

EARL THOMAS CONLEY
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Earl Thomas Conley, known as "the thinking man's country musician," reflects upon the realities of life, love, and relationships in every song he sings or writes.

"Something about a song, whether it's melodically or lyrically, has to move you," says Conley during a recent phone interview. "No matter what kind of feel it is, songwriting and making music is all a spiritual trip. When you discover a new way to put something musically, it becomes a big revelation you've been looking for. And hopefully you write the resulting song in such a way that it's relevant to the listener as well."



Conley is scheduled to perform at The Little Nashville Opry on Saturday, March 8, at 8pm.

"Earl Thomas Conley is a talented artist, songwriter and entertainer," says Jim Bowyer, who co-owns The Little Nashville Opry with Esther Hamilton. "He's had an amazing amount of No.1 hit singles throughout his career and puts on a great show."

Conley, the son of a railroad worker, was one of eight children born to Arthur and Ruth Conley in West Portsmouth, Ohio.

"My mother instilled in me the lifelong advice that you can be whatever it is you want to be," Conley says. "She believed that the sky is the limit and that her children could be anything that they wanted to be."

Conley's first brush with creative expression occurred at age ten when he discovered a passion for pen and ink drawing and oil painting. He was also influenced musically by his father who played for him throughout his childhood.

When jobs became scarce for Conley's father in West Portsmouth, Conley left home at age 14 to live with his older sister in Dayton, Ohio. Upon high school graduation, Conley was offered an art scholarship at a local college, but turned it down to join the Army instead. It was in the military, as a member of a Christian-influenced trio, where his vocal talent and songwriting abilities were first realized.

Following his military discharge, Conley began commuting to Nashville in 1968 to plug his songs. He finally achieved songwriting acclaim when Mel Street recorded his '73 Top Ten song, "Smokey Mountain Memories," and Conway Twitty recorded his No.1 smash, "This Time I've Hurt Her More Than She Loves Me," in 1975.

Conley began his solo career in '79, but failed to crack the Top 20 country chart until he released the No.1 hit, "Fire and Smoke" in 1982. Since then, Conley has charted eighteen No. 1 Billboard country singles including "Holding Her and Loving You," "Chance of Lovin' You," "Once In A Blue Moon," "What I'd Say," and "Love Out Loud."

"Music is a release," Conley says. "I'm doing what I live to do. And while you're in the act of doing it, it's like making a pro-football touchdown. You're accomplishing something. So even if your not totally active in the radio market, except for recurrent airplay, you're still performing road shows and making fans amongst a multi-generational audience."

Conley's also had great duet success with Gus Hardin ("All Tangled Up In Love"), Anita Pointer ("Too Many Times"), Emmylou Harris ("We Believe In Happy Endings"), and Keith Whitley ("Brotherly Love").

"What's nice about duets is that it kind of takes the pressure off you," Conley says. "Because you have someone else to share it with. I worked in the studio with Anita Pointer and Emmylou Harris when we recorded our duets. But when Keith Whitley and I did Brotherly Love, we weren't even in the studio at the same time together. He found the song, recorded his part and then he had to go back out on the road. Then I came in off the road and recorded my part. The studio held that duet for about 3 or 4 years and didn't release it until after he passed away. It was the last No.1 single either of us ever had."

If a new country artist would ask Conley what the foundation of his lengthy music industry career is built upon, it would be answered with one word.

"Persistence," Conley says with a knowing laugh. "You live out your whole life according to your belief structure. You don't have to be pompous about it, but you have to, within your humble self, persistently believe in everything that you do if you want to accomplish it."