

JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY
by Tamela Meredith Partridge
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Even though its been eleven years since John Michael Montgomery charted his first country single -- he still believes that "Life's A Dance" you learn as you go.

"I thought Life's A Dance was kind of cool when I first heard it," says Montgomery, who will perform at Nashville North USA in Taylorville on Sunday. "But it didn't blow me away initially. Only after I recorded it as my debut single and got to know the song more is when it started to remind me of myself a little bit. Because that is the way I've lived my life -- I've learned as I've gone along."

Obviously a quick learner, Montgomery has sold over 15 million records and charted close to twenty Top Five singles over the past decade.



"I relate to looking for songs in terms of dating them." Montgomery says. "I get a song. I listen to it. I'll put it in my truck and listen to it when I'm driving up and down the road. And eventually we get to know one another over time."

The easiest way to get to know Montgomery's music is through his recently released greatest hits album, "The Very Best Of John Michael Montgomery." The 20-song compilation showcases 18 past hits, including the No.1 singles, "I Swear," "Be My Baby Tonight," "If You've Got Love," "I Can Love You Like That," "Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)," and "The Little Girl."

"I've got to fall in love with the songs that I sing," Montgomery says. "I just can't sing something because I feel that it's something radio is going to play and it's going to be a hit. I look for songs that I feel people will turn on 25 years from now and think that it still sounds as good today as it did yesterday. And that it could still be as good as anything being played on radio right now."

"The Very Best Of John Michael Montgomery" collection includes two new songs, "One Day Less" and current single, "Cool."

"Cool is actually a cool song," Montgomery says with a dimpled smile. "It's a story song that begins with this young boy riding around in the car with his parents. Looking from the backseat, the boy thinks how difficult it must be for his 40-something dad to be cool, especially since he wears flannel shirts and listens to weird music. By the end of the song, the boy has grown into an adult and finally starts realizing that his dad is not so un-cool after all. It's one of those full circle in life songs."

Other projects in the works for Montgomery include releasing a Christmas album for the 2003 holiday season and recording a new studio album in early 2004.

"I like to cut songs on my albums in the winter when that's all I have to focus on." Montgomery says. "To try and cut an album when I'm out on the road touring makes no sense whatsoever. To me, in order to do it to my best ability -- whether it's touring, whether it's in the studio making an album, or whether it's being a dad -- I have to be able to focus directly on the issue at hand. That's when I feel I can do my best."

Singing songs that reflect what really happens in people's lives -- their hopes, feelings, loves and dreams -- is what makes John Michael Montgomery's musical life such a dance.

"When it's all said and done," Montgomery says, "I'd love to be considered a classic stylist. You know the ones... the people who are thought of as stylists, whether you're into Frank Sinatra or Willie Nelson or Lionel Ritchie. Those people all have distinct voices, but they also have a way of singing every song from a true place, a true moment -- and people can't help but respond to that."