

The Killer's Legendary 70-year Career Ends Days After CMHF Induction

Jerry Lee Lewis, who passed away on Oct. 28, 2022, at age 87, may be best remembered as a rock and roll and rockabilly artist, but he also found an audience among fans of country music.

Jerry Lee Lewis was “too ill with the flu” to attend the Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony, during which he was inducted into the Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tennessee.

Instead, Lewis’ longtime friend and fellow music legend Kris Kristofferson accepted the medallion on Lewis’ behalf. Kristofferson and his wife then traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, where they delivered the honor to Lewis in person, not knowing Lewis had only days to live.

In a career spanning more than 70 years, he had a dozen gold records in both rock and country. He won four Grammy awards, including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and two Grammy Hall of Fame Awards.

Lewis was the first person inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986, and his pioneering contribution to the genre was recognized by the Rockabilly Hall of Fame. He was also a member of the inaugural class inducted into the Memphis Music Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2022.

Born on Sept. 29, 1935, in Ferriday, Louisiana, Lewis began playing the piano at age nine, copying the styles of preachers and black musicians that traveled through the area. His musical talents became apparent early on in life. He taught himself to play piano and sang in church growing up. He listened to such radio shows as the Grand Ole Opry and Louisiana Hayride, and Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams were some of his early influences. When he was 10, Lewis’ father mortgaged the family farm to buy Lee his first piano.

Lewis eventually ended up in Memphis, Tennessee, where he found work as a studio musician for Sun Studios. While working at



Sun, he and Carl Perkins jammed with Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. This session by the “Million Dollar Quartet” was recorded at the time, but it was not released until much later. Lewis’s distinctive piano-driven sound made him a star by 1957. Lewis became known for his stage antics, such as playing standing up and sometimes lighting his piano on fire. With his energetic live performances and recordings climbing the pop, country and R&B charts, he was dubbed “The Killer,” a moniker he continued to earn the rest of his life.

While singles like “Great Balls of Fire,” “Breathless” and “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” put him on the Pop and R&B charts in the 1950s, the ‘60s he found a new career as a country artist, scoring a hit with 1968’s “Another Place, Another Time.” Lewis recorded several country albums over the next few years, including 1970’s “Olde Tyme Country Music” and 1975’s “Boogie Woogie Country Man.”

A new generation of listeners was introduced to Lewis through the 1989 biopic “Great Balls of Fire,” in which Lewis was played by actor Dennis Quaid.

On the 2006 album “Last Man Standing” Lewis sang a number of rock, blues and country classics and was joined by friends and admirers

like Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson and Buddy Guy. Kristofferson described Lewis as “one of the few who can do rock ‘n’ roll, country or soul, and every song is authentic.”

Lewis and Kristofferson teamed up for 2010’s “Mean Old Man” with guests Eric Clapton, Tim McGraw, Sheryl Crow and John Fogerty among others.

Jerry Lee Lewis’ Café & Honky Tonk on historic Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee, opened in 2013, to showcase Lewis’s pianos, motorcycle, photos and memorabilia. His biography by Pulitzer Prize winning author Rick Bragg, “Jerry Lee Lewis – His Own Story,” was released in 2014.

In 2017 Lewis made a personal presence on Country Music Television’s “Skyville Live” show in a specially recorded performance featuring an array of artists paying tribute to the music of Lewis.

His most recent years were spent at The Lewis Ranch in Nesbit, Mississippi, but he was far from retired. Even after suffering a stroke in 2019, Lewis recorded an album of gospel covers. Earlier this year a collaborative gospel album with his cousin, Jimmy Swaggart, called “The Boys from Ferriday,” was released.

What IMDB calls “an electrifying glimpse into the complex life and thrilling, unparalleled performances of rock and roll’s first and wildest practitioner, a new documentary directed by Ethan Coen called “Jerry Lee Lewis: Trouble in Mind” was released just before Lewis’s death.

Lewis is survived by his wife, Judith Coghlan Lewis, his children Jerry Lee Lewis III, Ronnie Lewis, Phoebe Lewis and Lori Lancaster, a sister, Linda Gail Lewis, his cousin Jimmy Swaggart and many grandchildren, nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents Elmo and Mamie Lewis, sons Steve Allen Lewis and Jerry Lee Lewis Jr., his siblings Elmo Lewis Jr. and Frankie Jean Lewis and his cousin Mickey Gilley.



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Nadine's Corner



Well, here we are 15 days away from Christmas! Seems like I hid Easter eggs three weeks ago! I can't find my Christmas list so I can't remember who my friends are, much less my family! I bought my Christmas cards on sale last January and can't find them either! For holidays I guess I'll bring out all my traditional family recipes and that always keeps the guest list down.

Our grandkids are curious about how Santa Claus gets in their house if they don't have a chimney. I told them he came through a hole in their daddy's pocket.

This is also the time of year when I'm never quite sure if Dancer and Prancer are Santa's reindeer or two more candidates for president! I've been praying that a bright star would appear in the east over Washington DC. We could use a few wise men up there. Also the airlines are having

their own troubles. I heard they are putting mistletoe at the baggage counter, that way you can kiss your luggage goodbye!

I pray our Christmas eve service goes better than it did last year. Everybody lit their candle off of their neighbors and it was quiet and we were pondering the beauty of the moment. The choir director stood up and said, now that we are all lit, let's sing Joy to The World! I tell you if your christmas eve service doesn't involve candles being held by people who shouldn't be handling fire, you are missing one of the most exciting times of the Christmas season!

Merry Christmas to our christian friends, Happy Hanukkah to our Jewish friends and to our atheist friends, good luck!

Love y'all,
Nadine



Areeda's Southern Cooking

By Areeda Schneider Stampley

Beef Stroganoff

A tasty dish in between your holiday turkey and country ham meals!



1½ pounds thin sirloin steak cut in 2 inch strips
1/2 tsp salt
1/8 tsp garlic salt or 1/2 clove of fresh garlic
1/2 tsp black pepper 1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/2 cup onion, chopped 1/4 cup butter, melted
1/3 cup sliced mushrooms 1 ¼ cups beef bouillon
2 tsp Worcestershire Sauce 2 small bay leaves
1 cup sour cream 5 servings cooked white or brown rice
Season meat with salts, paprika and pepper. Brown with onion in butter. Add mushrooms and brown a few minutes. Add bouillon, bay leaves, and Worcestershire sauce; simmer 30-35 minutes. Remove meat. Place rice on serving plate and top with cooked meat pieces. Add sour cream to sauce in pan and heat, stirring constantly. Pour over meat and rice. Yield: 5 servings
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Cowboy singer and poet Don Edwards dies

Cowboy poet and Western singer, Don Edwards, has passed away. He was active for nearly 60 years in keeping alive the music and traditions of the American West. He died on Sunday, October 23rd at the age of 86.

Edwards was born and raised in the farming community of Boonton, New Jersey. He grew up dreaming of the American West from reading books about cowboys by Will James and others. He started playing the guitar at the age of 10 to emulate his heroes such as Gene Autry, Tex Ritter, and later Jimmie Rodgers. By the age of 16, Edwards moved to Texas and New Mexico to work in the oil fields and experience the West for himself.

Learning everything about the cowboy and Western ways, Edwards transformed himself into the very person he had idolized. The amusement park Six Flags Over Texas in Arlington hired him on when the park opened in 1961. He worked as a singer, actor, and stuntman for five years, before deciding to move to Nashville to pursue a recording career. But Edwards found little reception for his Western songs on Music Row since it was falling out of



style for the more Countryopolitan sounds of the time. Edwards did release an album of Western standards and originals for the independent label Stop, but to little success.

He moved back to Fort Worth in Texas, holding out hope for a recording career in Western music. That dream began to gain momentum in

1980 when he met Los Angeles DJ Larry Scott who helped set up Edwards in the studio with surviving members of Gene Autry's band and the Sons of the Pioneers to record the album *Happy Cowboy*. Edwards later visited the annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, which inspired him to release numerous

book/cassette packages of traditional cowboy songs, and he started to garner a cult following.

In 1992, Edwards signed with Michael Martin Murphey's label Warner Western, and began to regularly release albums of cowboy and Western music. He released *My Hero, Gene Autry: A Tribute* in 1998 for Autry's 90th birthday, and then paid tribute to Marty Robbins in 2001 with the help of Waddie Mitchell and the Fort Worth Symphony. In 2002, he worked with bluegrass legend Peter Rowan on a project called *High Lonesome Cowboy*.

Don Edwards ultimately became well known with Western music and cowboy poetry. He also worked as an actor, playing the character Smokey in the Robert Redford 1998 film *The Horse Whisperer*. He was twice nominated for Grammy Awards, and appeared on the Grammy-winning album *Other Voices, Other Rooms* by Nanci Griffith with the song "Night Rider's Lament." Two of Don's songs have been preserved in the Folklore Archives at the Library of Congress. In 2005, Don Edwards was inducted into the Western Music Association Hall of Fame.

Christmas Song Holds Timeless Message

By Sasha Dunavant

Keith Whitley's Christmas song, "The Christmas Letter," is as timely this Christmas as when it was first released in 1985.

"The Christmas Letter" is a subtle and gentle anthem for peace and hope. The first verse of the "The Christmas Letter" begins with an old man sitting at an antique desk. The lyrics inform that "it's almost Christmas Eve and it's almost time to go." Before the old man makes way toward his venture, he reads back the letter he had written not long before.

The most valuable message of the song is what the old man's letter states throughout its chorus, which is, "I want peace on Earth for Christmas. In a world where there's not one hungry child. A day when hope and faith conquers fear and hate. All that's gonna

take is a little more love."

The second verse reveals the identity of the old man when it states that "he walks outside and climbs up on his sleigh. Then, he calls out to his reindeer and off they fly away" to "make a million dreams appear," concluding with "while he wishes all dreams could come true this year."

Written by John Greenebaum, Gene Nelson and Paul Nelson, Whitley's recording was featured alongside popular Christmas songs by artists such as Dolly Parton, Charley Pride and Eddy Raven on the 1985 holiday album, "A Country Christmas Volume 4."

Since Whitley's sudden death in 1989, the song has been named No. 40 on the list of the Top 50 Country Christmas Songs. It has been covered by Reba McEntire, Patty Weaver and others.

Through the song's steady, easy flow, Whitley demonstrated his talent by playing both piano and guitar. He delivered the meaningful lyrics with vocals that were at the same time both humble and strong. The singer-songwriter seems to be offering a true reflection of his very own heart.

Whitley closes out the song by repeating part of the chorus to remind listeners that the true meaning of Christmas is "a day when hope and faith conquers fear and hate, all that's gonna take is a little more love."

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By Claudia Johnson

Lacy J. Dalton has not learned to act her age, and for her fans, that is a very good thing.

In addition to her commitment to the Let 'em Run Foundation, a charitable organization she founded for preserving, recovering and providing sanctuary for wild horses, Dalton, 76, continues to write and record new music and perform at venues coast to coast.

Country Reunion Magazine and CFR News were invited to an intimate evening with Dalton at Homestead Hall, Rory Feek's attractive and welcoming venue located on his Hardison Mill Farm near Columbia, Tennessee, on October 22.

During her 90-minute concert the Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter performed some of her million-airplay cuts, including "Hard Times," "No. 7 hit Crazy Blue Eyes," "Hillbilly Girl with the Blues," "Takin' It Easy," "Everybody Makes Mistakes," her worldwide hit, "Black Coffee" and her signature song, "16th Avenue," the anthem for Nashville songwriters voted one of Country's Top 100 Songs ever by Billboard Magazine.

Dalton's voice is as clear and strong as when she began recording four decades ago. As she sang each tune, she recalled the reasons she'd chosen to record it if it was written by someone else or what had influenced her to write it if it was self-penned. Her nimble mind and independent spirit is evident in one of her recently written songs, "Devil by a Different Name," from her album "For The Black Sheep."



The audience laughed along with her as she made jokes about her status as a female Country music "Outlaw," her relationships with men and her frustration that she could not get her guitar tuned to perfection during the performance.

Dalton had many old friends and professional colleagues attending the Homestead Hall event, which gave her the chance to draw

a connection between an individual and a song she was about to perform.

Throughout the evening Dalton told stories about growing up in a country-music-loving family who were a little shocked when she set out to become a Country star. She referred to the diverse locations she's called home since she left her native Pennsylvania as a teenager, including Utah's

Brigham Young University, New York's Greenwich Village, Santa Cruz, California, suburban Nashville and her current ranch in Nevada.

Named in 1979 as The Academy of Country Music's Top New Female Vocalist, Dalton recalled taking the stage with some of Country's most beloved hit-makers, many of whom are now deceased. Even as a new artist she performed with Hank Williams Jr., Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, George Jones, Glen Campbell, Merle Haggard, Charlie Daniels and many others. She talked about working with legendary producer Billy Sherrill and transitioning from being under contract with a record label to becoming an independent artist.

The night before the Homestead Hall concert she had returned to the Grand Ole Opry stage for her first performance there in a number of years. When she finished at Homestead Hall, she made a surprise appearance at the Midnight Jamboree at The Troubadour in Nashville where she joined David Frizzell and the duo Moore and Moore.

Dalton's lifetime of accomplishments was honored on Oct. 23, 2022, when she received the 8th Annual Josie Music Awards Lifetime Career Achievement at an awards ceremony in Nashville. She performed her hit "16th Avenue" with her guitarist, Dale Pounce, and received a well-deserved standing ovation.

"It's official," she said in a Facebook post of a picture of her award. "I am so honored and humbled."



Lacy's first album, Hard Times, released in 1980.



Lacy was the only woman on the project Half Nelson, for which she received a platinum record.

Memorial Tribute Show Held for Loretta Lynn

A memorial tribute show was held for Loretta Lynn on October 30.

Performers included Wynonna Judd, Jack White, Brandi Carlile, the Highwomen, Tanya Tucker, Alan Jackson, George Strait, Keith Urban, Darius Rucker, Margo Price, Little Big Town and others, with presenters including Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, Barbara Mandrell and Sheryl Crow. Taylor

Swift was among those adding video testimonials... although the most moving tribute was the one Lynn herself offered her fans, in an opening audio message that the star recorded for them this spring, not that many months before she died on Oct. 4.

Loretta's granddaughter, Emmy Rose Russell, paried up with Willie Nelson's son Lukas to sing Lay Me Down.



Left: Wynonna Judd with Larry Strickland and the Gaither Vocal Band. Right: Lukas Nelson and Emmy Rose Russell.



Lay Me Down - Emmy Russell and Lukas Nelson - Grand Ole Opry House - October 30, 2022



Christmas Cops & Country Music Ticket Available

A night of hit songs from the '80s and '90s era of Country music will be the focus of the Dec. 6 benefit event, Christmas Cops & Country Music, set to help raise money for Law Enforcement Assistance Partnership (LEAP) at the world-famous Nashville Palace.

Hitmakers from the 1980s like John Conlee, T. Graham Brown, Ronnie McDowell and David Frizzell along with '90s hitmakers Michelle Wright, Marty Raybon of Shenandoah

and Terry McBride of McBride & The Ride will take the stage to perform songs everyone remembers during the event presented by All Access Coach.

“Man, this event is going to be so much fun,” said T. Graham Brown. “You know, we never get to hang out with our fellow artist friends because we are always on the road, so these events really are a time to catch up, have fun and help raise money for such a great cause.”

Earlier this year the Nashville Palace hosted the Music Memorial for Jeff Carson which also benefited LEAP and raised \$82,000.

"We are honored to be part of this event as the last one exceeded all of our expectations," said LEAP President Diane Wilhoit. "We used some of the funds raised in May to provide scholarships to children of law enforcement as well as purchase air units for police officers to use under their protective gear during the

height of the summer.”

General admission tickets to the Dec. 6 event are \$40, and reserved seats are \$50. VIP tables range from \$500 to \$1,000. Those interested in a tax-deductible ticket purchase may contact Diane with LEAP directly at 615-587-1023 or visit leapfranklin.org. Tickets are available on The Nashville Palace website thefamousnashvillepalace.com or at christmascopsandcountrymusic.com.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

Performing Larry's Country Diner with a live audience is always so much fun. And Branson in October was no exception. There are always special things that happen that are unexpected and special folks we get to meet. This year while hanging out in the lobby, Steven Lacy handed me his phone with a photo. I was stunned! While visiting Arizona, and with the directions in my book, "Precious Memories Memorial", there on his phone was a photo of my son, Justin's



grave!!! I couldn't believe it!! He and his wife took the time to visit Justin's grave and stopped by the grave of Waylon Jennings. How very cool!



Thank you Steven,...you touched my heart with your thoughtfulness!!!

NEW BOOKS

I have had a lot of questions about the 2022 CFR News book. Yes...the new 2022 book will be coming soon. It will include the complete newspapersall 12 months, January-December. Our newspaper books are so special because it feels like we are preserving history.

Check out all 10 books, Years 2012-2021 on my website for more information on each one and how to order. Or give me a call and I can take an order over the phone. (615-579-5497. www.Renaethewaitress.com)

DINER CHAT

If you are a faithful listener to Diner Chat every Thursday at 2:00 there may be some changes. When I started Diner Chat around 10 years ago I was working for Larry Black at Gabriel Communications. At 2:00 it was easy to just turn on my computer camera on my desk, and take a break. These days I run around like a chicken with my head cut off. Since the offices sold and I don't have a company job.... I am on the go a lot. Between my Book club, being the distributor for GoGut, and traveling, 2:00 seems to be missed occasionally. I do apologize. My NEW YEARS resolution is to revamp Diner Chat on Facebook. Subscribe to Diner Chat and never miss a Chat no matter what time it happens. You can catch me on Larry's Country Diner's

Facebook page or Renae The Waitress Facebook page. See you there.

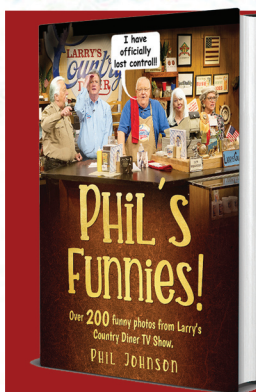
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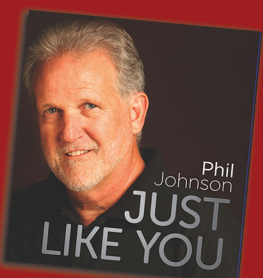


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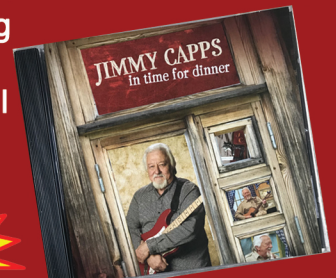
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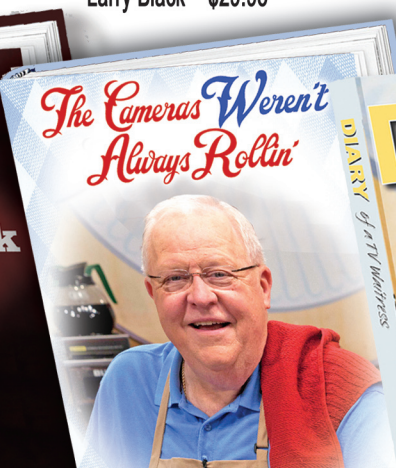
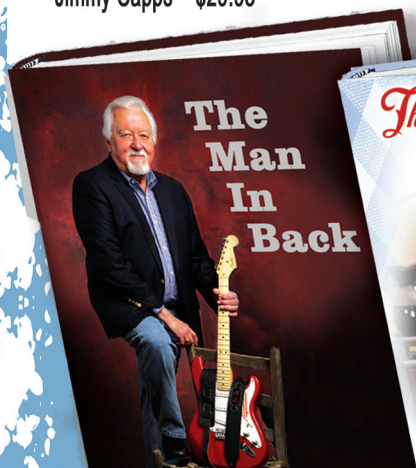
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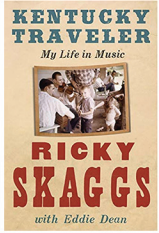


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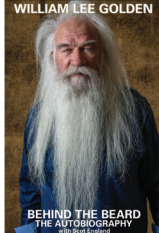
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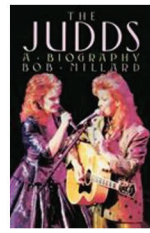
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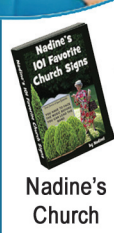
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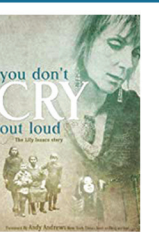
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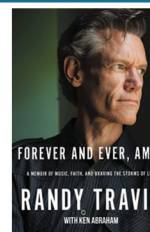
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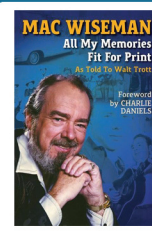
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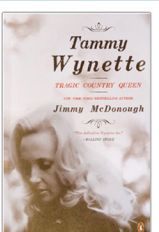
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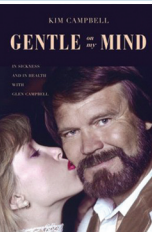
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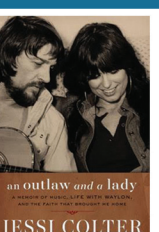
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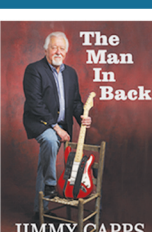
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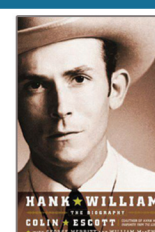
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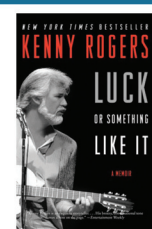
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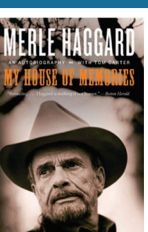


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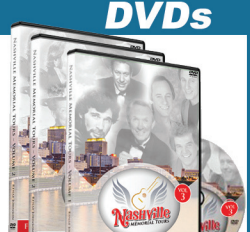
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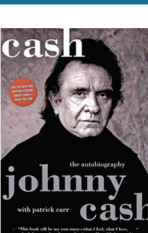
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“Coming Home for Christmas” Tour with Vassar and Carter

Platinum-selling Phil Vassar is “Coming Home for Christmas” and bringing singer-songwriter Deana Carter as the pair announce their 2022 Christmas tour. Fans have made it a tradition to join Vassar for an evening of Christmas classics and original holiday music, packing out venues for his last four tours.

“I love Deana. She is one of my dearest, oldest friends. She’s an amazing talent and an even better person. I’m really excited to bring this tour to all the fans this holiday season,” Vassar said.

In anticipation of their first tour together, Vassar and Carter co-wrote two original Christmas songs with No. 1 hit songwriter and Songwriters Hall of Fame member, Steve Dorff, titled “Coming Home for Christmas” and “Brand New Year.” The festive singles will be released this fall and be featured on Vassar’s forthcoming EP release.

“I’m thrilled to announce my first ever Christmas Tour! My buddy, Phil Vassar, and I will be hitting the road with some new Christmas songs that we wrote together on our Coming Home for Christmas Tour...to celebrate the most special season of the year in a town near you!” said Carter. Vassar’s reign of signature songs includes 10 No. 1 singles and 26 Top 40 hits, including “Carlene, Just Another Day in Paradise,” “Six-Pack Summer,” “When I Love You” and many more. Vassar was racking up hits on the radio long before he even began his own recording career that has seen the release of nine albums, two ASCAP Songwriter of the Year trophies, ACM’s Top New Male Vocalist and sold-out shows across the country. Vassar’s songwriting career blossomed in the mid-’90s when he landed a publishing contract with EMI and penned hits for Collin Raye (“Little Red Rodeo”), Alan Jackson (“Right on the Money”), Tim McGraw (“My Next Thirty Years,” “For a Little While”), Jo Dee Messina (“Bye Bye, Alright”), and Blackhawk (“Postmarked Birmingham”). He signed a record deal of his own with Arista in 1998 and was named ASCAP’s Country Songwriter of the Year in 1999 and 2001. 2020 marked an important anniversary for Vassar, 20 years since his first No. 1 single, “Just Another Day in Paradise,” was released. To celebrate, Vassar released his long-awaited 10th studio album, “Stripped Down. The album’s effortless production puts the songs front and center. It features songs written over the past 20 years but never-before recorded and new music, including “This is Where the End Starts,” co-written with daughter, Haley Vassar and Vassar’s take on



(and fans) by storm with her wildly successful multi-platinum international debut “Did I Shave My Legs For This?” Anchored by the dreamy, debut super-hit, “Strawberry Wine,” Carter showcased her own blend of country and retro-rock, sprinkled with the folksy singer/songwriter qualities that have garnered Carter well-deserved, lasting respect, and wide acclaim.

Carter’s debut album, “Did I Shave My Legs For This?” showcased her songwriting and production skills and was met with strong reviews. The record would ultimately climb to the top of both the country and pop charts, quickly achieving multi-platinum status, with three consecutive No. 1 singles and five high-charting singles, an incredible achievement for a debut artist.

To date, Carter’s music has more than 500 million streams, and she has sold nearly six million albums. Carter was thrilled to recently celebrate the 25th Anniversary Edition re-release of the “Did I Shave

My Legs for This?” album on Universal Nashville, with new guest artist collaborations on the singles “Strawberry Wine” and “Did I Shave My Legs For This?” The 25th Anniversary Edition includes previously un-released bonus tracks and new digital content to round out the Diamond Anniversary celebration.

Get the Christmas tour schedule at deana.com.

“Postmarked Birmingham,” a hit he wrote for Blackhawk.

Vassar will release a brand-new project in 2021 featuring covers from artists that have inspired him throughout his career. Additionally, the hit-maker will release a new podcast on the American Songwriter Podcast Network and season 3 of “Phil Vassar’s Songs from the Cellar” on

Circle. For more information on Phil Vassar, visit PhilVassar.com and follow him on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Nashville native, Deana Carter, didn’t take an easy route to stardom. Instead, she chose to defy conventional expectations of the typical Nashville artist blueprint and to make her own mark, taking the industry



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Pair of Veterans Team Up as Country Duo

Combat veterans and musicians Scooter Brown and Donnie Reis are no newcomers to the music scene with a combined history of more than 20 million streams and counting, 26 Billboard Top 10s and 25 years of touring around the world.

The pair recently formed a duo called War Hippies and have released a 12-track album, "War Hippies," featuring Brown and Reis on vocals as well as Reis on the violin. "We couldn't be more excited to join forces and start this next chapter of music in our careers," said the pair in a statement. "This project is 100% us and we couldn't be more proud of the music we are creating with War Hippies."

Featuring eight original songs plus four carefully selected covers, the album follows the storyline of their past as USMC and US Army Combat veterans. In the focus track "Make It Out Live," the pair touch on the heartbreaking growing veteran suicide rate.

Reis and Brown are no strangers to loss and their authentic, deeply-personal lyrics help encourage those dealing with these struggles to keep pushing on and live each day for what they are given.

"The Hangman" has garnered thousands of streams since its release and this album is highly anticipated by the loyal fanbase they've built organically touring the country. Reis is a world-renowned violinist who has spent years on the road with various artists playing violin/fiddle, piano/keys, guitars and contributing vocals. Off the road, he has written and produced many hit songs for a wide range of artists, groups, television and film projects spanning the genres of Country, Rock, Pop, Gospel and Singer-Songwriter. Reis's



achievements include 26 Billboard Top 10's and four songs on the Billboard 200 chart.

Despite receiving a full music scholarship to Miami University, after completing his sophomore year, Reis chose not to pursue a career in classical music. Instead, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and began preparations for combat after watching the attack on America, Sept. 11, 2001.

He deployed for a year in Iraq at the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2004-2005. He was honorably discharged in 2009. Since then, Reis has returned to bases all over the world on multiple MWR and USO tours to entertain troops and connect with fellow warriors. Donnie serves on the Nashville Task Force of the Special Operators Transition Foundation, which specializes in assisting Special Operations Forces veterans with the successful transition from the service into their next great career in corporate America.

"I hope this record has a positive impact and makes a difference, provides hope and inspiration and is a

breath of fresh air for country music and the world at this moment in history," adds Donnie Reis.

Brown formed the Scooter Brown Band more than a decade ago and began playing mainly in and around Houston, Texas.

He's since toured North America and opened for some of his biggest influences including the Charlie Daniels Band, Travis Tritt, Dwight Yoakam, Lee Roy Parnell and the Marshall Tucker Band, just to name a few.

With his band, he released "American Son feat. Charlie Daniels

"in late 2017, which reached No. 19 on the iTunes Country chart. He was named in Artists to Watch by Rolling Stone. Spotify supported the title track of the album on playlists "Country Rocks," "Southern Rock 101" and "Texas Music Now." Brown was featured as a finalist on USA Network's "Real Country" in 2018 on Travis Tritt's team, and was awarded Male Vocalist of the Year at the Third Annual Rocky Mountain Country Music Awards presented by iHeartRadio.

Brown served four years and three months, two tours overseas with one tour of combat in Iraq as a United States Marine. He is a founder and board member for Base Camp 40, an organization that provides brotherhood and support to veterans – www.bc40hunts.com. He is also a father of three children, two of which he and his wife adopted.

Along with the physical CD version of the "War Hippies" album, fans have the option to pre-order a limited-edition vinyl containing exclusive versions of "American Son," "Make It Out Alive" and "Warrior's Farewell." In conjunction with the album release, War Hippies just finished a U.S. tour with Travis Tritt and Chris Janson.

Fun, Sweet Christmas Movie Stars Two Country Favorites



"Christmas in Tune" is the story of Belle, played by Candice King, a marketing executive who is worried that she may lose her job at her start-up communications company. Luckily, she is able to reunite her battling mother Georgia, Reba McEntire, and father Joe, John Schneider, to stage a reunion benefit concert for the Snow Ball, which would be live-streamed to overseas U.S. troops.

Belle's parents were once part of a sensational, award-winning Country duo. However, the pair parted less than amicably when Belle was a child and have battled ever since. Each of them found success as solo artists, but Reba's character, Georgia Winter, is supposed to be as famous as, well, as Reba herself.

The movie is sweet, touching and perfect for fans of country music. It is filled with Nashville drama and solid country performances by two country favorites. It's a Lifetime Network movie, so it's wholesome enough for the entire family.

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Brenda Lee – “Little Miss Dynamite,” Part II

In addition to Brenda Lee’s success at home, she also achieved fame in the UK early in her career with “Sweet Nothin’s,” which reached No. 4 on the UK singles chart in the spring of 1960. “Let’s Jump the Broomstick,” “Speak to Me Pretty” and “Here Comes that Feeling” also became favorites with her supporters abroad.

Lee became one of the biggest pop stars on the planet with a global fan base. “My overseas success was a surprise to me and it still is, even after all these years,” she said. “We were just told that I am still the third largest foreign seller on my label, still after all these years.”

To what does she attribute that success?

“Being loyal about going over, singing in their language, showing them that you really do want to be there and are really trying,” she said. “I learned to sing in Italian, German, Spanish, Japanese and French. They appreciate it even if you pronounce it wrong. They love you for even trying. I think that’s a lot of it, and you’ve got to go over more than once. You can’t just go once and leave them because once they are loyal, they are loyal.”

Though she’d had success in rockabilly, pop and rock, in the 70s she returned to her first love—country music—and enjoyed another successful season of her career starting with “Nobody Wins,” which hit the Top 5 on the



country chart and also graced the pop chart.

Lee recalled Nashville publisher Bob Beckham asking her to come in and listen to a Kris Kristofferson song called “Jesus Was A Capricorn,” that he thought she should record. Instead, she gravitated to the Kristofferson-penned “Nobody Wins.”

“That was my first legitimate country hit,” she says. “I told Kris,

‘You started the walk for me to the Country Music Hall of Fame!’”

Lee churned out country hits such as “Sunday Sunrise,” “Big Four Poster Bed” and continued to have country hits into the ‘80s including “The Cowgirl and the Dandy,” “Broken Trust and “Hallelujah, I Love Her So,” a duet with George Jones.

Even though she’s had success in multiple genres, Lee feels her best-loved hit will always be “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree.”

“I always thought, ‘I’m Sorry’ would be my signature song, but it seems like ‘Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree’ is, so I’ll take it,” she said with a grin. “We knew we had something special when we cut it.”

Lee said that Johnny Marks, who wrote “Rudolph,” “Holly Jolly Christmas” and lots of Christmas songs was the writer.

“I don’t know why he chose me,” she said. “I was only 12, but he sent it to me, and we just loved it. The lick on the front with the sax and the guitar, that is Grady Martin, Boots Randolph and Hank Garland. That was the A team. We recorded with musicians Buddy Harman, Bobby Moore, Ray Eddington, Harold Bradley, Floyd Cramer and the Anita Kerr Singers, and Owen was the producer. It doesn’t

get any better than that. When you’ve got that kind of talent, it’s not hard to record. We knew we had something special, but we never dreamed it would be what it is.”

“Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” continues to top the holiday charts year after year.

“Owen had a Christmas tree in the studio when we recorded it and Christmas lights,” she said. “He had the air conditioner on full blast and it was all Christmassy. I never get tired of singing it. I sing it all year long. I love singing it, and it’s a simple song. It’s not complex at all. It’s a feel-good song, and we all had fun doing it.”

In addition to dominating multiple charts and performing on the world’s most prestigious stages, including the Hollywood Bowl and the London Palladium, Lee also forged a successful life away from the spotlight. She married husband Ronnie Shacklett in 1963, and they raised two daughters, Julie and Jolie. She fills her life by performing for her fans, spending time with family and hosting a weekly Bible study with her girlfriends. Life is good and she’s grateful for her blessings.

“What I’m most proud of is that I don’t have to put on a different hat to be Brenda Lee. I’m who I am all the time,” she observed. “My greatest achievement is that my fans have become my friends, and we’re family. They know I love them, and I know they love me. I have some that have been with me from the start. Other than God, they are responsible for who and what I am. He gave me the gift, but they’ve let me have my gift. They are the best people in the world. I know when one of their kids are hurt. I know if they are hurt. They know if something is happening in my family, and we love each other. I want them to love other entertainers too and they do. That makes me happy. We started out together and Lord love them, they are still here.”



Jeff Cook of Alabama dies peacefully at 73

Jeff Cook, founding member and legendary guitarist of the supergroup ALABAMA, has died. Cook, a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, Musicians Hall of Fame, Fiddlers Hall of Fame and Gibson's Guitarist of the Year, passed away peacefully yesterday, November 7, with his family and close friends by his side at his beach home in Destin, Florida. He was 73.

The multi-award-winning guitarist was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2012. Cook was a champion in all he attempted, and he courageously faced his battle with a positive attitude.

Jeffrey Alan Cook was born in Fort Payne, Alabama on August 27, 1949. He began playing lead guitar and keyboards in bands at the age of 13. Securing a broadcast license only three days after his 14th birthday, Cook went to work as a disc jockey at a local Fort Payne radio station. The broadcast bug had entered his blood and later resulted in him owning radio and TV stations. After graduating from Fort Payne High School, Cook received a degree in Electronic Technology from Gadsden State Community College in Gadsden, Alabama and was named "Outstanding Alumni" by the American Association of Community Colleges. Cook loved that radio combined two of his favorite things, music and electronics.

One of Cook's lifelong dreams came true with the construction of Cook Sound Studios and his home, "Cook Castle," based in Fort Payne. The studio was a way for him to help musicians share their music with others. Outside of music, one of his favorite hobbies was bass fishing. He was proud to be an official "Fishing Ambassador" to the state of Alabama, as proclaimed by five Governors.

Cook is credited for introducing the electric double neck guitar to country music. He was also an accomplished musician with the ability to play piano, guitar, fiddle, bass guitar, banjo, mandolin and anything



else thrown in front of him.

He married the love of his life, Lisa Williams, on June 9, 1995. The Cooks resided in "Cook Castle" atop Lookout Mountain in Fort Payne, AL, Guntersville, AL and Destin/Miramar Beach, FL.

As a member of ALABAMA, Cook enjoyed one of the most successful careers in country music history. Over 50 years ago, Cook, along with cousins Teddy Gentry and Randy Owen, left Fort Payne to spend the

summer playing music in a Myrtle Beach, South Carolina bar called The Bowery. It took Cook, Gentry and Owen six long years of tip jars and word-of-mouth to earn the major label deal they'd been dreaming of. Then, seemingly no time at all to change the face of country music forever. Cook's iconic guitar licks, unique fiddle style, exceptional vocals and harmony, along with his bandmates, went on to sell 80 million albums and charted 43 No. 1 hits,

becoming the biggest group in the history of the country genre.

Due to Cook's health battle, he ceased touring with ALABAMA in 2018. With his encouragement and well wishes, ALABAMA went on because Cook never wanted "the music to stop or the party to end."

With his profound desire to help others, The Jeff and Lisa Cook Foundation was formed along with The Jeff and Lisa Cook Children's Home to house orphaned children worldwide, starting in the Philippines.

Cook is survived by his wife of 27 years Lisa Cook, beloved puppies Blazer and Blakely, his mother Betty Cook, his brother David Cook, Crystal Cook, his father-in-law Jerrial Williams, his brother-in-law Randy Williams and many nieces and nephews. Cook was pre-deceased by his father James Cook and his mother-in-law, JoAnn Williams.

Jeffrey Alan Cook will always be thankful for his loving family, many close friends and especially... his FANS.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations be made to THE JEFF AND LISA COOK FOUNDATION:

P.O. BOX 680067, Fort Payne, AL 35968 or through the foundation website: thejeffandlisacookfoundation.org

Arrangements for Cook's "Celebration of Life" will be announced at a later date.



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Ten Years Ago This Month

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Two talented Christmas babies, born a year apart

BARBARA MANDRELL

Barbara Mandrell was born December 25, 1948 in Houston, Texas into a very religious Christian family to parents Irby and Mary Mandrell. Barbara showed musical promise from a very early age. By the time she was nine years old, she was already proficient in the accordion and steel-pedal guitar. Right from the start, she had an affinity for the stage: "When I was a little girl in Texas, no more than four or five, I used to pretend I was Loretta Young. Remember the way Loretta Young made her entrance on the television show, so graceful and glamorous and controlled? I would make poor Aunt Thelma sit and watch me do my big entrance. I'd find one of Momma's dresses and I'd put on a show and sing. And Aunt Thelma would sit patiently through it."

Barbara's father, Irby, was her biggest fan and musical mentor. He later became her manager as well and helped her get her first jobs, but she recalled that he was never demanding, only encouraging and loving. "Some people call him a stage father ... He wasn't a stage father. He was a father who raised his children to succeed. Our business just happened to be music."



In 1960, at the tender age of eleven, Barbara Mandrell was discovered by Joe Maphis and became part of his show in Las Vegas. Barbara was so good on the steel guitar that her gig in Vegas led to an invitation-at age 12-to tour with Johnny Cash, where she met Patsy Cline and other musical greats of the era, all of whom were incredibly impressed by her talent and her pluck at such a young age. "When we started to play instruments, Daddy said, 'Don't ever let anybody say 'You pick good for a girl.' As far as I knew, there was only one woman in country music who played steel guitar, Marion Hall, and the saxophone always had a reputation as a kind of man's instrument, but those were the two instruments I played when I went to Las Vegas at the age of eleven. Later I picked up the Dobro and the banjo, two other instruments very few women played."

After the tour, Irby formed the Mandrell Family Band, which featured Barbara on pedal steel and saxophone. Her two sisters, Irlene and Louise, sang backup, with Irby on guitar and lead vocals and mother Mary Ellen on bass. Barbara soon fell hard for Ken Dudley, the drummer of the band, but he was 21 and she was fourteen, which created quite a scandal. Her parents separated the young couple and prohibited them from even seeing one another; Barbara was not able to see Dudley again until many years later, when he returned from fighting in Vietnam.

With the love of her life fighting overseas, Barbara put all of her attention and effort into the band. As an 18-year-old, she released her first single, "Queen for a Day," in 1966. A year later, she married Ken Dudley and briefly retired from music to become a housewife. But Barbara missed performing and returned to music in 1969, signing with Columbia Records and charting for the first time with a cover of Otis Redding's "I've Been Loving You Too Long." In 1970, Barbara released "Playin' Around With Love" and also gave birth to her first child, Kenneth Matthew. In 1976, she gave birth to a daughter, Jamie Nicole, and in 1978 she scored her first No. 1 hit, "Sleeping Single in a Double Bed."

In 1984 she was involved in a serious head-on car collision. She barely survived, suffering multiple fractures, lacerations, and memory loss. While taking time off to recuperate, she found out she was pregnant with her third child, Nathaniel Mandrell Dudley, born in 1985.

Today Barbara Mandrell continues to spend her time with family and

friends and has slowly recovered from her intense fear of driving to live a normal life. "I am much more aware and defensive than I used to be," she said. "It's true. Everybody is out to get you. They don't know those are lethal weapons, those automobiles ... But I kept going. Now I come home in rush hour, and I'm fine. I've got my independence again. No telling what I'll do next."

SISSY SPACEK

Born Mary Elizabeth Spacek, on December 25, 1949 in Quitman, Texas. Nicknamed Sissy by her two older brothers, she was a vivacious little girl, making her first stage appearance at age six, singing and dancing in a local talent show. After attending Quitman High School, where she was crowned homecoming queen, Sissy moved to New York City to pursue her dreams of a singing career in 1967, at the age of 17. In New York, she lived with her cousin, the actor Rip Torn (Sissy's father was Torn's uncle) and his wife, the actress Geraldine Page. In 1968, using the name "Rainbo," she recorded a single, "John, You've Gone Too Far This Time," teasing John Lennon for appearing nude on an album cover with his wife, Yoko Ono. Sales of her music sputtered, however, and "Rainbo" was dropped from her record label.

Sissy subsequently decided to switch her focus to acting, enrolling at the famed Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute. After appearing as an extra in *Trash* (1970), a film produced at Andy Warhol's factory, she made her bona fide film debut as a teenager abducted by a white slavery ring in the Lee Marvin thriller *Prime Cut* (1972). Sissy played another troubled adolescent character in 1973's *Badlands*, attracting attention for her role as the girlfriend of a serial killer, played by Martin Sheen. It was while working on the film that Spacek met her future husband, the production designer Jack Fisk. The couple married in 1974, and Fisk helped Sissy land her breakthrough role in Brian De Palma's teen horror classic *Carrie* (1976). (Fisk worked as art director on the film.) As an emotionally disturbed, telekinetically gifted teenage girl with a fanatically religious mother (Piper Laurie), real-life prom queen Sissy struck a heartwrenching, terrifying chord with critics and audiences alike, earning her first Academy Award nomination for Best Actress and instant cult status.

After beginning to prove her versatility as an actress in such films as Robert Altman's *Three Women* (1977), costarring Shelley Duvall and Janice Rule, and *Heart Beat* (1979), costarring Nick Nolte, Sissy showcased her considerable gifts in the 1980 biopic *Coal Miner's Daughter*, about country singer Loretta Lynn. In addition to portraying Lynn from age 13 to her forties, Sissy insisted on singing all of Lynn's songs herself, instead of lip syncing. The performance earned her universal critical praise, including the Academy Award for Best Actress.

On the heels of *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Sissy turned away from high profile projects to star in her husband's directorial debut, *Raggedy Man* (1981), playing a divorced mother who has a dangerous relationship with a sailor, played by Eric Roberts.

Both Sissy and her husband then took a lengthy break from filmmaking, retreating to their Virginia farm, Beau Val, to spend time with their two daughters, Schuyler (now an actress who appeared in the 2002 comedy *Orange County*) and Madison.

While there's been no shortage of Sissy onscreen in recent years, the 62-year-old star has a more literary goal in mind these days. Co-written with friend Maryanne Vollers, "My Extraordinary Ordinary Life" traces Sissy's Texas childhood to her experiences working with Terrence Malick, Brian DePalma and David Lynch to the challenges of finding juicy roles as an actress over 50.

