

DIAMOND RIO

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
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Diamond Rio, much like a precious gemstone, have polished their 14-year country music career to a brilliant sheen by combining flawless clarity with precision cuts.

"We look for the best songs we can find that we feel will reach the public," says Diamond Rio band member, Gene Johnson. "We haven't been willing to settle for anything but what we feel is the best."



Diamond Rio will perform at the 150th Sesquicentennial Celebration in Effingham on Saturday.

Finding just the right songs is a labor of love, and practical convenience, for Diamond Rio band members Gene Johnson (mandolin/tenor vocals), Marty Roe (lead vocals/acoustic guitar), Brian Prout (drums), Jimmy Olander (lead guitar), Dan Truman (keyboards) and Dana Williams (bass guitar/baritone vocals).

"We are pitched between 1500 to 2000 songs for every album we cut," Johnson says. "Our way of selecting songs is to listen to them while we're already together traveling for hours and hours on the bus. That way we can all hear the songs at the same time and we don't have to make a special date to get together and listen to material."

Diamond Rio, who first came together in 1989, have mined such carat cuts as "Meet In The Middle," "You're Gone," "Unbelievable" and "One More Day."

"Sometimes people have looked upon us as doing a lot of uptempo, happy and lighter songs," Johnson says. "We figure that if we are going to have an effect on people it should be a positive one. One More Day helped make people aware of the serious side of Diamond Rio. It wasn't just a song they heard on the radio. It meant something to them. That's the dream of anybody that's in music is to have a song that can actually reach in and touch someone's heart and change the way that they feel about something."

Current hit, "I Believe" is the second single released from their eighth Arista Records album, "Completely," which debuted at #3 in August on the Top Current Country Albums Chart.

"I can't even begin to tell you how many letters, cards, e-mails and stories we've received about I Believe," Johnson says. "From people in accidents who believe they have either seen or were helped by angels at the time, while others at the same accident scene swear there was no one else there. Which is very similar to the story plot that is portrayed in the video. We aren't trying to push our philosophy onto anyone with this song. But we also aren't trying to hide the fact that we do believe in the possibility that angels are floating around watching over us all and perhaps there is another life beyond this one. That this isn't just it."

Hard to believe, but this rock-solid diamond was formed by uniting six individual and diverse musical nuggets.

"Long before we ever had a record contract," Johnson says, "we discovered that our varied personalities and musical backgrounds tends to make for a very interesting mix when it's all put together."

"For example," Johnson explains, "Marty is the lead singer and has an exceptional way of pleasing people with his voice. Personality wise, he makes quick decisions. Even before the question is out of somebody's mouth, he'll have the answer."

"To balance that," Johnson adds, "we have myself. Because of my mandolin and bluegrass background and the way I sing tenor, it helps make Diamond Rio's harmonies stand out from the rest of the country groups. Be it good or bad, it's different. I'm also probably the one who thinks the longest. I don't like to make decisions until I have thought about things for hours and hours."

"Jimmy is one of the most top-notch guitar players in country music today," Johnson says. "His personality is very calming. Whenever two people may disagree, he has a way of stepping in, and by simply stating an opinion, making it seem like there isn't really much of an argument anymore. A peacemaker. He's the one that can keep a cool head through everything."

"Dan is really a jazz man," Johnson continues. "Because of his classical and jazz training and superior keyboard abilities, he really gives us a different edge. Dan has a great vision when it comes to approaching songs and is very family-oriented."

"Brian is a dynamic drummer," Johnson states. "For us to be able to do what we do, he really has to be the best at what he does. He somehow manages to keep us all in control. Brian is a calm person that likes to think about things a lot."

"Dana is our comic relief in the group," Johnson concludes. "He loves to talk and tell stories. He's a born entertainer. It makes no difference if it's playing music, singing or just telling a story. Whatever situation he's in, he's the entertainment for it."

Whether Diamond Rio are performing on stage in Effingham, IL., or as members of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tn, their particular brand of country music entertainment will stand the test of time.

“Diamond Rio has tried to choose songs that have basic, positive messages, instrumentation and vocals that will hopefully hold up through the years,” Johnson says. “We hope our music remains somewhat timeless, in the sense, that when our grandchildren grow up and listen to our music that they’ll be able to understand it or identify in some way.”

MEET DIAMOND RIO

Info obtained from www.DiamondRio.com

DAN TRUMAN

Dan plays keyboards/piano. His musical influences are deep rooted in jazz and classical music. Some of his favorite Country Music artists include Martina McBride, Keith Urban, Rascal Flatts and Trisha Yearwood just to name a few. Favorite songs of this past year are "Run" George Strait, "Neon" John Mayer and "One More Day".

"When I am on stage, I watch the crowds response to One More Day. I also feel what is coming back to the stage from them, it is a wonderful even spiritual experience."

Dan's other musical projects include an instrumental album. Read about it at: www.ThisWayThat.com .

"I have 4 children 18, 15, 12, 7 ... My oldest son Ben is following in his parents footsteps by attending Brigham Young University."



Dan's favorite places to eat are... P.F. Chang, and almost any mexican restaurants like Joe T. Garcias in Ft. Worth, TX and PiPi's in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

BRIAN PROUT

Brian was born December 4th in Troy New York and now resides in Nashville TN .

Brian is the proud parent of 3, Lily and twins Bentley and Sophie.

Brian's first performance was with his sister Lori doing a song and dance routine. Brian grew up playing drums in various Rock bands in the New York area and by the late 70's he was ready to head South to Florida where he found his taste of Country music, so his only career experience has been as a working musician.

Brian became a member of Diamond Rio in 1987 joining Marty, Dan and Jimmy.

Brian loves to snow ski on his time off from the heavy touring schedule of Diamond Rio and enjoys spending time at home with his children



“Whenever I’m asked what my favorite song is that we’ve ever recorded, my usual response is whatever the current single is. But on this new album, I do have a favorite. “I Believe” just absolutely kills me. The melody is so beautiful, and it’s one of Marty’s best vocal performances, ever.”

DANA WILLIAMS

Dana Williams was born in Dayton Ohio but grew up mostly in Nashville, TN.

His first performance was in church as the age of seven and as a youngster was influenced by a various styles of music including, bluegrass, country, rock and jazz but came back to where his heart was and is today, country music.

Dana joined Diamond Rio in 1989 and was the sixth and final member. Jimmy Olander knew Dana and called him to audition for the Tennessee River Boys. At the time Dana was hired, the guys only had one gig on their schedule, a television appearance on TNN's "Nashville Now." That night, the original members of Diamond Rio played together for the first time as the Tennessee River Boys.



Dana is married and has an eleven year old son.

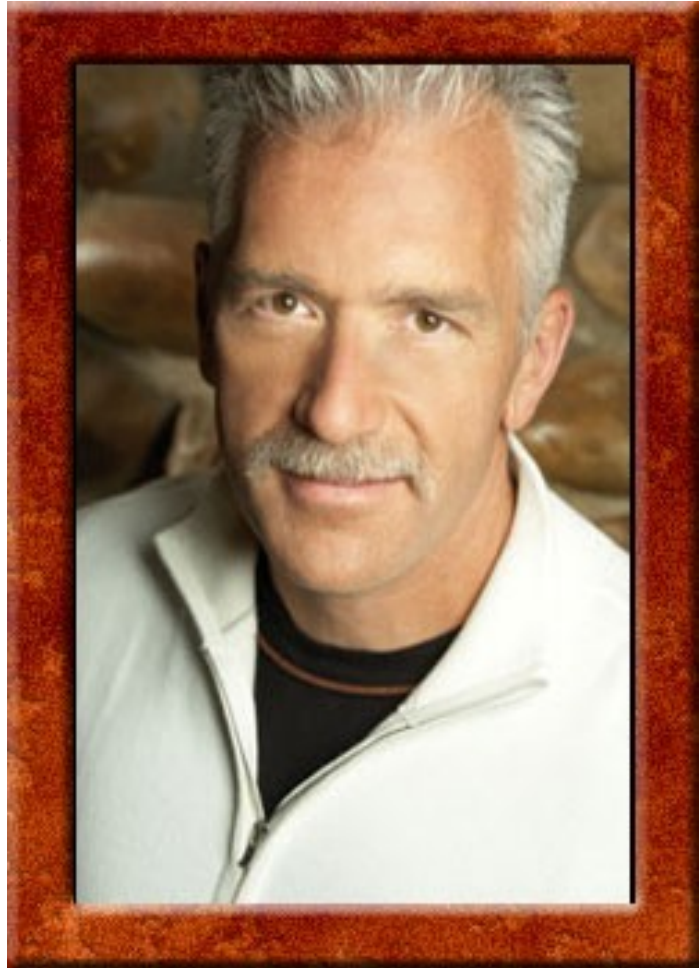
"This band is something I never thought would come my way, and when it did, it was the answer to so many questions in my life. People ask us what kind of music we listen to and what did we listen to when we were starting out. Well, COMPLETELY is the answer to those questions. There's a piece of all of us in this record, a piece of everything we like."

JIMMY OLANDER

When Jimmy was 12 years old, his father took him to see a musician named Gene Johnson, who played the mandolin, in a small club near Detroit, MI. Gene became one of Jimmy's bluegrass heroes and later on....his partner in the group Diamond Rio.

Jimmy was born in Minneapolis, MN on August 26 and when he was a teenager he had already mastered the banjo and gave lessons, however, by the time he was in college in Nashville, he found out that guitar players were more in demand than banjo pickers, so he mastered the guitar.

Jimmy joined the Tennessee River Boys in 1984 at Opryland theme park alongside Marty and Dan. His musical influences are Earl Scruggs, Leon Rhodes and Clarence White and one of his all time favorite singers is Ella Fitzgerald.



Jimmy is married and he and his wife adopted two boys and are enjoying family life. Jimmy also enjoys sky diving and weight training.

" I remember that [co-producer] Mike Clute once asked me a very poignant question, He said, 'If this was your last album, what would you record?' I told him that I want to make records that will be played by friends in late-night listening parties, like I used to do, pulling out George Jones doing 'The Grand Tour,' The Dixie Dregs' 'Pride of the Farm' or Ella Fitzgerald singing 'Round Midnight.' "

GENE JOHNSON

Gene Johnson grew up in Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania and played the mandolin professionally at a hometown square dance at the age of 4 years old but his finest performance would come years later when he was part of an acoustic quartet at Carnegie Hall.

Gene was heavily influenced by the early country and bluegrass music and also folk and blues played a large part. In the early 80's, Gene joined a well-known group from Kentucky called J. D. Crowe and The New South. Also during this time, Keith Whitley was a member of this band adding to Gene's list of Favorite Singers.

Gene loves the forest and has a wonderful talent in carpentry, and a great hobby collecting old tools and old instruments.



Gene is married and has 2 daughters.

In 1987, after the Tennessee River Boys left Opryland to go on the road, Marty, Dan, Jimmy and Brian welcomed their newest member Gene Johnson

“We’ve always tried to have a good mix of stuff on our albums – something that’s fun, something that’s very radio friendly, something that’s going to touch someone’s heart, maybe even something that’s pop influenced. More than ever, on the COMPLETELY album, we wanted to show more than one musical side of Diamond Rio.”

MARTY ROE

Marty Roe was named after Country music legend, Marty Robbins and started singing at the age of two. The first song he ever sang was the “Star Spangled Banner,” and by the age of six he had learned to sing Merle Haggard’s “The Fugitive.”

Marty grew up on a farm in Lebanon, Ohio where he daydreamt about winning a CMA award and where he practiced his acceptance speeches. Marty versed one of those speeches in 1991 when Diamond Rio won their first award from the Academy of Country Music as the Top Vocal Group.

Marty’s musical background included Church choir, Gospel Quartet, College Band, and the TN River Boys at Opryland.

Based on his singing talent and all the years he had honed his craft in the various school and church music groups, he was granted a full-scholarship to David Lipscomb University in Nashville, TN.

Marty is married and has 2 daughters and enjoys playing Golf as often as he can.

“You want to feel with each album project when you sit back and listen to it that you can say, ‘I like where we have come from, but I love where we are going.’ We keep it fresh by trying new things and going new places. As long as we’re doing that, I’ll stay with it.”

