

Tippin, Strait, Travis: Bad Boys of Country

BRAD PALMER
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AARON TIPPIN
Call of the Wild

Aaron Tippin is one of the hardest working members of the country music scene today. Tippin has set the stage for a vast array of singers. He blends traditional country with rock, and his lyrics cover a wide range of emotions. Songs like "In Your Wildest Dreams" from *You've Got to Stand for Something* and "There Ain't Nothing Wrong With the Radio" from *Read Between The Lines* exhibit the flavor that Tippin conveys to everyone that listens to his music.

In late 1990, Tippin marched into country music with his tough minded single "You've Got to Stand for Something." Many people have heard the song as a cry for the war America was then waging against Iraq. The song, however, was written by Tippin as merely an affirmation of personal integrity. That is a subject dear to his heart and one that is woven into merely every song that he writes.

His platinum album *Read Between the Lines* shows his remarkable ability to transmit emotions in a song. With his first single, "I Wouldn't Have it Any Other Way," and "My Blue Angel," Tippin proves his ability to shed light on emotional issues.

"Trim Yourself to Fit the World" is yet another classic tune. It notes the essence of Tippin's feelings towards "trimming" yourself to fit that of the world.

With Tippin's latest effort *Call of the Wild* and the smash "Working Man's Ph.D." he enhances the flavor of country music as it is classified today.

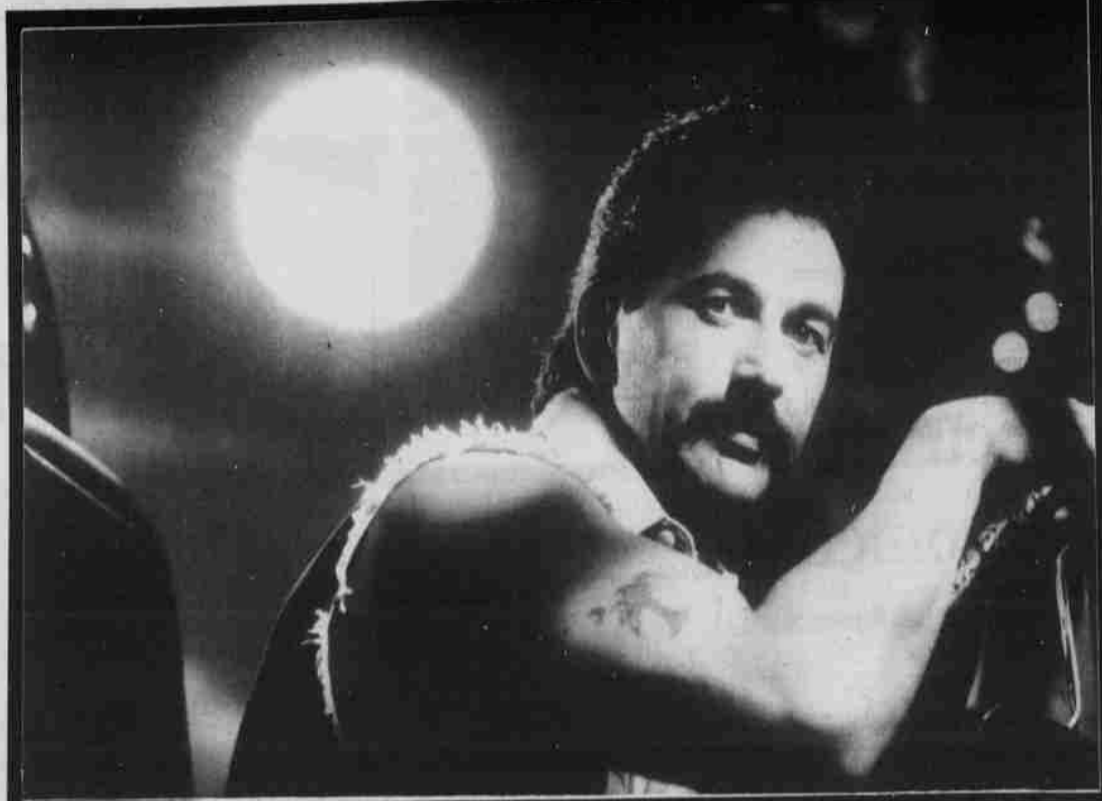
GEORGE STRAIT
Easy Come, Easy Go

George Strait has been noted as one of the finest country music stars of the last fifteen years. Strait hit the scene in 1981 with the smash number one "Unwound," and a smash debut LP. Later, Strait went on to win several awards including Entertainer of the Year and Lead Male Vocalist in several venues.

Strait has released eighteen albums and dozens of singles. The most noted songs of his career include "Amarillo By Morning," "The Chair," "Ocean Front Property," and "I've Come to Expect it From You."

Strait has had platinum album success with *Greatest Hits Volume Two* and *Chill of An Early Fall*. With the success of the movie *Pure Country* and the soundtrack which went double-platinum last year, he attained the biggest record of his career. Also, the classic "I Cross My Heart" became his signature song as a stylist, and went on to become the largest selling single of his career. Strait has been mostly noted for his classic ballads "Baby Blue," "Love Without End, Amen," and "If I Know Me."

Strait is currently on the scene with *Easy Come, Easy Go*, and the title track is climbing the single charts. Strait will continue to be noted as one of the perpetually cool singers of the scene.



Aaron Tippin adds to the limelight of traditional country music.

RANDY TRAVIS
Wind in The Wire

Randy Travis is noted as one of today's top crooners of Country music, and another stylist, like that of George Jones and the late Conway Twitty.

Travis hit the scene in 1986 with "1982" and "Diggin' Up Bones," and the *Storms of Life* LP. In almost ten years, Travis has garnered over a dozen No. 1 songs including the crossover smash "Forever and Ever, Amen" from *Always and Forever*. In 1988, Travis won Best Country Performer

Male for his strong debut, and became a success with his first two albums which later went double-platinum.

In 1989, "Is It Still Over?" rocketed the charts and later in that year "Promises" became a hit.

For the next two years Travis took a turn in his career. In 1990, *Heroes and Friends*, a duet album with Hall of Famers George Jones, Loretta Lynn, and favorite Dolly Parton launched Travis on a whole new leg of his career. "Cool Water" with Roy Rogers and "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind" with Dolly Parton later became hits, and boasted

Travis' career to an all time high.

Currently, Travis appeared in *Wind in the Wire*, a television movie starring Burt Reynolds, Chuck Norris, and Denver Pyle. The album, also the soundtrack for the special, features the "Cowboy Boogie." This song reclassifies Travis, and makes his versatility known.

As Gene Autry once noted: "Randy Travis carries on the best of the singing cowboy tradition, not only in his music but also his dedication to the 'Cowboy Code.' He believes in being one of the good guys who wears a white hat so that he's a positive role model as well as a great performer."

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that. Red Buttons - terrific, saw him the other night. Funny man.

J: Have you seen Buddy Hackett?

RL: Buddy Hackett's great. Buddy is strong. Sandy Hackett's a good comedian living here, locally. Excellent comedian. Impersonators here, have you ever seen a guy named Bob Anderson? Does singing impressions?

J: No, not yet.

RL: He's superb. And then in our show we've got Kathy Walker, who's great, and Jeannette Markey. There's a lot of good talent out there. A lot of people don't become names because there's no place to be seen. When I was growing up, you could do "Ed Sullivan," Carson, and about twenty other variety shows; "Hollywood Palace," Glen Campbell, Carol Burnett, Flip Wilson. There were about twenty variety shows on the air in the late sixties. Today there are none.

So if you're not on with Arsenio Hall or doing a guest shot with Jay Leno or some comedy show - and there are millions of those - nobody gets to know you. You can't create stars today. It's hard to get a name anymore.

J: What is your definition of success today?

RL: You just have to be content with what you're doing, and don't as a lot of performers do, say "I should have," or "if only." There's many levels of success, and I could say I've always wanted to get into movies, and I've always wanted to have a hit television show, and things like that.

It can be disappointing, but on the other hand, I should be happy with what I've done up to

now, and settle for that. A lot of people want to do more, and if they don't stay right on top they get depressed, instead of just relaxing and enjoying what success they have.

J: You've got a good thing at the Sahara.

RL: Yeah, I've got a good thing at the Sahara, and I still do my dates on the road. I do a lot of charity work, and develop projects. I'm working on a one-man show, or almost a one-man show on Jack Benny for Broadway. I'm putting together a show on the presidents. I'm going to do an evening of all the presidents, and that's kind of exciting.

I have to work on projects like that, otherwise you just get stilted, and you just stay in one area.

J: A voice isn't funny unless it says something, unless it comes with a punchline. I think I do a good Louise Jefferson, but the joke is a skinny white guy doing Louise Jefferson. My roommate does the bear from *Hercules in New York*, but that doesn't translate into a stage act.

RL: Really? The bear? (laughs) Everybody does one impression.

BM: That was *Hercules Takes on Manhattan*. One of Arnold's (Schwarzenegger) real good movies. (laughs) You know where you're coming up, right Rich?

RL: Yeah, I'm thinking of coming up later.

BM: That band. They're giving out this - groove - on the monitors.

RL: What are you going to say about me?

BM: Don't worry, I'll make it glowing, and flowery.

RL: Where are you now?

BM: Union Plaza.

RL: Got out of the Maxim, huh?

BM: Yeah. (laughs)

RL: What do they have over there at the Maxim?

BM: Just stand-up comedy, like the Improv.

RL: Stand-up comedy. Is there any sit-down comedy? Lie-down comedy? (laughs)

So, things are going good for me now. I'm starting to work on some good projects and getting a lot of personal problems solved. I went through a lot of garbage a couple of years ago. You have to be so careful in this business of who you associate with and who your friends are.

J: Are most of your friends in the business?

RL: Yeah, but after a few bad experiences where people have taken advantage of me through publicity I question a lot more than I used to, even in personal relationships. What's the motive here? What do they want? What are they trying to do? You can get yourself into a lot of trouble by being ignorant. All of a sudden, you're turning around and somebody's suing you and you think, "Why? I've been nothing but nice to them." And then you realize it's publicity, or whatever.

I've had a lot of problems in the last couple of years with managers that took money from me, agents. So, you're just a little more careful. And I have been, and I hope all the things are in the past because I want to do a lot for this community. I love living in Vegas, and I love doing things for this community.

J: I wonder how much of what you spoke of reflected on you, personally. I can't help but believe those who you say took advantage of you were more damaged.

RL: Well, I always think it will come around, and the truth will always come out, eventually. What

goes around comes around.

J: That must be hard for you, because you can't work alone at this, and you almost have to surround yourself with people you trust, don't you?

RL: Yeah, you're really careful. Who's going to be your friend today and sue you tomorrow? It's happened to me a lot. So I'm much better with contracts and relationships.

J: Everyone should take a contractual law course.

RL: When I was growing up, when you got angry with someone, you got annoyed. Today, people sue. For any reason at all, people sue. Get a lawyer. "He's an entertainer, get a lawyer." What will that do? "Well, because he's an entertainer, he won't want the publicity of going through a lawsuit, so he'll settle."

I've got a drummer who sued me for that reason, an ex-manager for that reason. Thinking that you'll just settle.

Lawyers are really the winners. Those jokes about lawyers are true. There's a joke about lawyers I heard the other day. An honest lawyer, a dishonest lawyer, and Santa Claus were playing poker, and the lights went out. When the lights came on, all the money on the table was gone. Who do you think took the money? Well, the answer is, the honest (laughs) - no, yeah. The dishonest lawyer, because the other two are fictional characters. Isn't that a great joke? (laughs)

J: Really, and I know lawyers who wouldn't appreciate it. That's crossing the comedy line we spoke of earlier.

RL: (laughs) There was a hit-and-run on the highway over here, and they were trying to figure out if it was a skunk or a lawyer they

ran over. They decided it was a lawyer, because if it was a skunk there would have been skid marks in front of it. (laughs)

J: A joke is actually an argument used in the context of logic.

RL: Yeah, it is, but it has to be simple. If you have to explain it, it's not funny. Or if you do, you might get a little laugh, then a little more, but you can't wait.

Audiences in Vegas that have been drinking, staying up all night, gambling, and carousing, as they do in this town, need humor that's corny and very plain and a little suggestive to get a laugh. Whereas if you're on the road, and at a concert where people are sitting in rows in front of you after parking the car and coming in to see the show, you can be a little more clever. You're not fighting the alcohol and the late hours.

J: What's easier, to be clever or be base?

RL: (laughs) I love a clever joke. When we went to Branson (Missouri), it was all families and farmers and mom and pops - the humor was very corny and clean and nothing suggestive. That's what they wanted in Branson.

J: I think humor changes with your age.

RL: It does. Oh, yeah, because look at the movies that you liked as a kid. Look at the Dean Martin/Jerry Lewis movies that came out in the fifties. And look at them today.

J: Jerry did a couple of films in the early to mid-eighties that didn't do so well.

RL: Not by himself, no. He and Dean - He (Jerry) was doing pratfalls and waiters carrying trays and spilling stuff on people. If you look at it today, it's a physical kind of cornball comedy. So is the Three Stooges.