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Country Junction

Her biggest hit, "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue," still resonates on classic country and easy-listening stations. And Crystal Gayle never tires of singing that song or talking about its impact on pop and country music. For more than 40 years, the baby sister of country legend Loretta Lynn has carved her own musical path, appearing on television specials, performing to sold-out concert halls and winning a Grammy® Award for her signature single. *Goldmine* caught up with the long-locked lass, and she talked about her new album of American standards, *All My Tomorrows*, her tribute single to the soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan and what she currently has in her record collection.

Goldmine: Your new album, *All My Tomorrows*, shows your vocal ability, reinterpreting classic ballads and Big Band melodies of the 1940s and 1950s.

Crystal Gayle: I just had so much fun in the studio doing that album. And of course, I just love singing that style. I think that my voice, if it had been in another time, another life, I would have been a cabaret singer somewhere, singing those kinds of songs. We tried to perform the songs in an honest way. You know,

year, you recorded a special CD single for our soldiers overseas, with a tribute song called "You Don't Even Know My Name."

Sally Mudd, a songwriter here in Nashville, wrote it. And you know, when I heard the lyrics, I wanted to record the song. It's not on an album or anything like that — we did it as a tribute to our military. It's a thank-you song, and I am very proud of our military that has served and those that are serving now. In the news, you find people going back and forth, bickering over why didn't we do this or why we're doing that, and I'm thinking, "Let's just make this a better place."

Your first country hit, "I've Cried (The Blues Right Out Of My Eyes)," was written by your older sister, Loretta Lynn. Have you always been a fan of your sister's music?

There's 19 years between Loretta and me — I'm the last out of eight children. But I grew up loving my sister's music and I'm probably one of her biggest fans. I'd go to Nashville — and Owen Bradley was her producer — and Owen said to me, "We're gonna record you, but we want you to have your education first." But I did record in high school, including that song. Even on my first album with Decca, which was released after I was off the label, there were several songs that she had written.

That song developed a life of its own

— it was re-released once "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" became a monster hit.

Record companies always do that if you've been with one years ago — they would bring out the songs you had on their label, just to hope that someone would buy them.

When you first recorded "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue," did you have any idea that that song would be your biggest-selling recording ever, not to mention being recognized by ASCAP as one of the 10 most-played country music songs of the 20th century?

That song was written so well, you don't get tired singing it. It says so much and so little. It's not this long, drawn-out song that goes on forever and ever, and it just, it has so much emotion in the lyrics. Richard Leigh wrote the song; he's a great writer. And we almost didn't get that particular song. Allen Reynolds, who was my producer at that time, went to Richard's house to listen to some songs he had written, and Richard said he had one that was going to be sent to California for



Crystal Gayle

another singer, and he started playing "Brown Eyes" and Allen said, "You're not sending that song anywhere." When I heard it I just fell in love with it — and what you hear on the record was the very first take in the studio.

Not to mention becoming a huge crossover hit, your first Top 10 on the Pop chart, and a Grammy Award as well.

We were excited that we had a song that broke all barriers. It was so different-sounding from what was out there on the radio. It just opened so many doors for me. From that song, I did television specials, from Bob Hope, Dean Martin, my own specials, and I had to turn down a bunch that I couldn't do, just because I would be on the road traveling.

You've had a long association with producer Allen Reynolds, almost your entire recording career.

Allen was actually someone that I didn't think that I would find in Nashville. I was a bit naive in the studio, but he owned his own studio, so we got to go in there and experiment with different singing styles — the sense that I could sing the song several different ways just to see how the song would feel. I used to be what you call a belter. Everything I would sing would just be, you know, at full force. Then, you know he would say, "OK, why don't you lay back a little bit." I mean, he can pick songs. As you know, he's done a lot of producing with Garth Brooks as well and started his career out. Started out Don Williams in the beginning of his career. He's also a terrific writer. He wrote my very first Top 10 country song, which was "Long Road

(Please see Crystal Gayle page 27)

NEWS & NOTES

The Cornucopia: Chely Wright's next album will be released on Dualtone... Sara Evans and Andy Griggs open for Brad Paisley on his 2005 tour while George Strait's upcoming tour includes Dierks Bentley and newcomer Amber Dotson. Also touring together: Ted Nugent with Toby Keith; Trace Adkins with Montgomery Gentry... *Rolling Stone* Magazine's "500 Greatest Songs Of All Time" list contains the following country entries: Johnny Cash, "I Walk The Line" (#30); Patsy Cline, "Crazy" (#85); Johnny Cash, "Ring Of Fire" (#87); Hank Williams, "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" (#111); Johnny Cash, "Folsom Prison Blues" (#164); Glen Campbell, "Wichita Lineman" (#192); Hank Williams, "Your Cheatin' Heart" (#213); Dolly Parton, "Jolene" (#217); Patsy Cline, "I Fall To Pieces" (#238); George Jones, "He Stopped Loving Her Today" (#270); Willie Nelson, "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain" (#302); Glen Campbell, "By The Time I Get To Phoenix" (#450); Willie Nelson, "On The Road Again" (#471)... On the mend: Little Jimmy Dickens (from pneumonia).

New Releases: Dec. 28: Merle Haggard, *Love Songs* (Legacy); Marty Robbins, *Love Songs* (Legacy). Jan. 11: Gene Autry, *The Essential Gene Autry* (Legacy); The Jenkins, *The Jenkins* (Capitol); Waylon Jennings, *Love Songs* (Legacy). Jan. 25: Jessi Alexander, *Honeysuckle Sweet* (Sony); Kenny Chesney, *Be As You Are: Songs From An Old Chair* (BNA); Shelly Fairchild, *Ride* (Sony); Miranda Lambert, *Kerosene* (Sony); Blaine Larsen, *Off To Join The World* (BNA); LeAnn Rimes, *This Woman* (Curb); The Stanley Brothers, *Earliest Recordings: The Complete Rich-R-Tone 78s 1947-1952* (Rounder).

TV/Movie News: CMT Total Access profiles Rascal Flatts Dec. 30... Big & Rich perform on *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve 2005*, Dec. 31 on ABC... 20 Greatest First Videos airs Jan. 1 on CMT... CMT's *Muzikmafia* TV series follows Big & Rich and Gretchen Wilson on tour. Episodes premiere Jan. 15, 22 and 29.

Best Country Collections of 2004: Aside from being a strong overview of an artist's music, to make my year-end "best" list the recordings had to be the original, unaltered (aside from remastering) renditions. George Strait's *50 #1s*, for instance, didn't contend since several tracks are truncated. Here are my picks (in alphabetical order): Lynn Anderson, *Greatest Hits* (Collectors' Choice); Brooks & Dunn, *Greatest Hits 2* (Arista); Terri Clark, *Greatest Hits* (Mercury); Merle Haggard, *40 #1 Hits* (Capitol); George Jones, *50 Years Of Hits* (Bandit); Sammy Kershaw, *The Definitive Collection* (Mercury); Kris Kristofferson, *The Essential Kris Kristofferson* (Legacy); The Mavericks, *The Definitive Collection* (MCA); Earl Scruggs, *The Essential Earl Scruggs* (Legacy); Lee Ann Womack, *Greatest Hits* (MCA).

— Jim Bagley

12 Questions For...

Crystal Gayle

by Chuck Miller

they played in a way that jazz improvisation was available if we wanted it. If I wasn't comfortable with something, I would say, "OK, I want to change this." I'd rather have it be the truer note or what I recall. But, really when you get in the studio and you're doing the performance, those songs are created from everybody working together and making it come alive.

You've worked with vintage standards before; a CD you recorded a few years ago, *Crystal Gayle Sings The Heart And Soul Of Hoagy Carmichael*, is now back in print.

You know, Hoagy's from Indiana, and that's where I grew up. I was born in Bloomington, and I've lived in Indianapolis as well. It was just great working with his music. His songs are timeless, like a lot of the songs from that period. When you have a great melody and the lyrics work, they are kind of timeless.

You've always supported our soldiers overseas, including a concert last year with the Air Force Band at the DAR Constitution Hall. This

(Crystal Gayle from page 26)

Again,” and he wrote “Somebody Loves You,” wrote “Ready For The Times To Get Better.”

What are some of the prizes in your personal record collection?

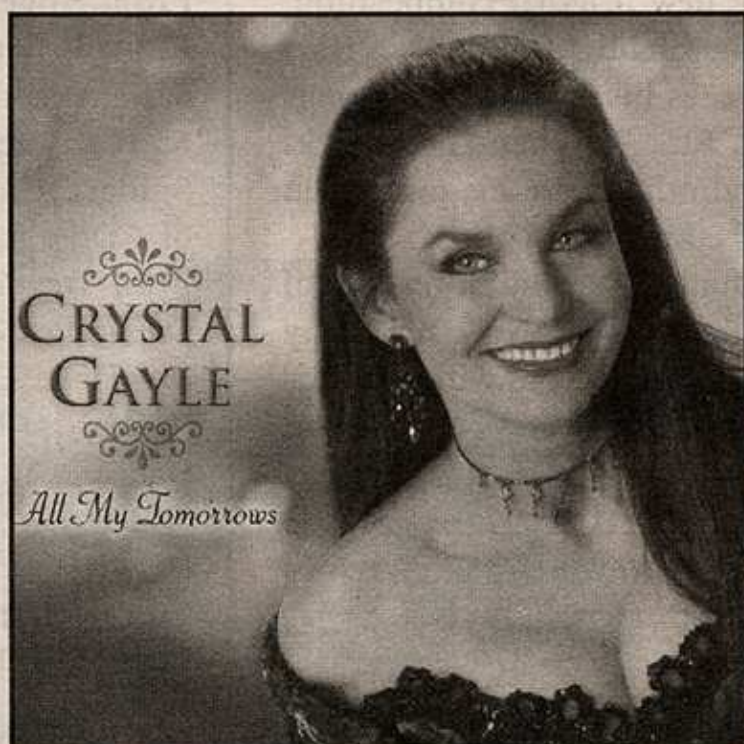
Some of my prized possessions are my sister's records, you know. I have records of hers that go back to the very beginning.

On the old Zero label?

Zero label and all her albums. And of course, you know there's albums that maybe aren't “old” old, but they're prized possessions to me. I also have some of the early *Sesame Street* albums; I love those. There's just some great music out there from things that weren't real big hits, but I love them.

Many people still remember that duet “Just You And I” that you sang with Eddie Rabbitt.

Eddie was so great. He asked me to do some harmony on a song, and we went into the studio intending much more than a little harmony. So many people have used it as their wedding song. That's always made us feel real good. I loved working with Eddie a lot. We got to record together on a song for a movie called *Gordy*; it was a children's movie about a pig. I'm so glad the movie people put us together for the music on that movie. That was really probably one of the last projects he did. We just had a great time in that studio. I wish we could have recorded much more together.



What trends do you see in country music?

For a while I thought country music, in the last few years, started losing its identity and what it was. And I think people started stepping back — when it stopped selling a little bit, everybody gets frantic. You cannot really put Shania Twain in the country genre, or a Garth Brooks. They're not principally country artists. Their music goes beyond boundaries. I think the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* really helped start turning it back around. We need to not lose what country music is all about. Brad Paisley is definitely an artist that's sticking true to what he wants to do, solid country music. There's a lot of good out there. I look back at some of my older material, and I think it's country than what's country now. But I'm glad that they're trying to get back a little bit.