

RONNIE McDOWELL  
by Tamela Meredith Partridge  
"The Times" newspaper  
Ottawa, IL.  
© 2004

Singer, songwriter, and celebrity voice impersonator, Ronnie McDowell, will headline The Ottawa Jaycee's 19th annual country music concert at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, December 11, at the Ottawa High School auditorium.

"I've never really counted the amount of voices that I mimic," McDowell says. "But to name a few, I mimic Elvis Presley, Dean Martin, Louis Armstrong, Little Richard and Johnny Cash."

Opening for McDowell will be Nashville country group, Wild Horses. Together for over a decade, Wild Horses have three country singles to their credit, "Ride Cowboy Ride," "I Will Survive" and "You Gotta Ride," and a recently released debut album, "Frontier Free For All."

For tickets and further information call Jean Wilson at 433-5853.

McDowell first hit the country charts with the self-penned '77 Elvis Presley tribute single, "The King Is Gone."

"That song touched millions of people all over the world," McDowell says. "Which was amazing to me. But that's the beauty of songwriting. You get to say something special, in just a fraction of a different way, and it can have a meaningful impact."

McDowell steadily gained his own musical identity by recording over 30 albums and charting fourteen Top 10 hits including, "Wandering Eyes," "Older Women," "Watchin' Girls Go By," "You're Gonna Ruin My Bad Reputation," and "It's Only Make Believe" (with Conway Twitty).

"Personally, the best song I ever recorded was It's Only Make Believe," McDowell says. "That's because I got to record it with my close friend and mentor, Conway Twitty. I worked with him for 7 years on the road as his opening act. I learned a lot from Conway. He was like a second dad to me and I still miss him dearly."



McDowell's voice is the singing talent behind eight Elvis Presley film projects. He also writes, sings and endorses a variety of products through numerous commercial jingles.

"I've been doing all kinds of jingles for over 30 years," McDowell says. "Many people don't know this, but that was me singing, 'Red Lobster for the seafood lover in you.'"

McDowell's writing talents include releasing a new novel, "The Fever," which will be available through his website and bookstores later this year.

"It's based on a true adventure and love story about my great grandfather going to California during the Gold Rush," McDowell says.

McDowell is also an accomplished historical acrylic artist.

"I've been doing signed and numbered prints since I first got back from Vietnam in '72," says McDowell, who served in the Navy. "I paint at the kitchen table, it's where I like doing it. Art is a wonderful escapism and I enjoy the creative outcome."

McDowell's current cd, "The Big E - The #Ones That Got Away," is a collection of No.1 hits McDowell has loved since he was a small boy growing up in Portland. The 12-song collection includes "Sentimental Me," "Soldier Boy," "Don't Ask Me Why," and "Just Pretend."

McDowell's singing legacy continues through his teenage son, Tyler Dean, who recently signed a pop/hip-hop recording deal with Curb Records.

McDowell and his band, The Rhythm Kings, recently recorded a 50th anniversary Elvis Presley tribute project, "The King Is Gone - A Tribute To The King," with E-Connection original Elvis band members Scotty Moore (lead guitar) and DJ Fontana (drums), Millie Kirkham, and The Jordanaires. The tribute album was released in September and features fifteen of Elvis' biggest hits including, "That's Alright Mama," "Teddy Bear," and "Are You Lonesome Tonight."

"My career started with The King Is Gone," McDowell says. "And now almost 30 years later, I've come full circle doing it again. Which is great, because Elvis Presley's music forever changed my life."