



# Spotlight

## Bocephus!

Superstar's Son  
To Young Gun  
To Country Icon

*Well, my Mama met my Daddy down in Alabam'  
They tied the knot, so here I am.  
—"Born to Boogie"*

**BY RAY WADDELL**

When Randall Hank Williams was born 54 years ago in Shreveport, La., he had a tough act to follow. But today he casts as wide a shadow as any artist over the country music landscape.

The pride-and-joy son of Hank Williams, arguably the most iconic of all country music figures, and his firecracker wife, Audrey, Hank Jr. moved with his parents to Nashville at 3 months old. Bocephus, as his dad nicknamed him, was heir to a legacy that he has spent a lifetime burnishing and building upon.

Hank Williams died at age 29 on New Year's Day 1953, and just a few years later, Hank Jr. was singing his father's songs himself.

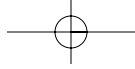
With his mother as his manager, Hank Williams Jr. made his onstage debut singing "Lovesick Blues" in Swainsboro, Ga. Three years later, Hank Jr. performed on the Grand Ole Opry for the first time, and his career was officially under way.

By the time Hank Jr. was in his mid-teens, he was a veteran of several tours, first as a member of Audrey's Caravan of Stars and later as a headlining artist in his own right.

His companions as a youth included such legendary hell-raisers as Jerry Lee Lewis, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash and, of course, Merle Kilgore, Hank Jr.'s longtime manager and one-time opening act.

"We had a lot of fun," Kilgore remembers of the era and parties at Audrey's house. "People like Cash, Hank Snow, Jerry Lee all came over, we all had a  
(Continued on page 20)





# THE #1's

## HOT COUNTRY SINGLES & TRACKS

- All For The Love Of Sunshine
- Eleven Roses
- Texas Women
- Dixie On My Mind
- All My Rowdy Friends  
(Have Settled Down)
- Honky Tonkin'
- I'm For Love
- Ain't Misbehavin'
- Mind Your Own Business
- Born To Boogie

## HOT COUNTRY AIRPLAY

- I'm For Love
- Ain't Misbehavin'
- Mind Your Own Business

## HOT COUNTRY SINGLE SALES

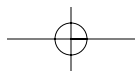
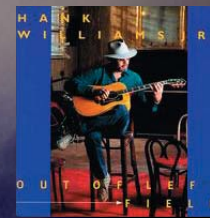
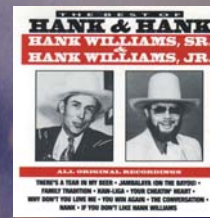
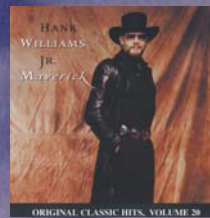
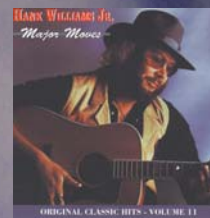
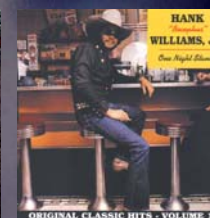
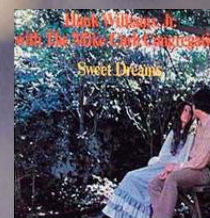
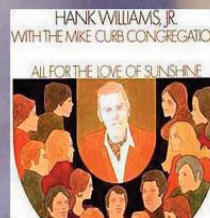
- I'm For Love
- Ain't Misbehavin'
- Country State Of Mind
- Mind Your Own Business
- Born To Boogie
- Young Country

## TOP CATALOG COUNTRY ALBUMS

Greatest Hits

## TOP COUNTRY ALBUMS

- Major Moves (7 weeks)
- Five-O (10 weeks)
- Greatest Hits, Volume II
- Montana Café (4 weeks)
- Hank "Live"
- Born To Boogie
- Wild Streak (2 weeks)
- Greatest Hits, Volume III (11 weeks)



# Curb Records Congratulates Hank Williams Jr. On 5 Decades Of Music 1969 - 2004

## ALBUMS

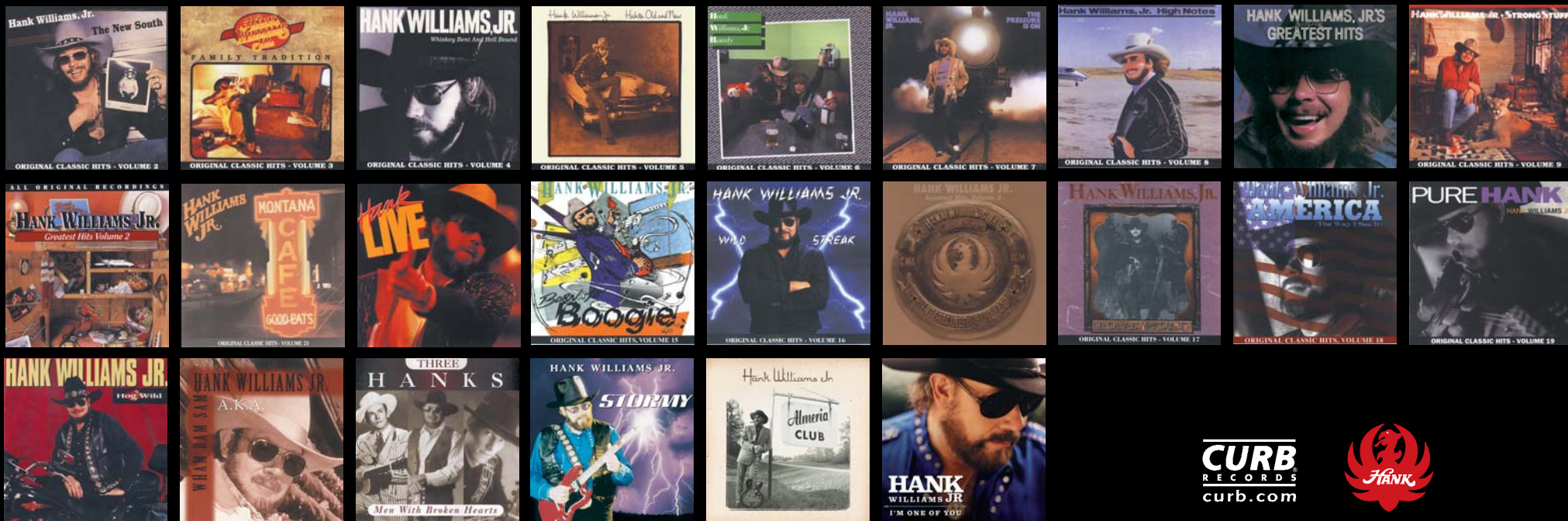
All For The Love Of Sunshine  
Sweet Dreams  
One Night Stands  
Family Tradition •  
Whiskey Bent And Hell Bound •  
Habits Old And New •  
Rowdy •  
The Pressure Is On ★  
The New South  
High Notes •  
Greatest Hits ★(5)  
Strong Stuff •  
Man Of Steel •  
Major Moves ★  
Five-O •  
Greatest Hits, Volume II ★  
Montana Cafe •  
Hank "Live" ★  
Born To Boogie ★  
Wild Streak •  
Greatest Hits, Volume III ★  
Lone Wolf •  
America (The Way I See It) •  
Pure Hank •  
Maverick •  
The Best Of Hank & Hank  
Out Of Left Field  
Hog Wild  
A.K.A. Wham Bam Sam  
Men With Broken Hearts  
Stormy  
Almeria Club Recordings  
I'm One Of You

## SINGLES

All For The Love Of Sunshine  
Rainin' In My Heart  
Ain't That A Shame  
Mobile Boogie  
I'm Not Responsible  
(Honey Won't You Call Me)  
One Night Stands  
Feelin' Better  
You Love The Thunder  
I Fought The Law  
Old Flame, New Fire  
To Love Somebody  
Family Tradition  
Whiskey Bent And Hell Bound  
Women I've Never Had  
Kaw-Liga  
Old Habits  
Texas Women  
Dixie On My Mind  
All My Rowdy Friends  
(Have Settled Down)  
A Country Boy Can Survive  
Honky Tonkin'  
American Dream  
(If Heaven Ain't A Lot Like Dixie)  
Gonna Go Huntin' Tonight  
Leave Them Boys Alone  
Queen Of The Heart  
Man Of Steel  
Attitude Adjustment  
All My Rowdy Friends Are  
Coming Over Tonight  
Major Moves

I'm For Love  
This Ain't Dallas  
Ain't Misbehavin'  
Country State Of Mind  
Mind Your Own Business  
When Something Is Good  
(Why Doesn't It Change)  
Born To Boogie  
Heaven Can't Be Found  
Young Country  
If The South Woulda Won  
Early In The Morning And Late At Night  
There's A Tear In My Bear  
(w/ Hank Williams)  
Finders And Keepers  
Ain't Nobody's Business  
Good Friends, Good Whiskey, Good Lovin'  
Man To Man  
Don't Give Us A Reason  
I Mean I Love You  
If It Will It Will  
Angels Are Hard To Find  
Hotel Whiskey  
Come On Over To The Country  
Everything Comes Down To Money And Love  
I Ain't Goin' Peacefully  
Hog Wild  
America Will Survive  
Outdoor Lovin Man  
I'm One Of You  
Why Can't We All Just Get A Longneck

- RIAA GOLD CERTIFICATION
- ★ RIAA PLATINUM CERTIFICATION



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# 'I Like That Banjo And I Like Balls-To-The Wall Rock'

*Hank Williams Jr Looks Back On Family, Friends, Fans And Football*

BY RAY WADDELL

You travel about 100 miles northwest of Nashville to rural Paris, Tenn., to find the offices of Hank Williams Jr. Enterprises. There, on a recent day, before sitting down for a chat with a visitor, Williams showed off the latest addition to his impressive collection of Civil War artifacts, an exhaustively documented musket from the Sixth Cavalry of Alabama.

Williams and longtime manager Merle Kilgore later took their visitor for a short ride out to Williams' Paradise Lodge retreat, where wild turkey and Tennessee white-tailed deer dropped by for happy hour.

"You don't see this in Green Hills," Williams remarked, referring to the upscale Nashville borough. "This is where I'd rather have my afternoon cocktail."

Williams' collection "Greatest Hits Vol. 1" recently passed the milestone of 500 weeks combined on the Top Country Catalog and Top Country Albums charts. Meanwhile, Mercury Records has issued "The Best of Hank Williams, Jr." as part of its 20th Century Masters/The Millennium Collection, and Curb Records has released his latest CD, "I'm One of You."

And this son of country legend Hank Williams has fathered his own young country contenders. His son, Shelton Hank Williams III, and daughter, Holly Williams, are building their own music careers.

The veteran performer spared some time to talk about his life and work, from the earliest days to his current success, and to reflect on an illustrious family tradition in country music.

## What are your earliest memories of performing?

We do have an [early film] of me in Swainsboro, Ga., at 8 years old. Thank God I can't remember much of it, but I've seen it. To be quite honest, it wasn't until just a couple of years later that [performing] was totally commonplace for me.

I was out there. That was 1957, and of course everybody was starved for some piece of this person [Hank Williams] that so few people actually got to see. And the ones who did were just mystified.

I would be out there at 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 . . . People were either laughing and smiling or completely broken up. It was happiness and it was sorrow. That's the earliest thing I remember.

I really remember riding in the cars. Trailer in the back, sometimes the bass fiddle on the top. I could climb into the back window above the seat and lay down, that's how lit-



WILLIAMS: 'IT'S GOING TO BE MY WAY'

tle I was. They'd have the Grand Ole Opry on, and I'd say, "Put it on WLAC, I wanna hear Hoss." Many times over the years going somewhere in a jet to make a lick, I've thought about how I'm glad I got to see some of that.

## Other than the obvious impact of your father, who else influenced you early in your career?

Lightnin' Hopkins, Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, John Lee Hooker—all of that stuff.

## What was it that they did that you responded to?

I loved the Delta blues stuff, the open-G tuning, like I've been doing for years. I liked the music they were making. I liked the beat, the feel, the rhythm. I liked everything about it.

## When you were a teenager and young man, you had some pretty interesting friends, like Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis. That was a pretty fast crowd to be running with for a kid.

Everybody was coming over to [our home at] 4916 Franklin Rd. to touch Hank's piano, number one. Jerry Lee at Mother's parties. Johnny wants to shoot the cannon. Hank wants to shoot the cannon. So we shoot the cannon, knock books off the shelf at the neighbor's house.

Hank Snow one night, Jerry Lee one night, Ferlin Husky one night. Or pop people, Ray Charles, Fats Domino. You never knew who would

be recording in town and come by.

## That's a heck of an education.

Oh, man, to have Earl Scruggs show you how to play banjo? I'd ride my little Harley over to Earl's house. What a wonderful guy. What a perfect position to be in. Talk about the planets being lined up for me: "Hold that over here, tune that key here." Now it's come full circle: me with Kenny Chesney, Kid Rock or whatever. It's a good feeling. The music marches on.

## In the first part of your career, even though you had success touring and on record, it must have been frustrating to not have your own songs and style embraced.

A lot of it I didn't care about. In the late 1960s, I probably wasn't paying much attention to it. There was a lot going on in the late '60s. And I was at that age when there's one thing on your mind above anything else, and it ain't huntin' cannonballs. [I was doing] shows out the kazoo, the "Cheatin' Heart" movie. I did 230 shows one year in a bus. Talk about touring. In '66-'69, it was one continuous road trip, and I was young enough to say, "Fine with me." And I flew home and got married, a really brilliant move. I showed them all.

## Tell me about the move to Cullman, Ala., in 1974 and the recording of "Hank Williams Jr. & Friends" in Muscle Shoals.

Now you're talking. The teenage boy was gone. Somewhere around '69-'70, it was one big party, but that's when I started thinking, "I'm going to do something different." I started laying out actual goals: I'm either going to do this or do something else. It's not going to be going out there and imitating Daddy. That's over.

A lot of depression, that's part of the reason I moved down there in the first place. Probably a lot of the same thing my son Shelton (Hank III) is going through now. You're getting pulled from all angles. It's probably harder in his case than mine. He's following a couple of pretty good hitters. One of 'em was a real good hitter.

## In retrospect, moving to Cullman was the right thing to do.

Without a doubt. A lot of great things were coming out of Muscle Shoals. And the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd were happening. This is my generation. This is what I listen to. I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, but I'm not listening to those [other country artists]. I'm listening to Toy Caldwell. I'm playing down there with my buddies.

The Alabama move was absolutely the right thing at the right time

[in] the right place. Granddaddy's right down the road; it's halfway between Nashville and Montgomery, more or less. It worked out quite well.

A lot of people ask me how many albums I've made, and I say, "None of 'em count until 'Friends.'" With "Friends," finally that's when I got really serious.

## "Friends" arrived in 1976 and saw you team up with Caldwell, Charlie Daniels and Pete Carr, among others. Critics and fans loved it, but then you were blindsided by falling off Ajax Mountain in 1975, so you didn't get much chance to enjoy the praise.

It was like, "He's never going to sing again, if he lives." They'd tell me how the album was out and they'd play it and put my picture on the screen, and all the DJs would give a standing ovation. They probably [thought], "He ain't gonna make it back."

The doctors said, "We don't know if he's going to know anything or not." One of those doctors, who had been a Navy doctor in Vietnam, said, "My friend, you had a pretty bad trauma wound up there. I don't know if you're supposed to count elk or play, but you have been left here

*(Continued on page 18)*

## Hank Jr.'s Chart Action

### Top Country Albums

Rank	Title	Peak Position	Debut Date	Label
1.	'Greatest Hits III'	1	March 4, 1989	Wamer/Curb
2.	'Five-O'	1	June 1, 1985	Wamer/Curb
3.	'Major Moves'	1	June 16, 1984	Wamer/Curb
4.	'Montana Cafe'	1	July 26, 1986	Wamer/Curb
5.	'Greatest Hits - Volume 2'	1	Nov. 23, 1985	Wamer/Curb
6.	'Wild Sreak'	1	July 16, 1988	Wamer/Curb
7.	'Songs My Father Left Me'	1	April 12, 1969	MGM
8.	'Hank Live'	1	Feb. 14, 1987	Wamer/Curb
9.	'Born To Boogie'	1	Aug. 1, 1987	Wamer/Curb
10.	'Rowdy'	2	Feb. 7, 1981	Elektra/Curb

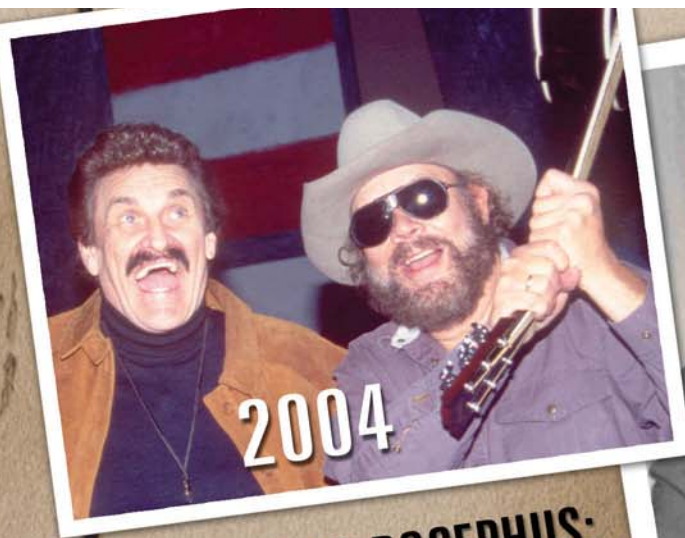
### Hot Country Singles & Tracks

Rank	Title	Peak Position	Debut Date	Label
1.	'Mind Your Own Business'	1	Oct. 11, 1986	Wamer/Curb
2.	'Eleven Roses'	1	April 29, 1972	MGM
3.	'All for the Love of Sunshine'	1	Aug. 1, 1970	MGM
4.	'I'm For Love'	1	May 11, 1985	Wamer/Curb
5.	'Born to Boogie'	1	June 13, 1987	Wamer/Curb
6.	'All My Rowdy Friends (Have Settled Down)'	1	Sept. 5, 1981	Elektra/Curb
7.	'Ain't Misbehavin'	1	Feb. 22, 1986	Wamer/Curb
8.	'Honky Tonkin'	1	June 5, 1982	Elektra/Curb
9.	'Dixie on My Mind'	1	May 30, 1981	Elektra/Curb
10.	'Texas Women'	1	Feb. 7, 1981	Elektra/Curb

\* Hank Williams Jr. with the Mike Curb Congregation

Compiled by Keith Caulfield

Titles on these charts are ordered by peak position on Top Country Albums and Hot Country Singles & Tracks, respectively. If more than one title peaked at the same position, ties were broken by the number of weeks spent at the peak. If ties still remained, they were broken by the number of weeks on the chart, and then in the top ten, and for top 40, depending on where the title peaked.



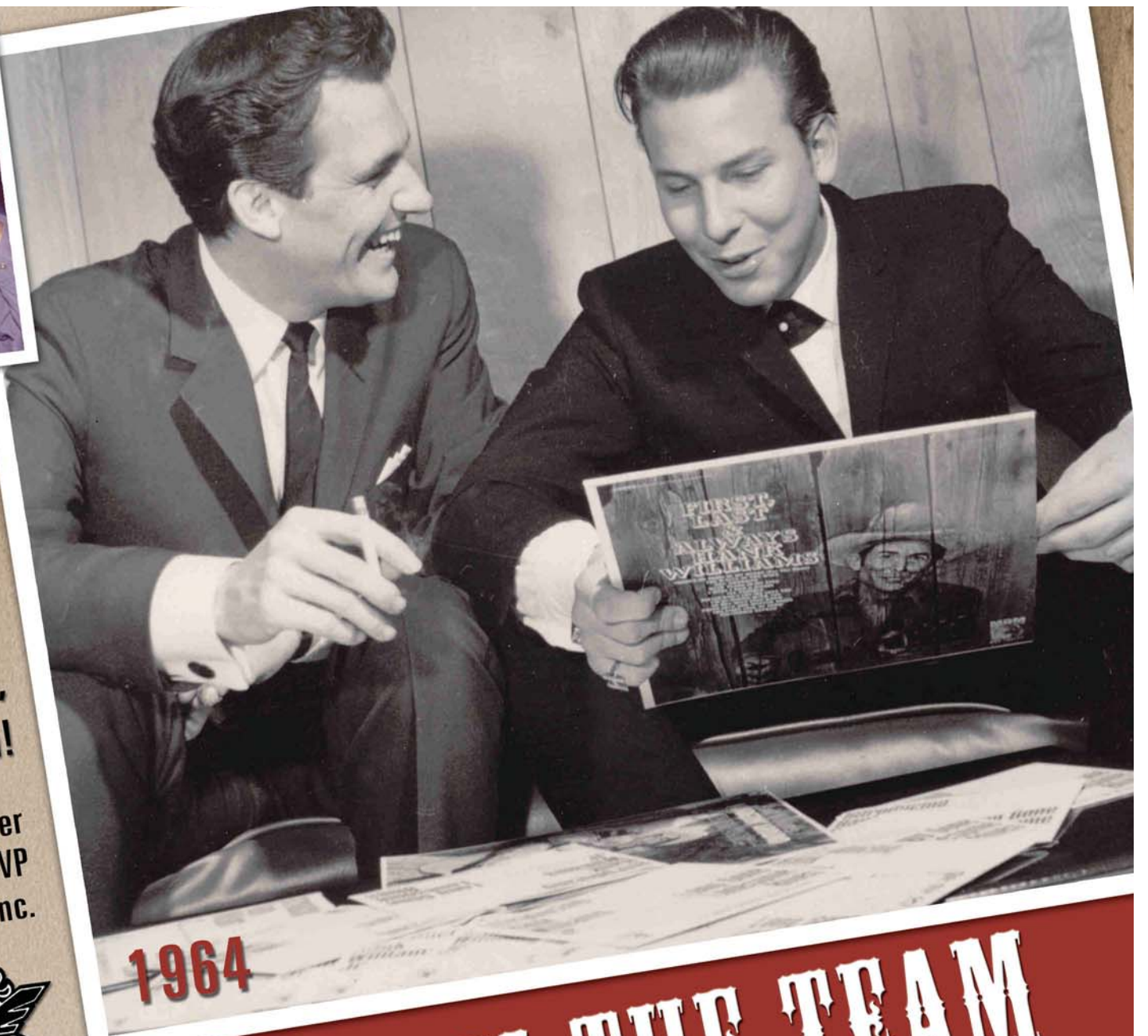
**MESSAGE TO BOCEPHUS:**

Thanks for all the years of being on the same stage and seeing you become the ICON you are today.

Today, as from day one, I am still your #1 fan!

Merle Kilgore, Personal Manager  
Executive VP  
Hank Williams Jr. Enterprises, Inc.

[merlekilgoremanagement@aol.com](mailto:merlekilgoremanagement@aol.com)



# THANKS HANK! FROM THE TEAM



**HANK:**

Thanks for being that unique artist with a true "grip" on the importance of PR! It's a total pleasure to represent a genuine superstar...

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# Spotlight

## Q&A

Continued from page 16

to do something." I always remembered his words.

**But when you came back, your creative vision was so focused. How would you describe what you wanted to do?**

I was locked in. I got in there [in the studio] with Jimmy Bowen, and said, "This is the key. Here's the lick. This is the intro. This is the turnaround. This is where I want the horns. This is where I want the mandolin. This is the whole thing."

And Bowen said, "I'll handle the board, everything outside that glass, you handle." And that's how we did it.

**So you just assumed total control.**

You bet I did. I said, I'm going to put my stamp all over this stuff. It was flowing. Writing three, four songs in one day. You just smile and get a little better. I went from 224 to 160 [pounds] in that fall, and I was slowly coming back physically, learning to see and smell and taste again, and wondering about the next operation.

**Your style brought a lot of new fans to country, but some of your older fans must have been shocked.**

Oh, they were. [laughs] Talk about rockin'! Full-tilt boogie. I had four 10s stacked with Marshall heads, and the Stratocaster, and I was laying it out there: Here it is, and if you don't like it, there's the door.

If I had 1,000 [people] there, and 400 or 500 of them left, the next time there'd be 3,500, the next time 7,000, the next time 10,000. Boom, boom, boom, just like that, in a matter of about three or four years there.

I remember doing "La Grange" on top of the piano at the Grand Ole Opry, and Roy Acuff jumped up there and did a little "La Grange" with me. They had bussed in all these older folks, and I said, "It's nice to be here, but I won't be back for a while. These folks ain't bought a record in 30 years." That's the way I looked at it.

**But even though you were packing arenas and selling records, the music industry seemed a little slower to come around. I remember when you won an award for best video, you made that comment: "I do audio, too." Do you think the country music establishment in those days was a little scared of you?**

They had to throw the stray dog a bone. Merle Haggard won something the year before, and he said, "Well, this is bullshit, it should have been Hank Jr.'s award, I know that." I never forgot that, ol' Hag.

**What's your approach in the studio?**

This is my album, my stuff, [so] it's going to be my way. I can play a little of this, little of that. If we're doing a ZZ Top song, "Blue Jean Blues" or whatever, I'll run over to the organ and show what I want.

The trouble with me and a lot of others, we basically want to do eight-bar blues all night long.

**How did recording the "Monday Night Football" theme song impact your career?**

Something like that puts you out there in a whole different realm. Millions of viewers. CEOs, or somebody slinging hot dogs in New Jersey, or some grandma in a nursing home, they all see it. Three Emmys and a one-year deal turned into 14, 15 years, and now it's the 30th anniversary [of "Monday Night Football"], so they want a special song for this year.

It's brought unbelievable attention to the touring, the shows. What a vehicle of publicity you don't even go after; it just happens. That's one of the big moments for me.

**Even though you've cut back on touring, do you still get a charge out of performing live?**

Oh yeah. When you walk out there and they're singing every single word, then Kid Rock comes out on two or three shows, I don't have to tell you the effect that has. There's something to doing this small amount of shows.

I've had some real opportunities to open [for other artists], but people find out real quick I ain't gonna do it. I ain't doing 30 shows, and I damn sure ain't doing 40. The energy level is a lot different when you just have those few shows. You're really looking forward to it. There may be somebody in that area [you're playing] you've known for a long time, maybe somebody who builds guitars, somebody who builds flintlocks, maybe a sports figure. It ain't a bad way to make a living. And the fans—talk about loyal! It's still amazing to me.

**Your two most recent albums have both been well-received, but they're quite different stylistically. "Almeria Club" is a rootsy, bluesy, pickers' album, while "I'm One of You" is a more hard-edged, traditional Bocephus record. Does shifting stylistically keep you energized?**

That's my trouble. I like to pick up that banjo and play "Foggy Mountain Breakdown," and I like balls-to-the-wall rock. I like different styles. I'm not a guy who stands there at the microphone and never moves [and says,] "Here's another love song." We've got plenty of those.

**You like to feel and touch history, don't you?**

You bet I do. That yard on Franklin Road where I grew up was full of miniballs, cannon fragments, from the Battle of Nashville, and when it would rain, we found so much stuff. I still go out with that metal detector, and my daughter Holly is nuts about it.

No phonies and fakes when it comes out of the ground,  
(Continued on page 25)

I CAN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER ARTIST WHO HAS CAPTURED THE ESSENCE OF HARD CORE COUNTRY AND MIXED IT SO WELL WITH EVERYTHING FROM ROCK TO DIXIELAND AND BLUES. MOREOVER, I CAN'T THINK OF ANY SINGLE ARTIST WHO HAS INFLUENCED MY MUSIC MORE THAN HANK, JR. THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOMETHING ABOUT A BOCEPHUS ALBUM THAT MAKES ME WANT TO CRANK IT UP TO TEN, DRIVE A LITTLE FASTER AND PARTY A LITTLE HARDER. I ALSO WENT TO SEE A BUNCH OF HANK JR. CONCERTS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS AND THOSE SHOWS TAUGHT ME A WHOLE LOT ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A SINGER AND BEING AN ENTERTAINER.

SO HANK, CONGRATULATIONS ON FIVE DECADES OF SUCCESS! AND FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP, ALL THE GOOD TIMES WE'VE SHARED, THE LESSONS YOU'VE TAUGHT, THE GREAT MUSIC AND THE INSPIRATION YOU HAVE GIVEN ME... THANKS HOSS!

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# Spotlight

## Bocephus!

Continued from page 13

good time by the pool and Hank Jr. was eatin' it all up."

Kilgore was Hank Jr.'s opening act by the time the latter was 14, a slot Kilgore held for 25 years.

Hank sometimes performed as "Rockin' Randall," and at first, "Audrey wanted him to go pop and rock. She got him gold lamé outfits; he was young, good-looking," Kilgore says.

But the young man's country music pedigree could not be denied. According to Kilgore, "People had never seen the son of Hank Williams. They went crazy."

In 1963, Bocephus—his father gave him the nickname—"moved it on over to MGM," as he once sang. He broke on a *Billboard* chart for the first time with "Long Gone Lonesome Blues" in 1964.

Later that year, George Hamilton played Hank Williams in the film "Your Cheatin' Heart," and a 14-year-old Hank Jr. provided the vocals. He re-signed with MGM/Curb in 1969, and at the time it was the biggest recording contract in the label's history.

"It was a very important contract," Curb founder and president Mike Curb says. "Mostly all of his music in the 1960s was either his father's songs or songs about his father. He had

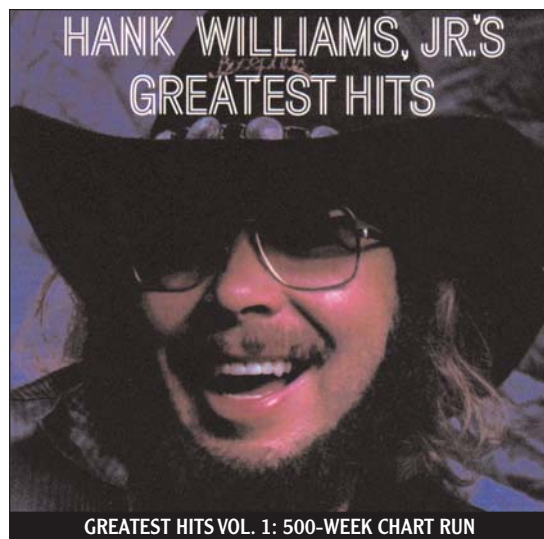
been, for all practical purposes, marketed as the son of the greatest legend in country music."

That, of course, was all about to change.

*I am very proud of my Daddy's name*

*Although his kind of music and mine ain't exactly the same.*

—"Family Tradition"



As the '60s turned into the '70s, Williams increasingly recorded more contemporary songs, including the 1970 hit "All for the Love of Sunshine," from the soundtrack of Clint Eastwood's film "Kelly's Heroes." The song was the first of Williams' 10 No. 1 singles on the *Billboard* Hot Country Singles chart. One year later, Williams' own song, "Eleven Roses," also topped the charts.

Williams continued to assert his independence, often from the stage.

"I remember his speech on his 21st birthday in Galveston, Texas," Kilgore says. "In effect, he said, 'No one's gonna tell me what to say, what to wear or what to do, from this day forward.'"

Williams achieved some measure of chart success through the early '70s, but he struggled with some of the same personal demons that plagued his father. So in 1974, thinking a change of scenery might do him good, Williams moved from Nashville to Cullman, Ala., to chart his own musical path.

Williams ended his agent/manager relationship with the late

(Continued on page 22)

## Hank's Sway

*What I do now is what I did then.*

—"Born to Boogie"

Today, you can't turn on country radio without hearing Hank Williams Jr.'s influence, as artists ranging from Brooks & Dunn and Tim McGraw to Toby Keith and Dierks Bentley have poured through doors that Bocephus kicked down.

"I wanted to make music that drinks well," Bentley once said, describing his approach to songwriting and performing. "If we're going to err, we're going to err on the side of Hank Jr."

Similarly, Williams has provided the soundtrack for many an influential Southern night. "We used to go to what we

*'Hank Williams Jr. was our hero.'*

—TIM MCGRAW

called bar pits, out in the country, where you dig all the topsoil out, and we'd steal tires from the co-op, build a big fire to keep the mosquitoes away, back the trucks up and drink [beer]," Tim McGraw told *Billboard* in a 2001 interview. "Hank Williams Jr. was our hero, and we'd crank him up."

That influence continues today. Hank's much-publicized friendship with Kid Rock, which includes collaborations onstage and in the studio, has turned a whole new generation of fans on to Bocephus. Manager Merle Kilgore says of the Kid Rock connection: "We hitched Hank up to a rocket."

RAY WADELLE

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THE GOOD OLE BOY  
GOD BLESS

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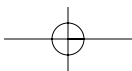
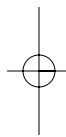
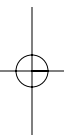
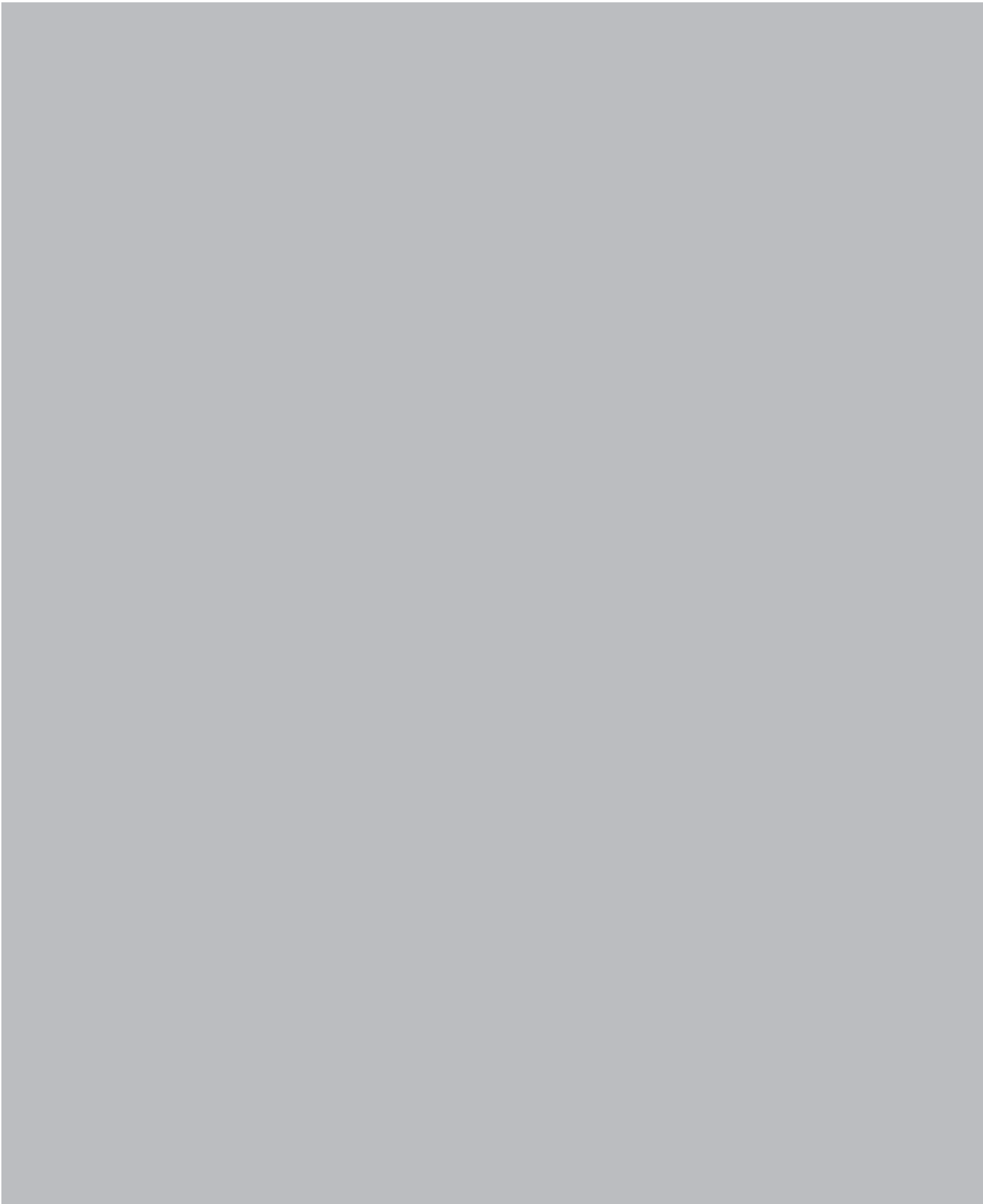
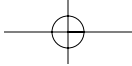
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# Spotlight

## Bocephus!

*Continued from page 20*

Buddy Lee and signed a new management deal with J.R. Smith, owner of an Alabama trucking business.

The move to Alabama proved to be a productive one. Williams recorded "Hank Williams Jr. & Friends" in Muscle Shoals with the help of such Southern rock stalwarts as Charlie Daniels, Toy Caldwell, Dickie Betts and Chuck Leavell. With this landmark album, the course for his musical path seemed clear.

"When I first heard the 'Friends' album, I thought, 'Whoa, he's really ready to emerge,'" Curb remembers. "That album showed more of a free-flowing style. But then the next thing I knew I got a call from Merle Kilgore saying Hank was in critical condition."

Fate had sucker punched Williams when, just as "Friends" arrived, the artist plummeted 500 feet face-first from Ajax Mountain while hiking on the Montana/Idaho border. He split his skull, causing massive structural damage to his face.

"It was over," Kilgore says. "His brain came out of his head, and his guide, Dick Willy, pushed it back in."

Williams laid out that mountainside for seven hours before he was rescued, never losing consciousness. The doctors in Missoula, Mont., did not expect a full recovery.

"When I went to see him, his head looked like a watermelon," Kilgore recalls.

But recover Williams did, although it took more than a year and a half and numerous reconstructive surgeries.

When Williams was healed, there was no looking back. As soon as he was able, he re-entered the studio. A brace of late-'70s releases on Warner Bros./Curb—"New South," produced by Waylon Jennings, and "One Night Stands"—solidified Williams' new musical stance.

By 1979, when Williams signed a new agreement with Curb, he was ready for a new generation of country fans seeking a bridge between George Jones and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

The transition had its rocky moments. In concert, Williams still drew old-guard fans of his father who followed the son's career, as well as a scruffier bunch of admirers who responded to Bocephus' rowdier inclinations.

When Williams played ZZ Top and Lynyrd Skynyrd covers, along with his own Southern-tinged style, audiences soon tilted toward young rebels raised on rock.

"When he played 'Sweet Home Alabama' for 15 minutes with those Marshall amps at volume 100, he'd empty the hall," Kilgore says. "Out of 5,000, 200 would stay. But he kept on until everybody stayed."

Williams released two albums in 1979 on Curb/Elektra, both of which are now considered classics: "Family Tradition" and "Whiskey Bent & Hell Bound."

Songs from both records remain staples of his live show. They also provide much material later released as "Greatest Hits, Vol. 1." That album has spent more than 500 weeks combined on the Top Country Albums and Top Country Catalog Albums charts.

"When Hank first played 'Family Tradition' for [producer] Jimmy Bowen, Bowen fell off his chair," Kilgore recalls. "He said, 'This is historic.' And it was. It changed country music forever."

*I'm not a walk-behinder  
I'm a new note finder.  
—"The Blues Man"*



WILLIAMS: 'HE CHANGED COUNTRY MUSIC'

Fearless in the studio, Williams constantly pushed the envelope, ripping through traditional country boundaries by incorporating elements of rock, blues, Dixieland, gospel and R&B.

Always a prolific and innovative songwriter, Williams also retains a knack for well-conceived covers, with anybody from Aerosmith and Ernest Tubb to Fats Domino and Warren Zevon fair game.

"Hank didn't really consider himself a Nashville artist—he considered himself an artist," Curb says. "In reality, Hank

Williams Jr. is a rock star who shares the name of the greatest country legend of all time."

Williams exploded with gold and platinum success in the early 1980s, a time of seemingly boundless creativity for him.

In the studio, he could do no wrong. Such hit-producing winners as "Habits Old & New" (1980), "Rowdy" (1981), "The Pressure Is On" (1981), "High Notes" (1982), "Strong Stuff" (1983), "Man of Steel" (1983), "Major Moves" (1984) and "Five-O" (1985) stand as proof.

Williams often has had several albums on the *Billboard* country album

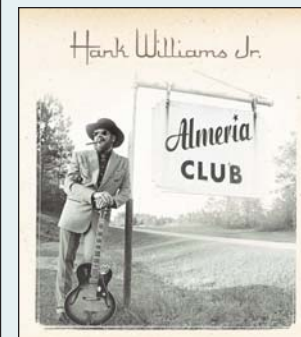
charts simultaneously. In one incredible week—that of Oct. 23, 1982—Williams had nine albums on the *Billboard* country album chart.

*(Continued on page 25)*

## Newest Hank

Hank Williams Jr. has lost none of his creative fire for songwriting and recording, those close to him say. His two most recent records for Curb, "Almeria Club" in 2002 and "I'm One of You" earlier this year, both received critical praise.

Both projects are near and dear to Williams' heart, particularly "Almeria Club," much of which was recorded at the album's namesake, an old Alabama social club where Williams' parents had notoriously performed in the late 1940s.



"'Almeria'—boy, was that fun," Williams says of the project. "A lot of those [songs] were two takes, one take. The guys on there, the band, they said, 'This is the greatest project I've ever done,' and they've played with some heavy-duty artists—and I don't mean country either. When old Bocephus is long gone, that 'Almeria' album will go on and on."

Merle Kilgore, his manager, agrees. "He sounds better than ever," he says. "And he has so much fun in the studio."

Williams also has garnered his most significant airplay in years, with the title cut from his new record and the current single, "Why Can't We All Just Get a Longneck."

"We're extremely excited about this single," Curb Records president Mike Curb says. "We really, really, really think we've got a hit."

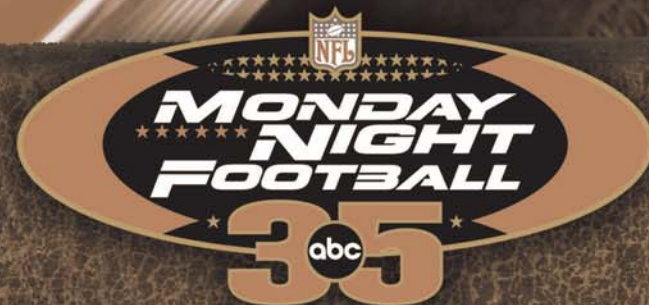
RAY WADELL

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wish you continued success. See you this Fall. We're ready.**



# Delivering The Goods On The Road

*Williams Pioneered Rock-Style Tours Within Country Genre*

*Went on the road when I was 8 years old  
When I turned 15 I was stealin' the show.  
—"Born to Boogie"*

BY RAY WADDELL

Hank Williams Jr. has been an arena-level superstar for more than 20 years. But the singer/musician had honed his onstage chops the hard way for more than half his life before he turned 30.

Williams always had the goods live. His 1969 performance at Detroit's Cobo Hall was, at the time, the highest-grossing performance by a country artist, with a box-office take of \$93,000. MGM released an album of the performance later that year.

"That's nothing now," Williams says of the then-record gross. "But that was big news then. I was rolling, believe me. Young and strong and ready to rock."

Williams' Cheatin' Heart Special tour bus went everywhere in the 1970s, with the artist relentlessly taking his show to auditoriums, civic centers, fairs, festivals—anywhere he could book a date.

Indeed, the genesis of what is today known as Buddy Lee Attractions came from the partnership of Williams' mother, Audrey Williams, with ex-pro wrestler Buddy Lee of the Aud-Lee Agency to book Williams.

On stage, Bocephus plays guitar, banjo, piano, keyboards, harmonica, fiddle, drums and anything else within reach.

As his own sound began to take shape, Williams moved to larger buildings in the 1980s, and he moved with the late

booking agent Dan Wojcik to Entertainment Artists in the middle of the decade.

By the early 1990s, Williams had signed with the William Morris Agency. WMA VP Greg Oswald has booked his dates for more than a decade.

Williams' rowdy performances with his crack Bama Band began to routinely fill arenas, and when the amphitheater boom began in the mid-1980s, the Bocephus show was tailor-made for legendary outdoor Saturday nights.

"I've worked with Hank since the early days, and he's a phenomenal performer," says Louis Messina, veteran promoter and president of TMG/AEG Live. "I'd book Hank Jr. any time, just call 1-800-Louis."

Pioneering promoter Tony Ruffino worked with Williams every step of the way in Birmingham, Ala.

"He used to do club dates for us at a place called Brothers in Birmingham," Ruffino says. "Then we moved him up to Boutwell Auditorium at about 5,000 capacity, then the Civic Center. We still do him at Oak Mountain Amphitheater [in nearby Pelham, Ala.]."

Williams was among the first country artists to bring rock-level production values to their concerts. The stage designs of the early 1990s gave fans bang for their bucks.

His "million-dollar stage" in the late 1980s came from R.A. Roth of Atlanta, which until then had only designed productions for major rock acts.

Williams was also among the first country artists to dabble in nationally promoted tours, with CPI promoting Williams coast to coast in 1992.

And, unlike most acts of any genre, Williams' career tour-



FLAMEWORTHY: WILLIAMS AT THE 2003 CMT AWARDS

ing arc reached its zenith—and stayed there.

"One thing about Hank Williams Jr., from the day he started headlining the big buildings, he never played anything less," Oswald says. "Here's a guy that started playing the big buildings in '80-'81. He's still there, and there's never been a time when he wasn't."

After years of playing 100-plus dates annually, Williams has cut back his schedule considerably to 20-25 choice dates annually.

He makes what dates he does play count. "I played 18 shows last year, and I remember when I sat down with my accountants and tax people, I had one of the biggest years ever, on a small number of shows."

Williams also says he feels more energized for each performance when playing a smaller number of dates.

Williams rarely works in hunting season and prefers to play weekends only. And he is that rare country artist willing and able to take a year off now and then.

"Hank will take some time off, not unlike a rock act," Oswald observes. "That's pretty much unheard-of in country. He takes time off because he wants to go back out with fresh product, to fresh markets. Hank had a rock mentality about touring when nobody else in country had it."

That's not to say Oswald wouldn't like to book more dates for Williams. "But the rules are fairly clear," he says. "We know what we need to do with Hank because we communicate."

Demand outstrips supply. "Every buyer, every fair, festival, shed and arena out there is dying to have a Hank Jr. date," Oswald says. "Demand exceeds what we can deliver 10 to 1. I could sell 200 dates a year on him."

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## NFL Mascot

Millions of football fans have come to know Hank Williams Jr. through his "Monday Night Football" anthem on ABC, with which he has a relationship that dates back to 1989.

The song adapts Hank favorite "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" to "All My Rowdy Friends Are Here for Monday Night," punctuated by an exuberant catchphrase, "Are you ready for some football?"

"Initially, we just loved the song," says Bob Toms, VP of production at ABC Sports. "We had no idea we were getting a great songwriter, artist, singer and one of the biggest NFL fans in the country. This relationship with Hank has not only been a great asset to ABC Sports and 'Monday Night Football' but to the NFL."

RAY WADDELL

## Q&A

Continued from page 18

in a world of phony art or phony instruments. I've got some instruments I know where they came from 'cause they handed 'em to me.

**You've signed seven contracts with Curb Records president Mike Curb over 35 years.**

I have? That's a scary thought. Loyal or trapped, I don't know which. Basically, I guess when somebody has options and wants to keep exercising them, what can you do? Thirty-five years, wow.

**What are you most proud of in your career?**

I guess, to try to put it into one corner, when I did the tribute show for Johnny Cash a couple of months ago, Kris Kristofferson and Willie Nelson gave me a look I'll never forget when I sang Johnny's part. Willie had a really big smile and Kris was like, "My God, man." There was some real magic that night.

I've got a fan base I'm really proud of. Some of the albums we've made I'm really proud of, and that was always my goal. I've got some awards in there in the case.

But the real bottom line, what I'm really proud of is, I'm proud of the company I've kept. I got to ride that car with Minnie Pearl. I got to ride in that mobile home with Waylon. I got to dig up those relics with John. I got to sit at the piano with Jerry Lee at the house and have a couple of drinks. I got to go fishin' with Stringbean and Grandpa Jones.

I'm proud of Toy Caldwell and the Marshall Tucker Band, and Skynyrd, and Charlie Daniels, and Earl Scruggs, and all the people who helped me. And the fact that they took the time with me.

I'm proud I rode in that car with that bass fiddle on top. Many times in that jet I think about it.

Now, whether it's Holly Williams or Shelton Hank III, there's a whole new level. On the soundtrack of Mel Gibson's movie ["The Passion of The Christ"], Holly's singing Daddy's song "How Can You Refuse Him Now?" The tradition goes on and on. Right now, I'm really proud of that.

## Bocephus!

Continued from page 22

"It hit so hard and so fast," Kilgore marvels.

By the mid-'80s, Williams was now releasing his albums on the Warner/Curb imprint, and he switched producers from Bowen to Jim Ed Norman.

The string of success continued into the latter half of the decade with "Montana Cafe" (1986), "Hank Live" (1987), "Born to Boogie" (1987), "Wild Streak" (1988) and "Lone Wolf" (1990). Eight consecutive releases, closing out the decade, each topped the country album chart.

Williams brought out the best in producers and studio musicians. "It didn't matter who the producer was. It was pretty much just Hank doing his thing," Curb says. "The secret was Hank working with a band. Even if they were studio musicians, it sounded like a band."

Not just a pioneer in the studio, Williams was among the very first in country to explore the possibilities of music videos. He has received industry accolades for trailblazing clips for such songs as "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" and "There's a Tear in My Beer."

Upon receiving one such video award, Williams quipped, "You know, I do audio, too."

Today, even if record sales and airplay aren't at the peak they once were, Hank Williams Jr. remains one of the most charismatic figures in country music and is certainly not lacking exposure.

And Williams seems to be in a good place professionally and personally.

"I've had such a string over the last two years of everything falling in place, all these wonderful things happening musically; some of Daddy's stuff that showed up," he says. "Just finding things here and there. I'm really a blessed individual."

Hank,

*After 28 years of working with Bocephus, it has become a true sense of pride and is a "Family Tradition".*

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