

DAVID LEE MURPHY

by Tamela Meredith Partridge  
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Country singer and songwriter, David Lee Murphy -- known for his rockin' rowdy songs and sleeveless shirts -- is returning home to his midwestern roots on Saturday, May 28, at The Little Nashville Opry.

"Even though I now live about 30 miles south of Nashville, it still feels like I'm going back home whenever I play in the midwest," says Murphy, a Herrin, IL., native. "I always get the homeboy treatment, and I really like it. Having spent 20 years growing up in the midwest, it's where I first learned how to sing. Both my parents were involved musically in my hometown church, where I would sit back, listen, and learn how to sing gospel harmonies."



Murphy, the son of two educators, credits his midwestern heritage and Southern Illinois University education for providing a solid foundation of creative songwriting direction.

"I got a lot of help from being a speech communications and journalism graduate of SIU," Murphy says. "It taught me to write tightly, precisely and to make a point real quick. It's the same thing when writing songs. You only have three minutes and 25 seconds or so to tell a story or to get your point across."

After graduating from SIU in '83, Murphy immediately headed for Nashville to pursue his country music dreams. He made ends meet by singing demos and honing his songwriting skills with a small publishing company.

"My dad passed away in '82, so it was just my mom who came down to Nashville to see my first apartment," Murphy says. "I had to live within my means, so it was just a little bitty garage apartment that I rented for \$150 a month. It was funny, because every time it rained, this little stream would run right through the middle of it! We laugh about it now, but mom was really worried about me back then because it was such a dump. I still tell stories about that first apartment in my shows and joke around that all I had in my refrigerator at the time was bologna and Tabasco sauce."

Never afraid to push the Music City envelope, Murphy's fresh Nashville sound achieved early songwriting success with cuts by Reba McEntire, Dobie Gray and Doug Stone. His big break occurred when he received an MCA recording contract in '94. His debut single, "Just Once," became a Billboard Top 40 country hit and was included on the soundtrack for the Luke Perry movie, "Eight Seconds."

"Walking down the red carpet at the Eight Seconds movie premier in Hollywood was like a huge culture shock," Murphy says. "At the time, I was living in a two bedroom house with a tin roof in Aspen City, Tennessee, which had a population of 2000. It was like going from small town USA to Hollywood. It's not such a foreign thing for me now, but at the time it was pretty wild."

Murphy's four albums, have resulted in the hit singles "Party Crowd," "Dust On The Bottle," "Every Time I Get Around You," "The Road You Leave Behind," "Just Don't Wait Around Until She's Leavin'," and "Loco."

"Country music has gotten really safe and generic," Murphy says. "And my music is a little bit different than what the norm is right now. Nowadays, I would almost say that we push past the boundaries with our rockin' country sound. We are wide open, and we go for it. We sing about partying and things that most don't sing about anymore, instead of the typical kind of sweet talking love songs that everybody is doing right now."

When he's not busy touring and writing songs, Murphy can be found on his 112-acre farm outside of Nashville with wife, Donna, and their three sons.

"We don't make a big deal at home about the fact that I'm an entertainer," Murphy says. "I pretty much try to keep my sons out of all of this. I used to tell this story about when my oldest son, who was about 6 years old at the time, stuck his head in the back door and asked, 'Hey Dad, do you have an album out?' I told him, 'Yes,' and he said, 'Okay,' and then took off out the back door again. He came back a few minutes later with this little neighbor kid in tow whose mother had sent down a CD for me to autograph. We thought it was kind of cute at the time, because my son really didn't have a clue what the whole thing was all about."