



# The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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Fall Edition

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## COUNTRY MUSIC - A REFLECTION OF OUR PAST

By Grant Heywood

The recent PBS documentary by Ken Burns is nothing short of amazing. If you are ever in need of a history lesson about country music, where it started, and how it evolved, then this is definitely required viewing. My wife didn't really have to coax me to watch this Country Music series on PBS. It literally had me glued to the television from the get go. I am sure that this documentary series will be one of the most watched and educational music documentaries ever, and will likely be up for a few awards.

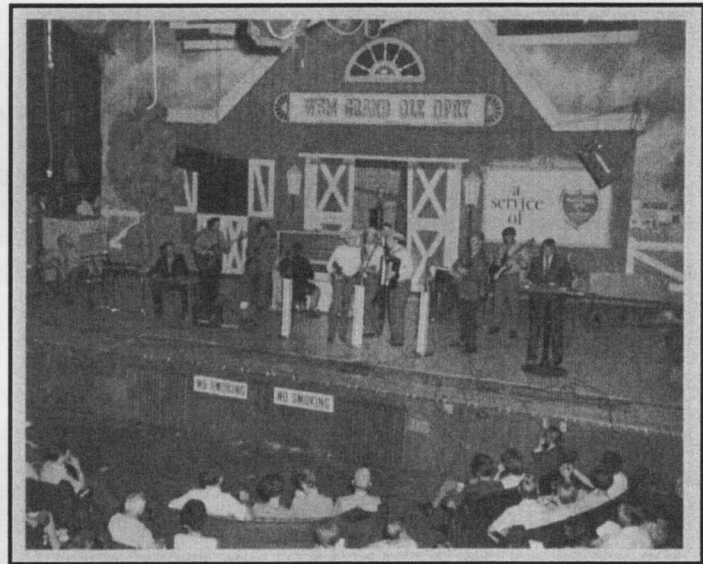
One common denominator in the series is where country music originated. It's interesting to note that country music, jazz, and rock and roll, can all trace their roots back to African American slaves and the blues and gospel music they sang in the southern U.S. states. Hank Williams can attribute much of his musical roots to African American street musician Rufus Payne. Payne taught young Hank a lot about the blues and how to play guitar. Hank came from poor humble beginnings as did many country music artists from that era. Music seemed to be a way to escape the perpetual poverty that many folks found themselves in because of the great depression of the 1930's.

I enjoyed seeing how Jimmy Rodgers was the first to make a real impact in shaping country music. With his first recording in 1927, Rodgers, along with the Carter Family were the real beginnings of country music. It was also satisfying to see some of the stars such as cowboy recording and Hollywood star, Gene Autry, sign up to enlist during the Second World War. Many of the other prominent country artists followed suit and signed up to

serve their country. Several of these country artists at that time, were making big money, but enlisted because they were honourable men. Politicians please take note.

I am sure Ken Burns spent many hours of travelling and long days and nights researching this documentary. It is so well done and covers every facet of country music, from folk, to hillbilly, bluegrass to cowboy music, and honky tonk music to uptown country. It was interesting to note the history pattern of country music. Country music has its roots in the southern states and was known as folk, hillbilly, country and western and eventually country music. It was widely recognized as a combination of Appalachian folk mixed with western cowboy music, and the blues of the south. From those early days, it eventually became known as country music. With the recent advent of new country music, many people now consider Americana music more in line with country roots music.

There was a scene in the Country Music doc, that made me smile. Bill Munro can be attributed to being the father of a brand new genre of music that evolved in the 1940's. It was called bluegrass music. When Bill wrote *Blue Moon of Kentucky*, there was no denying it's pedigree. Bill



could be a cantankerous old soul, and in the 1950's Elvis Presley recorded Monroe's *Blue Moon of Kentucky*. When Bill heard it being played on the radio, he was furious. As far as Bill was concerned, Elvis's version was a disgrace to the original song. Bill Monroe hated Elvis's version of the song until he got his first royalty cheque from Elvis's version. That's when Bill smiled and said 'He can record any of my tunes, anytime he wants to.'

Our country music scene in Canada emerged because of the country music emanating from our southern border neighbours. Many of our early country music recording stars were Wilf Carter from western Canada, and Hank Snow from the Maritimes. Wilf stayed in Canada while Hank eventually made his fortune in Nashville, Tenn. Wilf made his first recording for RCA Victor in 1932 and is known as the father of Canadian

Continued on Page 3

## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



It seems the older you get, the faster the seasons change. I thought it was just a few weeks ago when I put out all of the patio furniture and BBQ. Now fall has arrived and it's time to put it all away again. I guess that means I'll soon be putting the lawn mower away and getting the snowblower ready. Somehow that doesn't seem like a good trade off.

By this time now, the summer festival events have come to a close. I had a very busy summer this year performing at several different venues and festivals. This past summer I was part of a band production called *The Woodstock Experience*. It was a privilege to perform with such talented musicians and singers. The band included, Chuckee Zehr/keyboards & vocals, from Tavistock, Cheryl Lescom/vocals, percussion, from K/W, Mark Shickluna, bass gtr., from London, Rick Taylor, gtr./vocals/percussion, from London, Steve Thoman, gtr./vocals from Rostock, Grant Heywood, drums/vocals/percussion/gtr. from Wellesley, and Dave Harland from Tavistock who played the role of Chip Monk, emcee from the original Woodstock Festival in 1969.

We played several festivals, theatres and outdoor events throughout Ontario, and mostly to sell-out crowds. It was a real treat to see the audience dressed up in their finest 'hippie' attire dancing to the music. This was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original Woodstock Music Festival in 1969, so it was a celebration of that era. I'm proud to be involved in such a stellar show and can't wait

until next year to play even more venues. This show gets me excited every time we perform and even those who are country fans have commented about *The Woodstock Experience* being a fantastic musical production.

Being a steady performing musician really doesn't allow you to get out and check out other performers. I did make it out to a few events this year, but I was mainly on stage or on the road. It was great weather this past summer for anyone who attended an outdoor music event.

My wife and I were able to get away for a brief visit to the Maritimes. We travelled to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. I haven't been to eastern Canada since I was on tour in the late 1990's, and I must say it has really changed a lot. Many of the old clubs and hotels that we used to frequent as a touring band have virtually disappeared, and many of the 'mom & pop' stores have vanished. Some of the city landscape in Moncton, N.B. and Halifax, N.S., really doesn't look much different than Kitchener/Waterloo. I guess I'm really showing my age.

I really do like the east coast of Canada. I remember touring there as the *Heywood Family*, when I was only 7 or 8 years old. Those were the days of Don Messer and the Islanders, Marg Osbourne, Charlie Chamberlin and the home of Hank Snow. I have many fond memories of those beautiful provinces and the down home hospitality of the people that live there. Several of my friends who have retired, have moved to the Maritimes and some of them weren't even from there originally.

When the *Heywood Family* used to tour the Maritimes, my mom, dad, and sister would always get treated to a feed of lobster. I didn't come around to eating lobster until I reached my teenage years. This summer we were treated to the biggest fresh lobster supper ever! It was delicious and I had to spend a few hours on the couch just to let my food digest. It reminded me of when we'd tour and perform at some of the small towns, such as Sambro or Musquodoboit

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

Phone (519) 530-8000

(or leave a message)

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Harbour, and buy cooked lobster off the back of a pickup truck.

The CKNX Barn Dance Band had several performers who originated from the east coast of Canada. But you don't have to travel east to the Maritimes if you want to catch a Barn Dance Show. The Barn Dance has a few more shows to wind up the 2019 season. Please check the Barn Dance Schedule below for details. Hope to see you at the next Barn Dance.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

5584 Deborah Glaister Line,

R. R. #2, Wellesley, Ontario N0B 2T0

Phone: (519) 656-2552

E-mail: [heywoods@xplornet.ca](mailto:heywoods@xplornet.ca)

or send a message on facebook.

### 2019 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Sun., Oct. 20	Barn Dance Show - 3:00 p.m.	Commercial Tavern, Maryhill
Sun., Nov. 24	Barn Dance Show - 2:00 p.m.	Heritage Hall, Hensall
May 21-24, 2020	Annual Campout Jamboree	Blyth Arena and Campgrounds, Blyth

Continued from Page 1

country music with his distinctive yodeling and honest songs about Canada and Canadians.

My dad, Earl Heywood, trained in army camp in Chatham during the Second World War. Although he never saw combat, he was compelled like others to serve the nation. It was at boot camp that my dad wrote a song called 'Living in the Army'. Like Hank Snow, Wilf Carter, and Gene Autry, my dad was a product of the 1940's era of cowboy music. Similar to Gene Autry, Earl Heywood made a name for himself on RCA Victor records as Canada's No. 1 Singing Cowboy. He may not have become as famous as Gene, but he was a Canadian pioneer of country music in Canada.

I especially enjoyed the era of the barn dances portrayed in the documentary. The Louisiana Hayride and the National Barn Dance in Chicago were huge in their heyday of the 1920's and into the 30's. It was inevitable that the success of the Barn Dances in the U.S. would soon spill over into Canada. When Doc Cruickshank started CKNX radio in Wingham, it was around the 1930's when he first broadcast the CKNX Barn Dance program which turned into Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance Show.

It's great to know that we have our own country music history here in Canada and that much of it is rooted in places like Wingham, Ont. We should treasure our rich Canadian country music heritage. We may have been unduly influenced by our U.S. counterpart in their birth of country music. It's nice to know that we continue to honour our country music history of the past and celebrate traditional country music at every Barn Dance Show.

# Texas, A Cradle Of Unlimited Talent

By Grant Heywood

I've always been intrigued by how many musicians call Texas their home. When Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, snubbed Nashville and took their sound and recorded in their beloved home of Texas, I knew there was something up. They were later joined by Johnny Cash, and fellow Texan, Kris Kristoffersen, and spearheaded what is known as 'outlaw country'.

I investigated this Texas phenomenon recently, only to find out that Texas has spawned well over two hundred great, known musical artists of our time. From the blues of Big Mama Thornton, to the Texas swing of Bob Wills & his Texas Playboys, the 3 piece rock of ZZ Top, the rocking guitar of Stevie Ray Vaughn, to the signature vocals of Janis Joplin, Jim Reeves, Beyonce' and Johnny Mathis, every musical style is represented in Texas. Wikipedia lists 17 sub categories alone, of musical artists from Texas. It is a staggering list to say the least. The state of Texas is almost like a country within a country and includes musicians such as, The Monkee's Mike Nesmith, Van Cliburn, Barry White, Sly Stone, Norah Jones, Boz Scaggs, Johnny & Edgar Winter, Stephen Stills, Scott Joplin, Jack Teagarden...the list just goes on and on.

For the uninitiated, I am listing just some of the great country re-

lated musical artists of our time from Texas, including those previously mentioned. The list would be well over 250 if I were to include everyone. It's truly amazing how many of them are Texans, and an impressive list to be sure.

- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Buddy Holly       | Vernon Dalhart        |
| Moe Bandy         | Hank Thompson         |
| Lyle Lovett       | Roy Orbison           |
| Towns Van Zandt   | Jimmy Dean            |
| Johnny Bush       | Steve Earle           |
| Buck Owens        | Dale Evans            |
| Clint Black       | Lee Ann Womack        |
| George Jones      | Jerry Jeff Walker     |
| Tex Ritter        | Ernest Tubb           |
| Ray Price         | Michael Martin Murphy |
| George Strait     | Mac Davis             |
| Guy Clark         | Junior Brown          |
| Rodney Crowell    | Roger Miller          |
| Freddy Fender     | Larry Gatlin          |
| Jim Lauderdale    | Johnny Rodriguez      |
| Kenny Rogers      | Barbara Mandrell      |
| Red Steagull      | The Derailers         |
| Tracy Byrd        | Lefty Frizell         |
| Kelly Clarkson    | Tanya Tucker          |
| Mickey Gilley     | Holly Dunn            |
| Gene Autry        | The Dixie Chicks      |
| Charlie Prlde     | Dan Seals             |
| Nanci Griffith    | Johnny Gimble         |
| Miranda Lambert   | Radney Foster         |
| Johnny Gimble     | Asleep at the Wheel   |
| Louise Mandrell   | Deryl Dodd            |
| Kinky Friedman    | Billy Joe Shaver      |
| Delbert McClinton | Tommy Duncan          |
| Bob Luman         | Tommy Allsup          |
| Johnny Lee        | LeAnn Rimes           |
| Boxcar Willie     | Lee Hazelwood         |

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# CANADIAN COUNTRY MUSIC TELEVISION HISTORY

By Grant Heywood



*CKNX television show Western Roundup. From left to right: Dan Grummet on steel guitar, Don Steele on guitar, Lucky Ambeau on fiddle, Al Cherney on fiddle, Slim Boucher on bass, drummer unknown.*

Intrigued by the recent PBS Country Music documentary by Ken Burns, I dug into the archives to see when country music became popular on Canadian television. These are only Canadian television shows of country music. With the advent of rock & roll in the 50's, you will see that the list shows more country music in the 60's as country started to surge again in this time period. Here is a list I compiled from what I could find out. If I have missed any, please let me know.

- ◆ CBC Holiday Ranch 1952
- ◆ Circle 8 Ranch 1955 – 1978. CKNX Wingham. Host: Ernie King.
- ◆ CBC Country Hoedown 1956 – 1965. Host: Gordie Tapp.
- ◆ CBC Don Messer's Jubilee 1957 – 1969. Host: Don Tremain.
- ◆ CTV Cross Canada Barn Dance 1961 – 1962. Host: Evan Kemp.
- ◆ CBC Singalong Jubilee 1961 – 1974. Host: Catherine McKinnon, Anne Murray.
- ◆ CBC The Tommy Hunter Show 1965 – 1992. Host: Tommy Hunter.

- ◆ CBC The Stu Davis Show 1966. Host: Stu Davis.
- ◆ CHCH Hamilton. Harry Hibbs Live at the Caribou. 1968. Host: Harry Hibbs.
- ◆ CBC Countrytime. 1970 – 1974. Host: Myrna Lorrie.
- ◆ CJOH Ottawa. Family Brown Country. 1972 – 1985. Host: The Family Brown.
- ◆ CJOH Ottawa. The Ronnie Prophet Show. 1973 – 1974. Host: Ronnie Prophet.
- ◆ CBC Stompin' Tom's Canada. 1974 – 1975. Host: Stompin' Tom.
- ◆ CBC The Road Show. 1977. Host: Colleen Peterson.
- ◆ CBC The John Allan Cameron Show. 1979 – 1980. Host: John Allan Cameron. *Note: There were other local or regional shows with Ray St. Germain, Gary Buck, Brian Sklar and others. The above is the main list of cross Canada shows on mainly major networks. Two other country music programs from CKNX Television were: Western Roundup and Goodtime Country.*

## BOOKING THE BARN DANCE

If you are interested in more information about booking the Barn Dance Musical Production, please write to:  
Barn Dance Bookings,  
P. O. Box 68,  
Wingham, Ont. N0G 2W0;  
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# KEVIN WESTPHAL

## “THE CANUCK”

### STRAIGHTFORWARD CANADIAN-ISMS

BY GRANT HEYWOOD

If you said that Kevin Westphal is a bit of an aberration with a sense of humor, you'd likely be spot on. Kevin used to go under the monicker 'The Blue Collared Canuck', but nowadays prefers to be called just... 'The Canuck'. When Kevin got to be friends with Stompin' Tom Connors, Tom told Kevin if he wanted to succeed in the music business he needed an angle or even go as far as to call it a gimmick. Kevin and Tom talked over many beers and Tom seemed to take a liking to the younger Kevin 'Canuck'. He saw promise in the kid and that always stuck with Kevin.

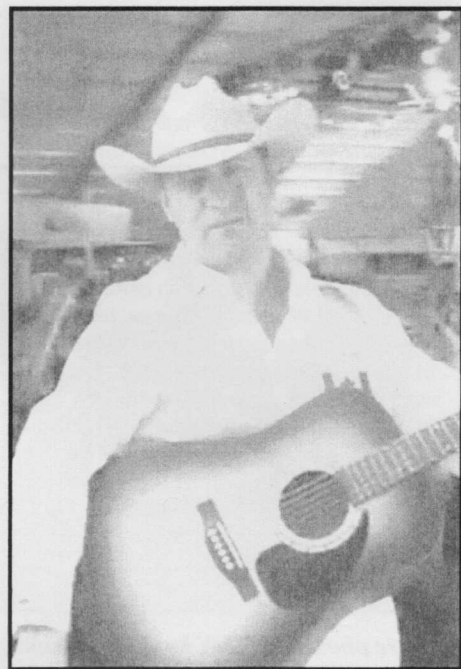
Kevin used to play all the honky tonks around the K/W area with a successful country band called the *Saltwater Cowboys*. Shortly after they disbanded, Kevin wrote a song and did a video about the high price of gasoline at the time. It was called 'The Gas Song', and it received coverage on every major television network in Canada. It also struck a nerve in other countries when Kevin soon realized he was receiving royalty cheques from Australia to the Ukraine and beyond. 'The Gas Song' was an underground hit on Youtube for Kevin and radio stations all jumped all over it.

With the help of local well known musician, Al Widmeyer and studio producer/musician, Dave McLaren, Kevin kept writing crazy songs and recording them in Dave's basement studio. You can still view many of these classic songs on YouTube, such as 'Pucknut Daddy', about the Maple Leafs & the Stanley Cup, The 'Timmy Tune', about waking up every morning to get your 'one big cup' at Horton's and The Beer Store Song. Kevin decided to change his pseudonym from 'The Blue Collar Canuck' to just 'The Canuck'. Short, sweet, and to the point, was the way he wanted it.

With two or three successful YouTube videos and radio airplay, Kevin continued with other songs such as 'The Christmas Shopping Blues', 'Canada, The Place To Be', 'The Legion Tribute' song, which became an anthem for many of the vets who attend the Royal Canadian Legion. His 'Lucknow Now' was a zany take on how to get to Lucknow... which isn't far from the lake. I was honoured to be a musician/singer on most of Kevin's songs and helped with arrangements when needed. I even performed with Kevin on the infamous 'Lucknow Now' at the Lucknow Fair one year. It was amazing to see the capacity crowd (mainly younger folk) chanting along with the song and even knowing the words. It was unbelievable!

Kevin has already played a couple of Barn Dance Shows in the past and was a guest back up musician on a Barn Dance Show at the Plowing Match one year. His father, Jack Westphal, played for several years as a prominent guitarist in local bands. His mom and dad and his family are Kevin's biggest fans. Kevin's only son is now shooting Kevin's YouTube videos and he does a fantastic job.

When it comes to Kevin's songs, they are corny, simple, and sometimes serious. He sings about the everyday common Canadian and he's proud of it. I appeared on his latest video, 'Pickled Eggs', along with steel guitarist, Mike Weber, Dwayne King on bass, and Jim Otterbein on guitar. The video is all about ... pickled eggs and the after effect. The YouTube video has been picking up a lot of hits lately and could very well become a successful calling card for Kevin 'The Canuck'. He's been working at this for quite a few years now and has gained a reputation as 'The Gas Song' guy or that dude who sings the 'Lucknow



Kevin Westphal, "The Canuck"

Now' song

You can't help but like Kevin's 'down home' approach to his videos. Kevin is a working man with a family himself. He's smart enough to keep his video persona relatively the same for every video he puts out, and he works hard at thinking of how everything will look and play out. He pulls no punches when he says "I just put this funny take on Canadian things I see every day and hope people will be able to relate to it". So far, it's been working for Kevin 'The Canuck'. Guitarist, Jim Otterbein and Kevin perform together in a duo as *Kracked Canoe*, playing traditional country songs, many of Kevin's songs and a tribute to Stompin' Tom. Let's hope this upward trend with 'The Canuck' continues. Maybe he'll be another Stompin' Tom in the making... with his own brand of songs. Now that would truly be a Canadian success story.



*Ernie King*  
Music (1993) Ltd.

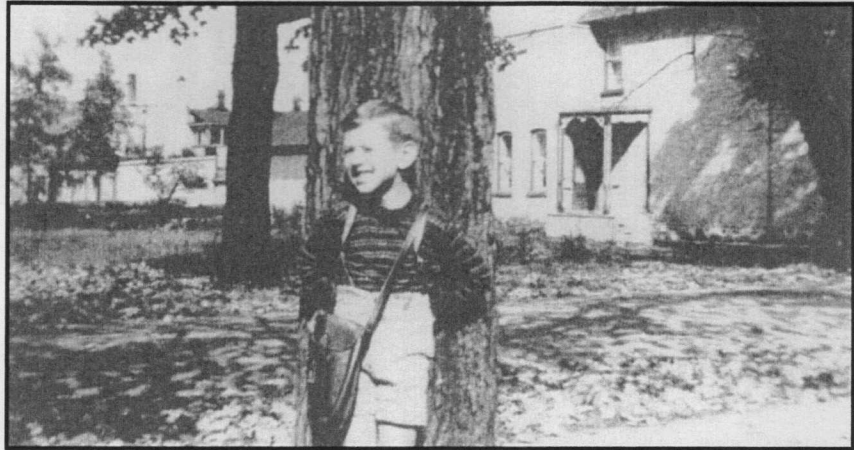
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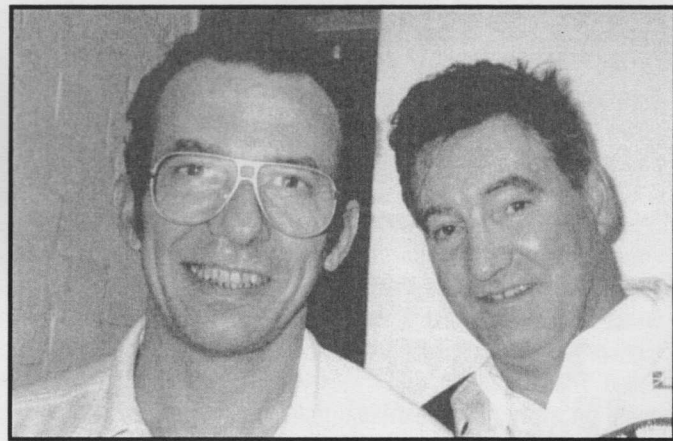
*A rare photo of CKNX boss, Doc Cruickshank and Jean & Doris Howard of The Howard Sisters, Barn Dance singers.*



*A rare photo of a young Larry Mercey, Sept. 1946 just about to attend his second year in school, in Hanover.*



*Circle 8 Ranch and Barn Dance pianist, Cora Robertson, at an honouring celebration as First Lady of the Barn Dance.*



*Sneezy Waters (Hank Williams tribute) and Michael T. Wall attending Stompin' Tom's concert at the Gatineau Clog Ottawa in the 1990's*



*A rare photo from the 1950's. Left to right: Jack Kingston, Les Dowell and Earl Heywood, arriving at a Barn Dance Show.*



*A Barb Dance fundraiser at the Wingham Legion Sept. 2002, left to right: singers Bill & Rita Winters from Michigan, Earl & Martha Heywood, Yodeler Joyce Leanord and husband Phil from the U.S.*

## COUNTRY CALENDAR



by **Doreen Brown**  
(Toronto and surrounding area)

878-6066. Dec. 22 7pm Chatham Evangel Community Church, call 226-626-7209.

\* First Sunday of the month, jam sessions at Dr. George Hall Public School, Eldon Rd., Little Britain with open mic.

\* **Oct. 17, 19 and 21** - Johnny and the generics, at Black Dog as follows, Oct. 17, 19 and 21 from 6-10, Orono, ON.

\* **You are invited** - To Purple Hill Country Opry by George and Anna Taylor and family. Call 519-461-0538 or email, purplehillcountryhall@gmail.com or go online at www.facebook.com/purplehillcountryhall check for upcoming shows.

\* **Appearances by Doreen Brown** - Oct. 3-6 attending awards show, National Country Music Assoc., Omaha, Nebraska. Oct., Nov. Dec. Rec Centre Alliston, third Tuesday of the month, 7pm dance with country music, same address, last Wednesday of the month from 1:30 - 3:30.

\* **Oct. 17** - From 1 - 5, Classic Country Music Dance, Renfrew Armories, 115 Veterans Memorial Blvd.

\* **Oct. 18** - Dance, Renfrew Legion, Branch 148.

\* **Oct. 19** - From 4 - 8, dance at 30 Raglan St. S, Renfrew, hosted by The Plager Boys and Jennifer Ferguson-Meigs.

\* **Kiley Joe Music Entertainment** - For upcoming appearances, call Lindsay 519-485-6542, or email lindsay@music.onca or online at kileyjoe.com.

\* **Oct. 20** - At 3pm Bonita Mercer is doing a fundraiser concert for Camp Norland in Warren, Ontario. Featuring Don Reed on fiddle. Spaghetti dinner to follow. Nov. 24 Bonita is doing some Christmas songs in Cambray.

\* **Naomi Bristow Updates** - Call 905-729-0956 for more info about the yodelin' cowgirl.

\* **Appearances for Dave Whalen** - Bringing the very best in live entertainment. Oct. 5, 19 and 26, dinner and dance. The Newfoundland Club. Oct. 27 The Moose Lodge, Lakeshore and HWY 27 in the afternoon. Email starliteband@rogers.com for more info.

\* **For Upcoming Old Country Music** - Contact Golden Country Classics, Rod 519-927-9138.

\* **Michael T. Wall** - Advises that he is working on a new CD with some of his earlier recordings.

\* **Joe Tucker** - And sometimes Dave Whalen and gang. Have fun being invited up as a guest. Army, Navy and Air Force Club, 765 Third St., Mississauga. Call 905-274-3821 for more info.

\* **Appearances for Crystal Gage** - Visit her website at www.crystalgage.com, or phone 519-945-7142, or email cristal@crysstalgage.com for more info.

\* **Little Bit Of Home Pub And Grill** - Newfie chef, call Everett and Sue 416-253-

4416. Located at 2961 Lakeshore Blvd, Etobicoke, Ont.

\* **Fiddles, Squares Fiddling And Old Time Square Dance Parties** - Contact Ralph and Sandy Price by email ralphsandprice@sympataico.ca.

\* **Country Music Band Joe Tucker** - Entertains often on weekends, also Dave Whelen and Band, as well as Linda Wells, at The Moose Lodge, Lakeshore and 27 HWY, Etobicoke and Army, Navy and Air Force Club 765 Third St. Mississauga. They often have open mic at both places and never know who you may meet down there, could be old friends. Call 905-855-3351 for more info.

\* **Dances At Trenton Legion** - Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 1. Doors open at 1:30. Contact Orpha 613-8437-3469. Food and door prizes.

\* **Shows dance** - Oct. 14, Nov. 11, Dec. 9 at Centennial Albert United Church, 19 Roshell, Oshawa.

\* **The Purple Hill Country Opry** - Sunday, Oct. 6 at 2pm hosting The East Coast Calling Opry Show. \$50 per person, includes a roast beef and chicken dinner. Call Anna at 519-461-0538. Line up: Guy Melanson, Scotty Gartsore, Canadian Country show band, Harold MacIntrye, Billy MacInnis, 3 time Canadian step dance champion Tiffany Fewster.

*You Are Invited to send me via email any appearances for country/bluegrass music to dbenterprises@rogers.com. Never know where your name may appear as this journal reaches international exposure and thank you very much for those who forward our journals to others'. We love our country music and like to share it.*

*To those who may be leaving for the winter months and all who support our Barn Dance Historical Society and all country music, even though it's early, a wonderful, healthy and happy holiday season. Hope we don't get too much snow here.*

## THE BARN DANCE MUSEUM

The Barn Dance Museum at 273 Josephine St. Wingham, is open for viewing by appt. Contact: Dave Wall at 519-357-1016.

\* **Oct. 17** - Whiskey Jack presents stories, songs of Stompin' Tom at 2pm, Sanderson Centre, 88 Dalhousie St, Brantford, Ont. Visit website for more info:

www.whiskeyjackmusic.com

\* **Oct. 20 & Nov. 24** - Upcoming shows for Barn Dance Band, at 3pm in the Commercial Tavern, Maryhill. Nov 24 at the Hensall Heritage Hall.

\* Warminster Legion has jamborees the first Sunday of the month at 1 p.m.

\* Army, Navy and Air Force Vets Club, has country bands during the weekends. Address: 765 Third St, Mississauga. Call 905-274-3821 for more info.

\* **Oct 19** - From 4 - 9 Renfrew Legion presents Plager Boys with Jenny Ferguson for an afternoon of country music.

\* **Oct., Nov., Dec.** - Has jam sessions the last Wednesday of the month at 1:30 at 7300 Industrial Parkway, new Tecumseh Rec Centre, Alliston, Ont. Also the same address the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30. Bring your musical instruments, dancing.

\* **Scott Woods line up** - Call 519-843-8873 for more info about any of the following dates. Dec. 3, 7pm Dryden Centre, call 1-855-726-8896. Dec 4, Thunder Bay CLE Coliseum, call 807-623-9077. Dec. 6, 7 pm Blind River, Alain Bray Auditorium, call 705-356-2135. Dec. 7 Parry Sound to be determined. Dec. 8 North Bay, David Club, call 705-474-4190. Dec. 9 Shelburne Grace Tipling Hall, call 519-925-2600. Dec. 10 Owen Sound First United Church, call 1-855-726-8896. Dec. 11 Fergus St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, call 519-843-3565. Dec. 12 Paris, Paris Agricultural Hall, call 1-855-1726-8896. Dec. 13, Camachie, Camachie United Church, call 519-869-4103. Dec. 14 2pm Beamsville, Providence Christian Reformed Church, call 905-309-5071. Dec. 15 Stratford St. Josephs Parish Hall, call 519-273-5356. Dec. 16 7pm Woodstock College Avenue, call 519-537-6062. Dec. 17 7pm Courtice Faith United Church, call 905-433-8953. Dec. 18 7pm Smiths Falls Westminster United Church, call 613-285-4281. Dec. 20 7pm Belleville St. Mathews United Church, call 613-967-1511. Dec. 21 Milton Knox Presbyterian Church, call 905-

# BARN DANCE CORNER by Peter Saros

What has been so fascinating to me while watching the early episodes of the eight-part 16-hour *Country Music* documentary series showcase produced by Ken Burns is how alive country music is in the present tense.

Emphasis on both the present and the tense.

Burns intriguingly titled his first episode "The Rub." It wasn't immediately obvious, or even easy to guess, what that title signified or meant going into the first two hours of the documentary. Was it a style? A primitive way of playing an archaic Appalachian instrument? Some old quack medicine show tonic? Come the end of episode one, what "The Rub" was couldn't be missed for the heat coming off of it.

In fact, every aspect of country music would now be viewed through this smoldering filter and metaphor. The rub brilliantly spoke to the friction between black and white culture, the urban and the rural, the authentic and the commercial, the old and

the new. These seemingly disparate influences ground up against one another with a relentless tectonic like tension that ultimately sparked what we know today as country music. This same creative tension continues to define and grow country music today.

Should he have extended his reach to 2019, Burns would have had no problem tapping into that same cauldron of conflict and drama behind Lil Nas X' song "Old Town Road." The country rap song entered the Billboard Hot Country Charts in March of this year. It climbed as high as 19 before the magazine disqualified it as not fitting the definitions of the country genre. The song has gone on to become an international phenomenon and topped the Billboard charts. Billy Ray Cyrus of "Achy Breaky Heart" fame recorded a re-mix of the song to help lobby for it as a country song. Black and white music, urban and country culture still rubbing up against one another in unexpected and exciting ways in 2019.

No less relevant to the readers of this

journal is the relentless rub between innovation and tradition. Much has been made on these pages as to the challenges of listening to today's country music. Recall Blake Shelton's famous quote a few years back, "Nobody wants to listen to their grandpa's music. And I don't care how many of these old farts around Nashville going. ' My God! That ain't country!' Well that's because you don't buy records anymore, jackass. The kids do, and they don't want to buy the music you were buying."

Though that quote still rubs a lot of people the wrong way it is still evidence of "The Rub." The music is still alive because we care enough to continue to fight for it. There is a pious push and pull from both sides. There are different sides to any story or song.

That's the point. So long as we are in conversation, and in relationship, there will be tension and conflict. The circle will remain unbroken so long as country music is forged in that crazy crucible.

## ELMIRA MUSIC IN THE PARK

The tradition of staging Elmira Music In the Park was originally started by our very own Barn Dance Pioneer Award winner, musician/songwriter and music historian, Lynn Russwurm. Since Lynn's passing a few years ago, the duties of staging the ever popular Elmira Music In the Park fell to Lynn's artist/musician son, Lance Russwurm. It has continued to have great success and grows in popularity every year.

I have known Lynn, Lance, and the Russwurm family since the 60's when I would sometimes play with Lynn, Lance & Laura (Lynn's wife at that time) when they were known as *The Hummingbirds*. Lynn was also a musical friend of my dad, Earl Heywood, and they would sometimes write songs together or play the Barn Dance Shows. I always appreciated Lynn's tenacity of promoting himself. Just like my dad, Lynn was always writing or playing a new song, or thinking of a way to promote his music or

some other singer/musician. Lynn's help with the Barn Dance Opera Journal was immeasurable. In my estimation, Lynn was the ultimate country music historian, and one of the best I've ever known.

It was because of Lynn that the Elmira In the Park Music series got off the ground. Like my dad, Lynn was always looking for a way to promote local country talent and he hit a home run with this one. Lynn's son Lance is somewhat of a 'chip off the old block', has done an excellent job of continuing with the tradition of having live country music in the park. Many communities could use this as a blueprint for doing the same in their own communities.

I was fortunate enough to perform with Earl & Greg Fries from the *Chaparals* in August. Earl is in his early 80's and still can belt out a good old country classic. His son, Greg is like Earl's right hand man and Greg can pick guitar with the best of them. It was a real treat to be onstage with them and the hundreds of people in attendance really appreciated their performance. With friends who were special guests and back up musicians, what's not to like. Greg's daughter Tanya, & son in law, Dwayne King

played a few songs as did Paul Koebel, and Lance as well.

Lance continues to book great local country talent and the audience (who pay by donation), seem to really love an outdoor music experience. Lance has had *Naomi Bristow, Fred Lewis & Ridin' High, Doug Dietrich & Sunrise, Southbound, Gerald Davidson & The Country Versatiles*, as well as *Lance Russwurm and his band*. It's great to see the people who come out for an evening of country music on a Sunday night. I am sure those who are disabled or unable to attend a country music concert can appreciate the value of having a class country music show right in the park of downtown Elmira.

The Elmira Music In the Park begins in late May or early June, every Sunday evening, until the end of August. A big thank you to all of those who participate and volunteer by helping Lance stage this annual event. Also, kudos to Elmira, and the Woolwich Observer, for promoting this event every year. This past summer had some of the best weather ever for the concerts in the park. I look forward to seeing what country talent Lance will bring onstage next year.