

RANDY KOHRS

I'm Torn

"I definitely want to try and book as much as I can for 2005 and really get things happening to where I can be not just a name in the studio but a name on the fliers."

Randy Kohrs

BMP: Tell me about your new solo project *I'm Torn*.

RANDY: There isn't one instrumental on this record - none at all. It's an 11-song vocal record. I'm very proud of it. It's been a couple, three years to write material for it that I felt suited me. A lot of 'em are country demos that were either too country or too grassy for country music so I didn't even bother shopping them to artists. I felt like they suited me and suited this project. It's pretty grassy - more grassy than anything I've ever recorded. I've recorded some wonderful bluegrass music with other folks and I put out a record called *Crack Of My Armor* in 2001 so the bluegrass elements were obviously there, but it wasn't three chord, driving grass like everybody would be familiar with. I wrote everything but two of the tunes. One of them is a song by Mike Ramsey called *Take Me Back*. Carl Jackson wrote the other one and it happens to be a Dolly Parton duet - Dolly is singing the second verse and choruses and harmony and Carl's singing on it as well so we got quite a harmony team. Some of my best friends in the world are playing on it.

BMP: Any favorite songs?

RANDY: *Hurry Back Jesus*. I had a little cuss jar sittin' in the house breaking myself from cussing and every time I'd cuss I'd throw a five dollar bill in there. I slammed my finger in my car door and locked my keys in the car at the same time. I was tempting my best not to cuss and the first thing I said was, 'Hurry back Jesus' and I have no idea where it came from. I just hollered it and I realized after a few minutes when I had settled down and figured out how to get back in my car that was a song He had given me and I sat down and wrote it with Susan Morrison the same day. *Mountain Stone* is about a man in the 1800s named James Clyman - kind of a mountain man that did all kinds of crazy things. There's a poem writer down in Georgia named Dennis Goodwin and Brian and Maggie Stephens came up with this pile of poems and said, 'We need to make a mess of this guy's stuff and see what we come out with.' I started rooting through the poems and there's a couple of songs on the record.

BMP: How did you become involved with Lonesome Day Records?

RANDY: I have a pretty decent studio at the house and I shopped the recording. Randall Deaton of Lonesome Day Records picked the record up and he's really been coming along in the last year and a half with his label. He's really pushing things and has hired some wonderful publicists and really getting it going on and I felt like it was a really smart move to jump on the wagon and be one of the first at the label really trying to pursue my own career as a lead singer more than just a studio session player.

BMP: Where were you born and raised?

RANDY: I was born and raised about 40 miles straight south of Des Moines, Iowa in a little town called New Virginia. I learned to play through an aunt and uncle that had a band called Boone County Bluegrass. I learned how to chord some on the guitar and I realized my uncle got all of the applause. He was really one of the main and only Dobro players around there and his name is Jack Ferguson. I just realized how brilliant the Dobro was as an instrument and what a voice it could have and how it could really make an audience pay attention and that's what attracted me to it.

BMP: When did you get your first Dobro?

RANDY: I raised a feeder calf and bought a 1979 or 1980 Regal. That's the only one I don't have. I sold it. It was real pretty but it didn't sound all that good so I sold it for an upgrade. I bought a 1932 Regal and I played it for a long time until I talked Ferrell Stowe, a brilliant Midwestern Dobro player, out of a Bob Reed guitar that he had.

BMP: What music influenced you?

RANDY: Definitely the *Manzanita* record and hearing Boone Creek and J.D. Crowe and the New South and Tony Rice and Jerry Douglas and Mike Auldridge before that and Josh Graves before any of that. Those two guys you pretty much just have to consider a staple of any Dobro player's diet. You don't have a choice. They're on so many recordings and their names are so big that you can't miss 'em, you know. There's a lot of fellas that are coming along that are listening to people that everybody else isn't listening to and that's pretty cool. It broadens the range of the instrument.

BMP: What groups did you play with before moving to Nashville?

RANDY: Boone County Bluegrass and then Ed and Mary Long's band Possum Trot. I grew up playing the Sally Mountain Show with Rhonda Vincent's family. They're from Queen City, Missouri and it's about a two-and-a-half-hour drive for me and driving that far to a festival or rehearsal was nothing in a desolate place like Iowa. I played with them here and there in 1986 and '87. Then I discovered pedal steel and realized you could make a good living in country bars and I learned how to play a Telecaster and a steel and a bunch of

other things to survive. I fronted a full-time country band for quite awhile and played five nights a week at a club in Des Moines. There wasn't a lot of musicians that were playing in a higher caliber from which to learn from and I realized that my next move had to be to Nashville in 1993 to be able to grow. I ate popcorn for about the first three weeks because I was too stubborn to get a day job. I wanted to play music fulltime. I played from one o'clock in the afternoon until one o'clock in the morning at a little club called Maggie McGee's for about a year - just me and an acoustic guitar. I auditioned for Tom T. Hall's band and it was the first and last audition I've ever had and my name has spread since then and everybody knows how I play now. I played for him for two years and I did a long stint with David Parmley and Scott Vestal and Continental Divide and I played with Paulette Carlson and Hank Thompson and Holly Dunn. My first major session in Nashville was with McBride and The Ride. It was quite an interesting experience to hang with people that were so much better than I was and it really kicked me into gear. Other than *Timeless and True Love*, the Rhonda Vincent record, I can't even remember a master I did after that or even a timeline of what I've done. I do know that I've played on over 400 records and it really evolved the last three-and-a-half years. The complete year of 2002 I toured with Dolly Parton and I've been on her last two projects - the *Halos and Horns* record and *God and Country*. Bluegrassers figured me out through David Parmley and Continental Divide and watched me through the John Cowan era too. People that were wanting progressive Dobro on their records in the country world started paying attention to those records too.

BMP: *How do you describe your band?*

RANDY: Hopefully bluegrass that isn't just the same old thing but yet still has traditional elements to draw even the most traditional listener. It's a really fine line to play something progressive enough that it makes a 16 year old's head spin but at the same time keeps the average general bluegrass listener that's a hardcore guy say, 'He's still one of the fold.'

Contact www.randykohrs.net or www.Lonesomedayrecords.com **BMP**