

## PORTER WAGONER

by Tamela Meredith Partridge  
"Our Brown County" magazine  
Nashville, IN  
© 2001

Porter Wagoner, one of the Grand Ole Opry's most popular stars, has successfully maintained a forty four year career with his signature brand of classic country entertainment.

"I think the Grand Ole Opry is a stabilizer for a career," Wagoner said during a recent phone interview from his Nashville office. "If you have a career in country music, you can't record hits all of your life. No one ever has, no one probably ever will. But, the Grand Ole Opry, to which I have been a member since 1957, is a stabilizer that allows people and fans who have followed your career throughout the years, the opportunity to



come and see you sing the songs that were popular in your day. It is just a wonderful, informal, happening show that really appeals to the people."

Wagoner is scheduled to share his broad smile, flashy costume, and memorable songs with The Little Nashville Opry audience on Saturday, April 28 at 6 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

"I really like performing in smaller venues like The Little Nashville Opry" Wagoner said. "You are able to get real close with the people, you can see and connect with each other. I'm looking forward to coming there, and I really think the audience will like the show."

Another show that was a tremendous success for the country music singer, songwriter, and entertainer was his syndicated television program, "The Porter Wagoner Show," which ran from 1960 to 1981.

“Probably my biggest contribution to country music is not necessarily the songs that I recorded that were hits,” Wagoner said, “but doing a tv show for 21 years that was successful. I am very, very proud of that. The show did a lot for my career and for everybody who was on it. Mainly because it was done very honestly, a ‘what you see is what you get’ type of thing, almost as if we were guests in people’s home on a Saturday evening. Just being honest with people, that is the secret to the success of the show and my career.”

The West Plains, Missouri native, known for his chart topping hits, “*A Satisfied Mind*,” “*Misery Loves Company*,” “*Green Green Grass Of Home*,” and “*The Carroll County Accident*,” has also achieved numerous industry awards and nominations for duets with Dolly Parton.

“We launched Dolly Parton’s career on “The Porter Wagoner Show,” Wagoner said. “We were the first ones to really get into the mainstream with duets. All the other duets came after us, like Bill Anderson and Jan Howard, George Jones and Tammy Wynette. There was a void, and anytime you can fill a void, then you will have success. Dolly and I filled that void, and I think we had a great sound. We sound like brother and sister more than we do of two artist singing together.”

Wagoner, who is almost as well known for his keen sense of fashion as he is for his extensive music portfolio, has a wardrobe of performance outfits designed by Nudie Cohen and Manuel Cuevas.

“Manuel actually made the first outfit, he was working for Nudie at the time,” Wagoner said. “I had never seen anything like that first costume, and neither had anyone else, it was the first one of it’s kind he had ever made. My sister told me that I had taken the outfit off and on 11 times that day, so you can just imagine how thrilled I was with it. It was this beautiful peach colored suit with rhinestones all over it and a covered wagon on the back of it, with wagon wheels going down the legs. It was something. Since then, I have helped him design some of the things that I wanted on the suits throughout the years, such as putting “Hi” or “Bass Pro Shop” on the inside of some of the jackets.”

The vocalist, who enjoys golfing, fishing, and his beloved golden retrievers, recently found pleasure in recording a collection of songs that he feels is his best work yet.

“I’m not sure what label or how we are going to get it out, but it should be out sometime this fall,” Wagoner said. “It’s a great CD called, “The Best Songs I Have Ever Sang, The Best I Have Ever Been.” All the songs were written for me by a songwriter in Missouri, a farmer by the name of Damon Black. This album is the best thing I have ever done in my career. I know when I am doing my best, I know what it sounds like when I am at my best. And this is it.”

When it comes to country music, Porter Wagoner is not concerned with paying homage to the current fads, nor cashing out intelligence for the sake of a musical hook. For him, music can make you smile, feel, and appreciate the little things that make life sweet.

“I think that most of my dreams have centered on the music business, because all I ever wanted to do since I was a little boy was be a singer and entertainer. To have all of those dreams come true, and to be a member of the Grand Ole Opry, which seemed a million miles away from the farm in Missouri where I was raised, they are the mainstay of my life.”