

Johnny Cash (1932 - 2003)

Remembering Cash

“Johnny Cash was a very giving man. I experienced that in 1991.

He spoke at the memorial service for my seven band members and my tour manager that we lost in a plane crash. His kind words and support comforted us at a time when we needed it most.”

— **Reba McEntire**



“Oh my gosh, Johnny’s death is so sad. I liked his purity. He continued to maintain a level of country people don’t strive for today.”

— **Cash fan Kenzie Scott, 26, from Hillsboro Village**



“People will say he was a giant and he was ... From a tough start in life, he made himself into a great man.”

— **Former Vice President Al Gore**



“To hear that Johnny was interested in doing my song was a defining moment in my life’s work. To hear the result really reminded me how beautiful, touching and powerful music can be.”

— **Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, whose song Hurt Cash recorded**



“Johnny Cash made it OK to be human, made it acceptable to be flawed. He stood up for the underdog, for can’t-never-could-wasn’t-supposed-to guys like me.”

— **Jeff Bates, RCA recording artist**



“Who else could knock on the doors of the pearly gates wearing black?”

— **Faith Hill**

Quotations compiled by staff writers Leon Alligood, Peter Cooper, Tim Ghianni, Mary Hance, Craig Havighurst, A. Tacuma Roebuck, Brad Schmitt and Sylvia Slaughter, Jeremy Johnson, *The Hendersonville Star News*, and *Tennessean* news services.

Nashville loses a legend

By **CRAIG HAVIGHURST**
Staff Writer

Everyone, whatever they were wearing, was in black yesterday.

Throughout Nashville and around the world, fans and friends shared their memories and found ways to mourn for Johnny Cash, a genuine icon and a beloved man, dead at 71.

Tootsie’s Orchid Lounge, the bustling honky-tonk on Lower Broadway was uncharacteristically silent for a minute yesterday afternoon, before singer Craig Curtis kicked off a raucous set of Mr. Cash songs.

Ernest Tubb Record Shop’s marquee read “Johnny Cash 1932-2003,” and the Man in Black’s records played nonstop in the store. The *Grand Ole Opry*, already planning a Saturday night tribute to country giant Roy Acuff, announced it also was dedicating all three weekend shows to the memory of Mr. Cash.

And a stream of visitors to the Country Music Hall of Fame rotunda (free all day) paused at Mr. Cash’s black-draped plaque and signed a memorial book for the Cash family.

“His voice was imperfect, but it spoke to everyone,” said fan Dennis Thomas, visiting the hall with his wife, Janice, from Vernon, B.C., and who first heard Mr. Cash as a kid in northern Saskatchewan. “He’s been in the forefront all my life. We’ll miss him a lot.”

No one will miss him more than his closest musical colleagues. Earl Scruggs, the father of the modern banjo and a contemporary of Mr. Cash, said, “I can hardly believe it’s actually happened. ... He was just the greatest person and one of the biggest drawing cards I’ve ever worked with out on the road. He packed them in everything I



Country Music Hall of Fame worker Annie Freeman places roses near the plaque of Johnny Cash. The plaque was later shrouded in black.

ever worked with him on.”

From his studio on Belmont Boulevard, Mr. Cash’s former producer and longtime friend “Cowboy” Jack Clement recalled striking up an instant friendship with

the young artist in the studios of Sun Records in Memphis.

“I think he was a great man,” Clement said. “He was a gentleman. He was kind and he never lost respect for his fans. And he

never quit playing music. A lot of people get jaded and they won’t pick up a guitar. But he’d pick up a guitar and play with anybody.”

“With somebody like him you don’t think about him ever dying,” said country music journalist and mother-figure Hazel Smith. “But I think, in his own way, he touched as many people as a Billy Graham or the Pope because of his strong belief. He recorded all those gospel albums for a reason to touch his kind of people.”

Those people were common, workaday, God-fearing and flawed. And in identifying with America’s often neglected classes, Mr. Cash managed to bring a liberal’s social conscience to his work without being perceived as a political liberal by country music fans.

“I think people understood that he loved his country and he loved his family, so all of his viewpoints were framed in that,” said Ken Paulson, executive director of the First Amendment Center, which last year conferred on Mr. Cash the first ever Spirit of Americana award for defense of free expression. “You couldn’t accuse Johnny Cash of being un-American or cowardly,” Paulson said.

Others remarked on Mr. Cash’s indelible cool factor, his enduring status as a cultural barometer.

David Andersen, the Hall of Fame’s house guitarist was dressed in a Mr. Cash-inspired black suit yesterday. “He was almost like the sage of country music,” Andersen said, recalling for example the artist’s watershed embracing of Bob Dylan when he was foreign to country audiences. “It’s almost like we’re weightless without him.”

Staff writers Tim Ghianni and Jeanne Naujeck contributed to this report.

No. 1 songs

Johnny Cash logged 14 No. 1 *Billboard* hits, listed here by song, date first charted and weeks at No. 1:

- I Walk The Line**, June 9, 1956 (six weeks)
- There You Go**, Dec. 22, 1956 (five weeks)
- Ballad of a Teenage Queen**, Jan. 20, 1958 (10 weeks)
- Guess Things Happen That Way**, May 26, 1958 (eight weeks)
- Don’t Take Your Guns To Town**, Jan. 19, 1959 (six weeks)
- Ring of Fire**, June 8, 1963 (seven weeks)
- Understand Your Man**, Feb. 22, 1964 (six weeks)
- Folsom Prison Blues (live version)**, June 1, 1968 (four weeks)
- Daddy Sang Bass**, Dec. 7, 1968 (six weeks)
- A Boy Named Sue**, July 26, 1969 (five weeks)
- Sunday Morning Coming Down**, Sept. 5, 1970 (two weeks)
- Flesh and Blood**, Dec. 19, 1970 (one week)
- One Piece At A Time**, April 10, 1976 (two weeks)
- Highwayman** (by The Highwaymen, with Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson), May 18, 1985 (one week)

SOURCE: JOEL WHITBURN’S TOP COUNTRY SINGLES

Vote for your fave

Go to www.tennessean.com to vote on your favorite No. 1 Cash hit.

On television

Several TV outlets have plans for Johnny Cash specials this weekend.

CMT: Country Music Television will run three Cash specials this weekend, *CMT News Special: Johnny Cash Remembered*, *CMT Inside Fame: Johnny Cash and A Concert: Behind the Prison Walls*, a 1976 Cash concert at the Tennessee State Penitentiary.

The news special airs at 6 and 11 tonight and 10 a.m., 2 and 5 p.m. tomorrow. *Inside Fame* airs at 5 and 9 p.m. today and 3 and 9 p.m. tomorrow. The concert will air at 5:30 and 9:30 p.m. today and 9:30 a.m., 4:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. tomorrow.

GAC: Great American Country will include Johnny Cash music videos and interview clips about Mr. Cash from other artists throughout the weekend. Those artists include Travis Tritt, Marty Stuart and Emmylou Harris.

E! Entertainment Television: The entertainment cable network will re-broadcast *Johnny Cash: The E! True Hollywood Story* at 6 tonight.

WTVF-Channel 5: CBS will broadcast a 1980s *60 Minutes* interview with Harry Reasoner and Johnny Cash at 6 tomorrow night.

Hendersonville loses a neighbor

By **SYLVIA SLAUGHTER**
Staff Writer

HENDERSONVILLE — When a town wakes up to the loss of a legend, coffee gets poured, golf gets played and floral arrangements get made.

When word reached Jerry Roberts that Johnny Cash had died early yesterday morning, Roberts went to work as he does every day. The florist, however, was asked to do something that wrung him dry. He was asked to make a man-sized wreath to memorialize the country musician he had worked for many, many times before.

As he added the white roses to the wreath he remembered the day Mr. Cash called and asked him to cover the Cash driveway and walk with red rose petals 2-inches deep.

“That was the day Johnny and June brought their son, John Carter Cash, home from the hospital after his birth,” Roberts said.

Roberts remembered the ordinariness of the Man in Black.

Last year, on Mr. Cash’s 70th birthday, Roberts asked deliveryman Jack Huff to take 70 black balloons to Mr. Cash’s home.

“Jack came back elated ... They didn’t have Johnny ready ... I think he was a little frail then. When Johnny finally came into the room, he shook Jack’s hand. That’s just the way Johnny was, no better or no worse than the next man.”

Doris Tucker recalled the common man that was Johnny Cash. Yesterday, the sacker at Publix took her break in her car, alone, where she could pray for the



Jerry Roberts of Brown’s Florist in Hendersonville remembers delivering flowers to the Cash home when June Carter Cash and Johnny Cash brought their son home from the hospital. Yesterday, Roberts was filling orders for Mr. Cash’s funeral.

artist she considered her hero.

“I came out here to pray for Johnny, to pray for his kids, and to pray for my sick sister. My husband and I met Johnny in the Shoney’s. Johnny sat and talked with us like we were long-lost friends.

“He told me then that he had Jesus in his heart.”

Tucker was amazed that Mr. Cash still recalled their conversation when she went to the visitation for June Carter Cash, who died in May.

“I’m not rich and I don’t sing,” she says. “But Johnny Cash didn’t pay no mind. He was richer than me and he could sing better than me but on human terms we was equals. He was a special person.”

So special was Mr. Cash to Franklin resident Michael Epps Utley that Utley took off work early yesterday to deliver the first commemorative carnations to the House of Cash, the Johnny

Cash museum no longer open to the public.

Utley lay the bouquet beside the flagpole on the grounds, then knelt, crying.

“I’m only 30 ... I felt when I heard that Mr. Cash had died, that I had lost one father and gained another.”

Utley didn’t know the singer. He just knew his songs. And, he said, when he began listening to the songs of the hardscrabble life that Mr. Cash often sang about, he felt he began to understand his own father who grew up poor and working the cotton fields.

“Mr. Cash’s music helped me forge a better relationship with my own father,” he said.

Utley then put a note beside the dozen carnations, got into his car and drove away. He had a date with his dad. ■

Sylvia Slaughter writes for *The Tennessean*. Reach her at 259-8053 or at sslaughter@tennessean.com.

Essential Johnny Cash collection



• **The Sun Years** (Rhino Records): Mr. Cash’s Sun Records sides put his booming voice up front, with Luther Perkins’ atypical guitar work providing a fascinating foil. This collection boasts 18 songs, including the biggest Sun hits and a few relative obscurities. A more thorough examination of Cash’s time on Memphis’ Sun Records in the 1950s is *Johnny Cash & The Tennessee Two: The Complete Original Sun Singles*, a harder-to-find, two-disc collection released on Varese Sarabande.

• **The Fabulous Johnny Cash** (Columbia/Legacy): This was Mr. Cash’s first Columbia album. The 1958 separation from Sun and move to a Nashville recording studio did not hinder Mr. Cash, as he recorded self-penned classics / *Still Miss Someone* and *Don’t Take Your Guns To Town*. An often-overlooked gem is the swinging spiritual, *That’s Enough*.

• **Hymns By Johnny Cash** (Columbia/Legacy): Sun producer Sam Phillips never allowed Mr. Cash to record a gospel album. That became a sticking point with Mr. Cash, who left for Columbia Records and recorded this excellent album in Nashville in 1958.

• **Ride This Train** (Columbia/Legacy): Recorded in Nashville in 1960, *Ride This Train* stands as one of Mr. Cash’s best “concept albums.” Mr. Cash intended this as a kind of American travelogue, and the narrations that precede musical selections are as interesting as the songs.

• **Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison** (Columbia/Legacy): This was the first of Mr. Cash’s two great prison albums. One priceless moment came when he introduced *Greystone Chapel*, a song written by Folsom inmate Glen Shirley. *I Got Stripes and Cocaine Blues* weren’t bad, either. “Listen closely to this album and you hear in the background the clanging of the doors, the shrill whistle, the shout of the men — even laughter from men who had forgotten how to laugh,” Mr. Cash wrote in his liner notes back in 1968.

• **Johnny Cash at San Quentin** (Columbia/Legacy): Noted as the show in which Mr. Cash debuted his Shel Silverstein-penned hit *A Boy Named Sue*, the 1969 San Quentin performance sounds wilder and edgier even than the Folsom recording a year earlier. The inmates demanded an encore of new composition *San Quentin*, a song that began, “San Quentin you’ve been living hell to me.”

• **American Recordings** (American): Having weathered more than a decade of creative and commercial decline, Mr. Cash returned in 1994 with this simple acoustic album on Rick Rubin’s American label. Accompanied only by his thumb-strummed guitar, Mr. Cash was never more bracing or more vital.

• **Unchained** (American): This 1996 album found Mr. Cash singing with accompaniment from Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers. *Mean Eyed Cat* and *I’ve Been Everywhere* are as rollicking as those long-ago Sun records, and Mr. Cash’s version of Petty’s *Southern Accents* is endlessly intriguing.

• **The Essential Johnny Cash** (Columbia/Legacy): A two-disc collection released in 2002, *Essential* provides a good sampling of Mr. Cash’s career highlights from the pre-American years. Here are the definitive versions of *Sunday Morning Coming Down*, *Flesh and Blood*, *Man In Black*, *The Ballad of Ira Hayes* and other gems.

• **American IV: The Man Comes Around** (American/Lost Highway): Mr. Cash’s voice is weathered and raspy here to the point that 2002’s *American IV* can be a difficult listen. But the title song offered proof that he was still a uniquely gifted songwriter, and his version of *Hurt* is empathetic, clear-eyed and, ultimately, nothing short of terrifying.

— PETER COOPER, STAFF WRITER