

## TRACY LAWRENCE

By Tamela Meredith Partridge  
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After 16 years in the country music industry, Tracy Lawrence knows how to "Find Out Who Your Friends Are."

"Find Out Who Your Friends Are was the first single released from my current album, For The Love," says Lawrence of his latest Billboard No. 1 country hit. "It's a universal song about overcoming the down times in life with the support, strength, and tenacity of true friends."

For The Love includes two separate tracks of Find Out Who Your Friends Are -- a solo radio track and a duet version with longtime country music buddies, Tim McGraw and Kenny Chesney.



"Tim, Kenny, and I spent four hours in the studio catching up on old times and deciding just who was going to sing what part for the duet version," Lawrence says. "Our lives, families, and tours take us in many different directions nowadays, so it was great being able to spend some quality time together."

Lawrence will perform a dual headlining concert with friend and country artist, Tracy Byrd, at the 54th Annual Farm Progress Show in Decatur on Wednesday, August 29, at 5:30pm.

"The Farm Progress Show will be a fun and interesting venue to perform at," Lawrence says. "I grew up farming with my dad, cutting hay, and herding cattle in the small town of Foreman, which is in southwest Arkansas on the Red River basin. It's a huge corn, rice, cotton, and soybean farming community."

Since his '91 debut No.1 single, "Sticks and Stones," Lawrence has released eight major label cd's, one live album, two greatest hits collections, and seventeen No. 1 hits including "Alibis," "Can't Break It To My Heart," "My Second Home," "If The Good Die Young" "Texas Tornado," "Time Marches On," and "Find Out Who Your Friends Are."

Lawrence wrote or co-wrote two out of eleven tracks on *For The Love*, including "Speed of Flight" and current single, "'Til I Was A Daddy Too."

"*For The Love* is the perfect title because it personifies everything this album is about," Lawrence says. "My goal for this album was to go back and draw from my initial love of music and those Merle Haggard, Keith Whitley, and George Strait early influences I had when I first came to Nashville. I used that as the motivation to make a more traditional record than I have in long time."

"*For The Love*," is the first project recorded on Lawrence's own independent label, Rocky Comfort Records, which he started with his brother and manager, Laney.

"When my hometown of Foreman, Arkansas, was founded in the late 1800's, it was originally called Rocky Comfort Township," Lawrence says. "I've always loved its history and I thought the name itself was an oxymoron -- especially in the way it relates to the music business and the highs and lows I've experienced throughout my career. My farm in Tennessee is named Rocky Comfort and I felt that it was an appropriate name to extend to the record label as well."

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It's been fourteen years since Tracy Lawrence charted his first country single -- and today he's still coming on "Strong."

"My current album, Strong, shows that I've always been drawn to strong songs about family and day-to-day life," says Lawrence, who will perform at the Effingham County Fair in Altamont on Saturday. "I tend to search for songs with strong messages, songs that present an interesting perspective or put a different twist on a story, the ones that paint a picture and come to life in the mind of the listener."

Lawrence, a Foreman, Arkansas native, wrote his first song by dictating it to his mother at age 4 and was performing in honky tonks by age 17.

"I really didn't come from a musical family," Lawrence says. "Growing up in a small town where hardly anybody gets away, you know that your options are pretty much limited to eventually getting a job at the paper mill or the cement plant. So, as a young man, I was driven by the desire to prove that I could do this and that I could do it on my own."

After high school graduation, Lawrence continued his education by majoring in mass communications and minoring in business at Southern Arkansas University.

"I was in the Sigma Pi Fraternity at SAU," Lawrence says. "I'm still very close to a lot of my college friends, even though they are scattered all over the United States and working in different fields."

Lawrence headed for Nashville in '90 in a very used '80 Toyota Corolla that had 250,000 miles on it, expired tags and no insurance. His big break occurred eight months later when he received a major label recording contract after performing a showcase at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe.



"I still have that old Toyota Corolla," Lawrence says. "It's still sitting out back at my house in Tennessee."

Chart-topping hits for the '93 Academy of Country Music Top New Male Vocalist include "Sticks And Stones," "Alibis," "If The Good Die Young" "Time Marches On," and "Paint Me A Birmingham."

"Music is the driving force behind everything I do," Lawrence says. "When I had demons to fight, or gone down the wrong path in life – when most people would fall into indulgence or addiction, music has always pulled me to safety. It's been a constant companion and source of strength my entire life."

Current endeavors for Lawrence include working on an autobiographical book/movie project and releasing an upcoming greatest hits package, "Tracy Lawrence : Then and Now - The Hits." The new album contains fifteen greatest hits and two new songs, "If I Don't Make It Back," and current single, "Used To The Pain."

"We went to great lengths to make the songs on this album as close to the originals as possible," Lawrence says. "We started with "Sticks and Stones" and worked our way up through the periods of my careers. The stories and memories that evolved from the process made it a fun, enriching, and reminiscent journey to embark upon."