their events promise unscripted experiences that the Spirit would lead through worship, laughter, tears, and praise. Rocky and Tamie are honored to bring revival through the grace of God whenever they get the chance to, no matter where they are.

Draped in their experiences with all thing's Gospel music and, of course, Tamie's work with Amazed, combined with Rocky's work with the Easter Brothers and both of their musical developments from a young age, leading into a united ministry, the couple now pastoring The Kernersville Full Gospel Mission in North Carolina and running Un-Marked Road Recording Studio - their mission of spreading God's love takes them nationwide for revivals, concerts, and conferences.

The story of Rocky and Tamie Smith is one of strength, faith, and purpose proving that, through God, it is never too late to pursue a meaningful calling.

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## GENE REASONER

By Robin Tanner

Gene Reasoner has been blessed to have many accomplishments in music and ministry. As a singer, musician, soloist, legendary songwriter and a founding member of one of the first groups in Christian Country music, God had a divine plan for him even at an early age.

**G**ene grew up singing and playing in church. He started taking accordion lessons at six years old and took them for seven years. Then later played in the school band for four years.

Reasoner's early musical influences were the Gospel quartets from the 50s and 60s. He recalls, "I cut my teeth on the Blackwood Brothers, The Statesmen, The Speer Family and the Oak Ridge Boys. When I started listening to the Oak Ridge Boys, I loved their Country sound with the late great Smitty Gatlin and remained an Oak Ridge Boys fan until the present. When The Rambos came along, I loved them! I loved Dottie's writing and the vocal sound of The Rambos. Then in 1974 The Rambo's recorded a song I wrote, *He's Ready To Come and I'm Ready To Go*. They singled it to radio and it became a number one song. They opened their show with it for two years."

Gene was also a fan of Country and Bluegrass music. "As a young boy I had a transistor radio and on Saturday nights I would put it under my pillow when I went to bed and listened to the Grand Ole Opry. I loved the Opry stars like Ernest Tubb, Porter Wagoner. Connie Smith and Bluegrass stars, Jim and Jesse & The Virginia Boys, Flatt & Scruggs, and Bill Monroe & The Bluegrass Boys. When I was about thirteen years old, I bought an album by The Osborne Brothers. The album title was, "Up This Hill and Down." That record changed my life. I had never heard close harmony like that before. That record made me fall in love with straight, vibrato free vocals which made the harmonies so close and haunting. Bobby Osborne was the greatest tenor singer I've ever heard and Sonny's hard driving unique banjo style just cranked my tractor!"

In the 80s, when Traditional Country music was on fire with artists like Ricky Skaggs, Randy Travis, Vern Gosdin,



Vince Gill, George Strait, Alan Jackson and George Jones, Gene's love for Country music grew to a new level. His love for the tight harmonies and the traditional Country sound paved the way for Gene and many others in the late 80s and early 90s as part of the band, White River. "We decided we wanted our music to sound like the Traditional Country music on radio at the time, so we began writing Country sounding songs with a strong Gospel message and along with us, Mid South, The Days and other artists, Christian Country Music was born."

Gene has enjoyed several memorable moments. He mentions, "From 1983-1985, I played bass guitar and sang with Hee Haw star, Grandpa Jones. That was a great experience and made my dream come true of playing on the Grand Ole Opry. Then from 1985 to 1994 with White River, some of the highlights was having several number one Christian Country songs, performing on Trinity Broadcasting Network, two appearances on the main stage of the National Quartet Convention and touring coast to coast."

In 1986, Gene wrote a song called, *He Didn't Throw The Clay Away*. It became a big hit and a career song for The Lesters. Gene admits, "Many artists have since recorded and performed it. Michael English did a vocal demo of it for a

soundtrack company. Someone posted it as a video on YouTube and it's had over 2 million views."

White River had several chart songs including, *What Ya Gonna Do?*, *The South's Gonna Rise Again*, *Take Mine*, *Rodeo Preacher* and others. White River was awarded, Christian Country Music Association 'Band of the Year' in 1993 and also their song *Rodeo Preacher* was 'Song of the Year' for the CCMA. Gene is also in the International Country Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame and has also received the Inspirational Country Music Association, 'Living Legend' Award.

Gene's latest CD in 2018 is "Daddy I'm Home." The title track from the CD, *Daddy I'm Home* was number one on the four Christian Country charts. Gene recently sang a duet with recording artist Steven Wood of his classic original song *He Didn't Throw The Clay Away*. Their video can be viewed on Steven Wood Music on YouTube.

Gene shares a spiritual moment that was life changing to him and has continued to change lives of many. "The most profound spiritual experience I've had in Christian Country music was in 1986. White River was singing in a revival meeting in Okmulgee, Oklahoma at the Crosstown Pentecostal Holiness Church. Rev Jerry Haynes was preaching and he preached a sermon from the book of Jeremiah about the potter and the clay. In his sermon, he was presenting Jesus as the Potter and us as the clay. He said that

sometimes we make mistakes and the vessel that the Potter created gets broken into pieces. Brother Jerry said that Jesus is the Good Potter and a good potter never throws the clay away. Jesus as the Good Potter gets down on the floor in the middle of our mess and gathers all the broken pieces of our vessel and puts them back on the potter's wheel and starts over. He makes a new vessel and puts the broken pieces back together again. Out of the 500 people in that service that night, that sermon was just for me. As I listened, the song started coming to me. I grabbed an offering envelope from the pew in front of me and wrote the first verse and chorus while Bro. Jerry was preaching. When I got back to the hotel that night I knew this song was a God thing, so I asked the Lord to help me write a strong second verse and in about ten minutes I had it. It was a powerful experience. God has used that song to impact people all over the world. Only God can do that!"

Gene concludes, "I've been blessed to accomplish most of my music goals. I'm 76 years old, so my touring days are over. Now my main goal is to be a better writer of songs. I'm also writing a book about my life and I write a monthly column for a Christian Country magazine, Empowering The Passion (formerly Power Source). My column is called, Cogitatin' With Gene. Once a year, White River does a reunion concert the last Friday night of July in Lebanon, Missouri. We sing our old hits and have lots of fun!"

Follow Gene at [www.facebook.com/GeneReasoner](http://www.facebook.com/GeneReasoner).



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## Pam Blackstock

By Robin Tanner

For Pam Blackstock, Christ is the focal point of her ministry. Her message is that in Christ there is hope for those who have no hope, forgiveness for those who feel they can't be forgiven, peace in the midst of the storm and salvation for the lost. The style of music Pam sings is Country Gospel, but she has been known to throw in some Southern Gospel and Praise songs to encourage and minister to all of listens.

Pam played piano and organ and sang in church growing up. She went anywhere the doors were opened, including local churches, school choir, special events, funerals, weddings, and singing with a local quartet.

Early on, Pam listened to Traditional Country music and then once she became a Christian she found a love for Southern Gospel. She says, "I enjoyed listening to groups like the Happy Goodmans, Jeff and Sheri Easter, The Nelons to name just a few. I really found myself listening to Sheri Easter and Kelly Nelon in my earlier years of singing. I also love the sound of Patsy Cline. My latest single was written to have that 'Patsy Cline' sound."

Pam believes that music is one of the few things in life that can cross all boundaries. She has a history of singing with several groups and for the past ten years has branched off into her own solo ministry. She has presented the Gospel in song and testimony to women's conferences, church services, opries, and concerts.

A memorable highlight for Pam was working with award-winning singer/songwriter Gerald Crabb and being able to go to Nashville and record. "What an honor to have Gerald Crabb produce three of my projects. Growing up, all I ever wanted to do was go to Nashville, record an album and sing Country music. I was able to do all those things, but God had a different plan and wanted me to sing Christian Country music. Another memorable highlight would be getting invited to attend the Terry Awards in Branson and being able to sing at some of the venues there. I also would have to say singing with a quartet ranks as one of my most memorable highlights as well. That had been a lifelong desire."

Pam has shared her ministry as a guest on the Christian Country Corral with Kent Thompson, Heaven's Country with Marty Smith and on Monday's with Micah, with Micah McCarley. She is an award-winning artist and has recorded



five projects and is in the process of recording a sixth project to be released in late Spring. Her latest single is *I'm Not*, currently at #3. Previously successful radio charting songs have included *Heaven's Really Not That Far Away*, *Sometimes I Get Homesick*, *Ain't No Way at All*, *I Can Feel His Holy Spirit*, *I Found it All in the Cross*, and *God's Holy Spirit*.

Several of the accolades that Pam has been honored to receive are the (International Country Gospel Music Association), ICGMA 'Female Horizon Artist,' ICGMA 'Female Vocalist,' ICGMA 'Album of the Year' 2021, 2022, and 2023, and GMAA 'Female Vocalist.'

Pam's music can be heard on stations across the country and throughout the world on internet radio stations. Her music can also be found on Spotify, Apple Music, Wynn Music, and various other streaming apps. She has also had songs in the top 40 on SGN Scoops Magazine; Christian Voice Magazine and various other charts.

Pam remembers a sermon that she has lived by and never forgotten. "A former pastor preached a sermon about WATCH, and it has stuck with me all these years. Watch your words, watch your actions, watch your thoughts, watch your companions, watch your habits."

Her goals are to expand her ministry into women's conferences as well as new churches. In a service or concert with Pam, one can expect a sincere servant's heart sharing her love for the Gospel in word and song, some laughter, and someone that is just being real.

[www.facebook.com/pamelajblackstock](http://www.facebook.com/pamelajblackstock)

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MTS

# 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.

## Carson McKee Fiddle and Mandolin

By Teresa Schweinsberg

**T**hough Carson McKee is just getting her feet wet, so to speak, in the session world, she is no less an incredible musician. Whether performing live or in the studio, she will definitely be high energy, catching the attention of anyone observing. As one of the three vocalists in Diamond Rio and their fiddle and mandolin player, Carson is making a name for herself in Country music.

Carson grew up in the Church of Christ in Synsonia, Kentucky. It was there she built her Christian foundation. She attended and loved church camps and youth groups and went all she could until she aged out. Then, she begged to go as a worker, counselor, or anywhere they could use her so she could keep attending. At one point she was a custodian and another a grounds keeper, but she was there and loved it.

Carson has an older brother, Conner, and a younger brother, Clint. She is the only girl and a middle child. When they were very young, her parents, Terry and Michelle, wanting to stimulate their brains, gave them an option of either playing violin or learning Mandarin (Chinese). All three siblings became classically trained violinists. However, their grandfather played Bluegrass music and held jam sessions in the garage every Tuesday. This was the first opportunity Carson had to play by ear and create, rather than reading a piece of classical music. When her mom saw her interest, she enrolled her in a fiddle class with Clay Campbell, who just happened to own the Kentucky Opry.

Carson began to participate in fiddle contests and started to learn about old Country artists and classic Country fiddle songs. She went to Dallas, Texas and was able to open for Charlie Daniels. Clay Campbell made her a part of the Kentucky Opry house band, where she sang backup vocals and played fiddle at eleven years old. “It was my first pay gig,” laughs Carson, “so I guess I became a professional.”

From ages 11-16, she also got to open at the Kentucky Opry for artists like Josh Turner, George Jones, Oak Ridge Boys, Roy Clark, Clint Black, Ray Stevens, and even the



legend, Loretta Lynn. At 16, she joined a Bluegrass band and got to travel all over. Next, it was Badgett Playhouse, a Branson style show. Carson says, “That is where I developed a lot of confidence, stage presence, and personality while playing.”

After High School, Carson attended the University of Kentucky, majoring in finance and marketing as her backup plan. Although she did not give up on music completely while joining a honky tonk bar in Lexington, she became

comfortable in investment banking, because “music couldn’t maintain my lifestyle,” Carson adds. Moving into her last year of college, Carson’s grandfather became ill. She told him, “Grandpa, when you get to Heaven, would you ask the Big Guy to get me a big time gig?” Her grandfather passed away shortly after that. Her friend and fellow fiddle player Mary had been subbing with Diamond Rio and had passed along Carson’s number. That is when she got a call from Gene Johnson to sub for him during his wife’s illness. Carson shares, “I’m pretty sure my grandpa asked someone to honor my request.”

Carson began touring full-time with Pam Tillis, filling in with Jimmy Fortune, and subbing with Diamond Rio when needed until January 2022, when Gene decided to come off the road permanently and retire. She was offered the job. At this time, she was also still trying to finish college at UK and take her final exams in hotel rooms and on the bus through online testing. She graduated summa cum laude.

There was one last thing to conquer. Carson was a fiddle player, and though she had “picked it up a few times and noodled with the mandolin in times past,” she says she was not proficient. Since that is what Gene played and a staple of many of their songs, she was asked if she could play. She told them yes, forgetting how much patience and dedication went into learning a new instrument.

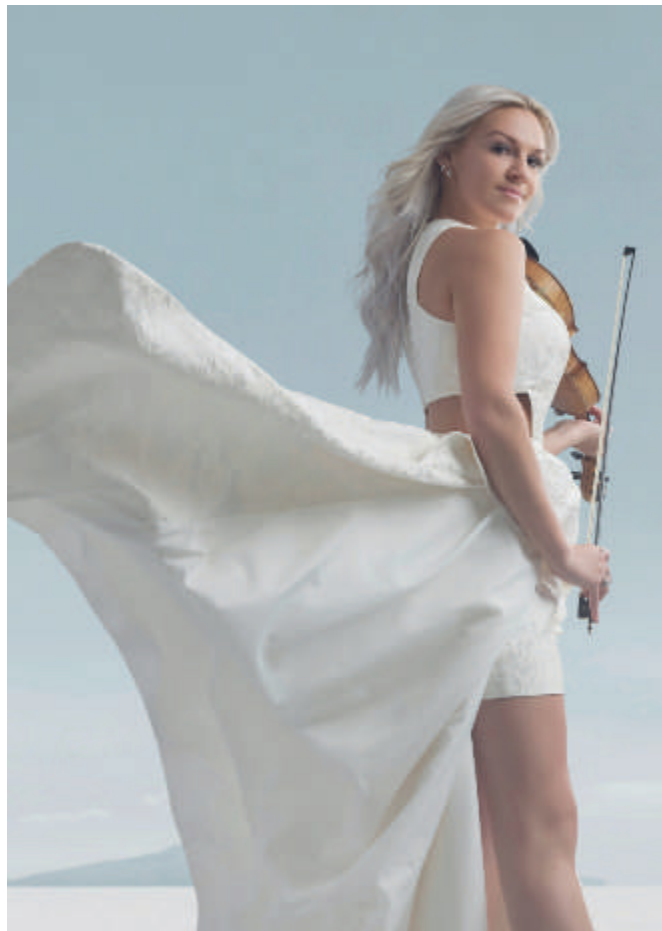
“Mandolin and fiddle are tuned the same, in fourths, but there’s quite a difference. A mandolin has eight strings and frets and you play with a pick, often chopping the rhythm. The fiddle has four strings, no frets, and you use a bow. The right hand is completely different,” shares Carson.

“After I said yes, I sold my car, went downtown to Carter Vintage Guitars, picked a mandolin off the wall, and bought it, using all the money I had on the mandolin,” Carson added, “now with no car!”

She continues, “I started practicing eight hours a day, every day, until I felt comfortable with the instrument. Then, I learned the entire Diamond Rio show. It was difficult at first, and I was often frustrated. At 24, I was learning a brand new instrument, when I had already been playing fiddle for 21 years. I look back now and know it was so worth it. I love the Rio boys, and am so blessed to stand on stage with them!”

As the youngest member of Diamond Rio, Carson says at 25, she still gets asked to prom sometimes on the road. However, no story could top the one Jimmy Olander, guitarist for Diamond Rio, talked her into one day shortly after joining the band. Here is the story in Carson’s own words:

“In October 2023, I am a runner, but had fractured my pelvis. I was just getting back into running again and taking it slowly. Jimmy, also a runner, asked me if I wanted to run with him. I told him I would be pretty slow, but he told me to come on. We’d run pretty far when we saw skydivers. We were heading right for their drop zone when Jimmy asked me, ‘Carson, if you could jump right now, would you?’ I said sure and laughed, not realizing he meant it. I had on a tank top, running shorts, no ID or bank card to pay. Neither did Jimmy. Somehow Jimmy persuaded them to trade ten tickets to the



show for letting me jump. I had to borrow a fuzzy sweater from the people at the skydiving place. So with a fractured hip, we had run 4 ½ miles, I skydived, then we ran 4 ½ miles back and barely made it back in time to shower and hit the stage!”

What advice would Carson give to a young person who wants to be a musician on stage or in the studio? “There is always someone better than you, so stay humble. Surround yourself with those who are better than you, so you can learn from them. Victor Wooten, the bass player, once said, ‘The world has a lot of great musicians. What we need is great people. Don’t be a great musician and not be a great person.’”

“When I was eight years old,” says Carson, “Joe Bonsall brought his banjo backstage and sat for such a long time letting me play fiddle with him. He gave me his time, and I have never forgotten that!”

Carson says her music, activities, and friends led her away from God during her college years, but playing in the band with Micah and meeting his wife Jackie, she began going to church with them and renewed her relationship with Christ. She became a stronger Christian and has surrounded herself with those who have the same Christian standards and values.

“God has a funny way of working things out. I never imagined what my life would look like now. If I could go back, I would tell younger Carson, ‘Everything is going to work out. Trust God and you’ll be fine. It will be even better than you ever dreamed!’”

A circular portrait of Gina White, a woman with voluminous, wavy, light-colored hair. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. Her right hand is resting under her chin. She is wearing a dark, high-necked top and a ring with a large, oval, light-colored stone on her right hand. The background of the portrait is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

# Gina White

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# CrossCountry<sup>USA</sup> **HOT 100**

OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN COUNTRY TOP 100 - FEBRUARY 2025

TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST	TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	5	<b>Wrong Side Of The Cross</b>	<b>Marvin Harrell</b>	51	57	Go Out With My Boots On	David Wall
2	4	Goodness Of God	Greg McDougal & Barry McGee and Friends	52	94	Grandma's Bible	Debbie Bennett
3	6	My First Dance	Stella Parton	53	69	Outrun The Rain	James Lann
4	7	Ink Stains	David House	54	59	You Ain't Wore These Boots	Michael Tetrick & Debbie Bennett
5	10	Joy When The Sun Goes Down	Luke Hendrickson	55	60	On My Knees	Delnora Reed Acuff & Bruce Hedrick
6	11	Going Down To The Church House	Terry & Debra Luna	56	27	It Was His Love	Jan Harbuck
7	19	Because He Changed Me	Carey Easley	57	66	There's A Man In Here	Patti Workman
8	14	Plenty Of Time	Gayla Earlene	58	65	When I Pray	Donna Kilmurray
9	16	Just A Country Boy	Ricky Paul	59	89	Bring Me Home	John Michael Ferrari
10	26	The Humble Cottage By The Sea	Eddy Man	60	75	Dead Man Walking	Paul Staggs
11	13	Going Home	John Penney	61	82	I Stand	Ashley Collins
12	15	I'm Going Home	Richard Sprayberry	62	100	Jesus You Are Everything To Me	The Masseys
13	25	Only You	Bruce Minchey	63	-	Farther Along	Willie and Bobbie Nelson
14	18	God Did That	Cody McCarver	64	74	Jesus Isn't Done Yet	Kenny Evans
15	3	My Own Way	Delnora	65	78	Show Us The Way	Steve Anthony
16	21	When Jesus Comes	Jonathan Ray Smith	66	85	His Church Went Marching On	Troy Richardson
17	30	Thank You	Todd Lee	67	95	Broken	Scott Peacock
18	39	Cast Your Cares	Jimmy R. Price	68	-	God Can Use A Broken Man	Jason Crabb
19	28	I Wouldn't Be Surprised	Keith Buchanan	69	77	Horses In Heaven	Woody Winn
20	24	Home	Dale Rochell	70	80	I've Seen It Rain Before	Steve Roberson
21	2	Rust On The Golden Rule	David Timms	71	81	Nothing Short Of A Miracle	The Pauls
22	52	Washed	Debbie Mills	72	53	A Hill Called Calvary	Gina White
23	33	Hell Don't Stand A Chance	Paula Slow	73	87	My Lord	The Gospel Friends
24	35	Time	Ken & Kim Stull	74	61	Same God	Elder Dempster & Johnathan Bond
25	45	Rise Above The Noise	Rachel Taylor	75	86	Dash	Joe Arview
26	38	When All The Saints Get Home	The Journeys	76	84	I Wanna Be Found Faithful	Thomas Brown
27	1	His Right Hand	Kali Rose	77	-	How Many Days	Doug Mathis
28	46	God And Trump	Richard Lynch	78	47	Wave After Wave	Robin Johnston
29	8	Mama's Praywes	Cyndi Reynolds	79	98	I've Overcome	Lester Feltner
30	32	That's What Really Matters	Paul Tuttle	80	-	Chasin' You	Small Town Sunday
31	58	Let's Get The Devil Outta Here	Chuck Hancock	81	91	Do You Remember	Joy LaVallee & Johnathan Bond
32	9	Until That Tme	Joe Babcock & The Babcocks	82	-	Forever Your Praises	Michael Walsh
33	42	Momma's Song	Robert Ross	83	92	Preacher Man	Marcus Ellis
34	49	Bring Your Faith To Life	Brandon Rowell	84	90	Change Of Heart	Robert Blankenship
35	55	Sin Is Color Blind	Jim Sheldon	85	-	There's Power In His Name	Gene Higgins
36	48	Jesus What Does That Name Mean To Me	David Smith	86	97	Heaven Help Me	Aaron Partridge
37	64	Another Day	Wings Of Love	87	93	Let's All Get Together	Melissa Couch
38	31	Pieces	Danielle Hargrove	88	-	Closer Than I've Ever Been	Daniel Crabtree
39	41	In The Sweet By And By	Johnny Jones	89	99	Come To The Church Yard	Michael Deese
40	79	I Miss Front Porches	Tonja Rose	90	-	Redneck Lens	Lonnie Hardy
41	76	Hold The Line	Victoria Steelman	91	-	Jesus Saves	Cooper Alan
42	56	Grace Never Has Failed Me	Kesha Parish	92	96	A Sign	Steve Bridgemon
43	70	Amazing Love	Ray Hollis	93	-	More Than You Know	Tim Livingston
44	88	Gonna Be A Party	Michael Tetrick	94	-	Things That Didn't Work	Judy Bailey
45	-	Man On The Middle Cross	Scott Inman, Jason Crabb, Charlotte Ritchie	95	-	House Of Gold	Dave Evans
46	22	I'm Not	Pamela Blackstock	96	-	Thirst & Hunger	Rick Lang
47	20	Impossible	Debra Camp	97	-	Trust In The Lord	Dan & Julie Krolow
48	68	Big Jesus Train	Brother Daniel	98	-	Turn To Jesus	Dave Adkins Trio
49	54	When Angels Fly	Fred Spencer	99	-	In God's Time	Barry Scott & Second Wind
50	67	Friendly Fire	Angela Seng & Marty Smith	100	-	Give Me Jesus	Larry Cordle



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# Waymasters

## **This Changes Everything**

By Phil Cauley

Use a mixing board to mince a sprig of Beach Boys, dash of Waylon Jennings, hint of Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver, and pinch of Nitty Gritty Dirt Band with a cup of Eagles. Pour into a rich, County-Gospel base of Statler Brothers and Oak Ridge Boys, and then let simmer. Some might presume this concoction to be a recipe for disaster, at worst, or an unsavory soup, at best. Ah, but those who have sampled this original, savory sauce know the name of that recipe by heart: the Waymasters.

**T**heir name is marinated with more meaning than founding band members Tommy and Harold Frizzell ever envisioned. The Waymasters discovered ways to deliver distinctively fresh sounds to the traditional origins of Gospel music. The Frizzell brothers didn't know precisely how spicy their seasoning would become when Tommy's boys, Danny and Darrell Frizzell, and their childhood pals, Tim Reynolds and Chewie McMahan, joined the group in 1984-85. Suddenly, the next generation was traveling, touring, mixing in, and mixing it up. Those then-teenagers now comprise the production, engineering, and ¾ of the harmonic blend that flavor the sound of the Waymasters. Fittingly, elder-statesman Tommy remains the base and bass of the group.

How did so many special ingredients get mixed? "Well, music certainly has lines, but there's no reason Country Gospel can't cross lanes," says lead singer and rhythm guitarist Darrell Frizzell. The Waymasters cross generations and still transcend genres. Original bandmembers were under the influence of Southern Gospel traditions, Smoky Mountain melodies, and the Spirit's leading. Current bass singer and lone-remaining, original member Tommy Frizzell and his brother Harold formed the Waymasters in 1979, following in the Gospel quartet path of their dad. The brothers knew the group needed a name and an identity. "We were brainstorming names as we rode down the road one day," Tommy recalls. "I had my arm out the window, and it was almost as if someone spoke the single word. It startled me so much, I just shouted 'Waymasters!' right there in the truck. I think I scared Harold to death. But he immediately said, 'that's it!'"

Musical lanes started merging in the mid-80s when the next generation expanded the Waymasters from five to nine

members. Darrell Frizzell and younger brother Danny, currently a music producer and recording engineer in Nashville, Tennessee, were under the influence of their dad, Tommy, and Uncle Harold. Lead guitarist and baritone Chewie McMahan, though only related to the Frizzells by the blood of Jesus, has been a part of the Frizzell family since childhood. Tommy had told Chewie to "make himself at home" when Chewie was five, and Chewie's been taking up Tommy on his offer ever since. Tenor and bass player Tim Reynolds also unofficially joined the family when he met Danny, Darrell, and Chewie at Erwin Middle School, in the mountains of North Carolina, while in eighth grade. At the time, these teens were under the influence of more than God, family, and mountain-hollow harmonies; they were under the influence of pop culture, 50s-and-60s oldies, and mainstream music as well. And God knew he would use these kids - His kids - to stir things up and stir things in.

"When the band bus stopped at a rest area, we boys would commandeer rest room stalls, intentionally leaving a vacant one in the middle," Darrell grins as he reminisces. "Once the empty stall became occupied, we made use of the bathroom acoustics and broke into a haunting, acapella, doo-wop rendition of, *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*, before flushing in unison. I always tried to imagine what that poor, unsuspecting soul in the middle stall might be thinking." Who knew that those interstate rest-area antics would serve as rehearsal for a new sound in Country Gospel music? God knew. He had hardwired these youngsters for musical spunk and spontaneity. He had connected them through boyish exuberance with a special, lifelong bond. He had soundtracks in mind that the Waymasters couldn't fathom at the time. Consider it their developmental stage of shape-note singing;



God was arranging a unique blend for his glory.

Unsuspecting souls who first heard the novel sound in rest room stalls might have thought those teens to be drunk, but these boys were just taking Ephesians 5:18-19 out for a spin. “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.” God filled the hearts of these teens with a gift and passion for music, all genres of music. For these young band members, music wasn’t pastime; music was lifetime. Tim notes, “Music isn’t what we do. Music is who we are. God crafted us as his instruments, so we can’t help but make melody everywhere we go.” These teens dissected intricate harmonies the likes of The Beach Boys and Bee Gees. They studied under the radio tutelage of all sorts of maestros and honed their talents during improvised jam sessions. They cut their teeth on music, schooled themselves on music, and camped out on music.

The unique way the Waymasters approach their craft also stems from the fact that God didn’t move them in any one musical way; he moved them in every way. Perhaps listeners can’t put their finger on their style because God has His artistic fingers all over it, and God has quite the eclectic musical taste. God hasn’t placed the Waymasters’ version of Country Gospel into a boxed set.

Makes no difference if these guys are singing in the boys’ room, in the acoustic confines of a primitive church in Cades Cove, or at the annual Mountain State Fair in Asheville, North Carolina; they primarily sing for an audience of One, the Giver of the music. Suspecting and unsuspecting souls alike seem drawn to the way God makes music. The Waymasters have been named ‘Band of the Year,’ ‘Favorite Country Gospel Group,’ ‘Acoustic Artist of the Year,’ ‘Favorite Musician,’ and ‘Artist of the Year.’ Their artistry has been dubbed ‘Song of the Year’ and Album of the Year.’ Their project, “Smoky Mountain Gospel, Vol. 2” produced seven #1 chart toppers, two #2 hits, and a top-10 release. Recent chart-topping singles include *Where are You Taking Me* with Berry Lee White and *Just Believe*. Their latest release, *Child Come Home* recently reached #1 on the charts, their 15th single to do so. But the Waymasters never began crafting music to top the charts. “We’re just mountain boys who sing for God,” Chewie explains. God put the love of music in them, and as their first international number-one song underscores, they *Pour Love* back out.

What’s next? “Interesting you should ask,” Darrell smiles. “First, we will be celebrating 45 years of the founding of the Waymasters on February 22 in Bon Aqua, Tennessee. The two-hour concert will feature songs and stories from



throughout the years as well as appearances by past group members, Lane Pressley, Danny Frizzell and Brian Kuhl. Folks can go to our Facebook page to get more information if they’d like to attend. In addition, our next planned release will likely come out this winter, and it’s called, *The Life He Gave*. It’s part of our next project, which will draw upon our past influences more distinctively. We don’t want to have all the influences overpower any one song; each song will feature a different flavor.”

Tim chimes in, “Yeah, it’ll be kind of like the Baskin-Robbins of music - all sorts of flavors in one place!” With that, they served up a spoonful of samples of their recent songs. *The Life He Gave* touched a

thick-caramel, Merle Haggard, musical taste bud. *I’ve Been Thinking* sugar coated some Beach Boys. *Child Come Home* dripped with Eagles extract. But a guy like Darrell, who doesn’t even like chocolate, knows that the rich, vanilla-bean essence and wholeness of Country Gospel must lead listeners to the heart of God.

“In the Bible, Jacob told God he wouldn’t let Him go until He blessed him. We get blessed when we let God go. Any cowboy worth his salt knows not to reign in a free Spirit. Let him loose and see what he’ll do. We’re just along for the ride. “Yeah, tethered horses go nowhere fast,” Chewie chimes in. “Hey, Chew, grab the guitar!” Darrell quips. “We might have another song there!”

The Waymasters are salt-of-earth guys who have devoted themselves to letting music run free whether inside a building with a steeple or under a canopy of stars. When you listen, you hear God breathe life into the dust and the salt of the earth. He’s still in the music business and creation mode. The Waymasters bear testament. And God still has his sense of humor. You see evidence in this quartet.

“We’re still kids at heart,” laughs Darrell. “You can’t take the mountains out of the boy, and, in our cases, you can’t take the boy out of the man.” That’s another special ingredient, the unabashed boyish sense of wonder and musical adventure this generation of Waymasters has never lost. The Great Commission instructs, “as you are going, make disciples.” The Waymasters make us smile as they go about making His music and make disciples by making music. Tommy sums it up best, “Every session is still a fresh way to see where God is going to go us and grow us. And God’s still using these boys to keep me going and keep growing me young.” You might say, this changes everything, which is the leading contender for the name of their next project.

[www.thewaymasters.com](http://www.thewaymasters.com)



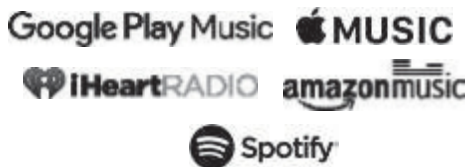
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## JOHNNY CASH & JUNE CARTER CASH The Love Story

There are many love stories of iconic couples in Country music, but none as legendary as Johnny and June. We look back on their careers and their love for God and each other. It was their marriage and musical collaborations that inspired generations of fans and lovers of love everywhere.



Johnny Cash and June Carter first met backstage at the Grand Ole Opry in 1956. Carter reportedly said about that night, “I can’t remember anything else we talked about, except his eyes. He had a command of his performances that I had never seen before. Just a guitar and a bass and a gentle kind of presence that made not only me, but whole audiences become his followers.”

Cash remembers telling Carter he had “always wanted to meet her,” and was aware of her through her famous Country music family: Her parents were Ezra Carter and Maybelle Carter, and June sang and performed as part of the Carter Sisters, a group composed of herself and siblings Helen and Anita.

Both were married to other people at the time of that first fateful meeting. Cash and Carter began working together professionally and by the early 1960s June was touring with Johnny both as a backup singer and as a duet partner. Cash was struggling with similar feelings at the time, telling Rolling Stone that they had yet to say, “I love you,” to each other: “Because we knew what was going to happen.”

It was in 1962, while touring with Cash, June was sitting at her kitchen table at home in Madison, Tennessee when she penned the immortal words that would come to describe the searing, burning torment that she felt as she and Johnny fell into the inferno that would be her “Ring of Fire.” His 1963 recording of June’s anguished anthem was one of his biggest hits and is considered one of the greatest songs in the history of Country music, one that forever defines June Carter’s legacy.

They married in 1968, just as Johnny was becoming the biggest musical artist in the world, and together they welcomed their son, John Carter Cash, in 1970. For 35 years, the Cashes exemplified the human condition in all its forms, from the incredible peaks of success to times of heartbreak and loss. Through it all, June was the rock that kept her family together, choosing the role of “holder-upper” over her career, all the while connecting the origins of the music form that her own flesh and blood had pioneered to the modern day.

Professionally, the couple continued to perform together, earning awards and releasing duets including *Jackson*, *The Loving Gift*, *If I Were a Carpenter*, *No Need to Worry* and *Long-Legged Guitar Pickin’ Man*. They also starred in and hosted *The Johnny Cash Show*, a television music variety series which aired on ABC from 1969 to 1971.

“Unconditional” was the word Cash often used to describe the love he and Carter had. She helped him eventually overcome his addictions, being there for him during numerous bouts of rehab, staying by his side through sobriety and when he returned to using drugs and alcohol. Carter battled her own demons: She was a compulsive shopper and also became a serious prescription user, according to their son’s 2007 memoir, *Anchored in Love: An Intimate Portrait of June Carter Cash*.

Regardless, his parents’ “love for each other lasted throughout their whole life,” John told Reuters in 2007. “They didn’t give up... they accepted each other totally unconditionally.”

“You hear that phrase a lot, but it’s real with me and her,” Cash told Rolling Stone of his “unconditional” love for his wife. “She loves me in spite of everything. In spite of myself. She has saved my life more than once. She’s always been there with her love, and it has certainly made me forget the pain for a long time, many times. When it gets dark, and everybody’s gone home and the lights are turned off, it’s just me and her.”

An accomplished entertainer in her own right, Carter was often portrayed in the press as existing in her husband’s shadow. “I was never looking back in regret. I never thought, ‘Oh why didn’t I become an actress?’ or ‘Why did I just go paddling along after John,’” she reportedly said of her life with Cash. “I’ve always walked along right by his side, and he’s always supported everything I do.”



The couple remained together for the rest of their lives. Carter died of complications following heart surgery on May 15, 2003, in Nashville. Johnny Cash passed away four months later, on September 12, from complications associated with diabetes.

Cash gave his final live performance on July 5, 2003, at the Carter Family Fold in Hiltons, Virginia. Visibly frail, he honored his recently deceased wife between songs. “The spirit of June Carter overshadows me tonight with the love she had for me and the love I have for her,” he said. “We connect somewhere between here and Heaven. She came down for a short visit, I guess, from Heaven, to visit with me tonight to give me courage and inspiration, like she always has... I thank God for June Carter. I love her with all my heart.”

*\*\*Excerpts taken from [junecartercash.com](http://junecartercash.com) and [biography.com](http://biography.com)*

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