

CHRIS YOUNG

Nashville Star

Season Four—Winner

by Tamela Meredith Partridge

“The Herald & Review” newspaper

Decatur, IL.

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For country singer, songwriter, and '06 Nashville Star winner, Chris Young, music is timeless.

"Our fans tend to range in age from eight to eighty and everything in-between," says '06 Nashville Star winner, Chris Young. "Appealing to audiences of all ages is something we'll always aspire for."

The 21-year-old baritone will make a return performance at Nashville North USA in Taylorville on Saturday. Opening act will be country gospel group, TNT and the Dynamite Cowboys, with special guest Joe Wheat.

"Chris Young, as part of the Nashville Star Tour, sold out the theater back in September," says Nashville North USA manager Mike Myers. "We're really looking forward to having Chris perform on his own for this concert. It should be a fantastic solo show."

Nashville Star, a USA Network tv country music talent contest, concluded its fourth straight season in '06 with Young as its winner.

"The biggest thing that I gathered from the whole experience is just how much I really do want a country music career," Young says. "With this career, just like anything in life, I'm always learning something new and trying to do better than the time before."

Young, who received an RCA Records contract with the Nashville Star victory, became the highest '06 debuting male country artist when his self-titled debut album sold 37,000 copies in its first week.

"RCA has always been the label I wanted to be on," Young says. "It's where my heroes recorded, guys like Keith Whitley, John Anderson, Ronnie Milsap, and Alan Jackson. I knew they were the best of the best."



Young co-wrote four out of eleven songs for the debut album, including its first single, "Drinkin' Me Lonely."

"I've always believed in that song," says Young, who wrote Drinkin' Me Lonely with Larry Wayne Clark. "But I've had so many people e-mail me and tell me they love that song, and I've had the same reaction when going around meeting radio people. There's a theory in Nashville that you don't start your career with a ballad, so maybe it goes against the grain. But I feel real confident about it because it's opened so many doors for me."

Young, a Murfreesboro, Tn., native, came by his musical obsession naturally. Some of his earliest memories involved listening to his grandfather, one-time Louisiana Hayride performer Richard Yates, play piano and guitar at family gatherings.

"He gave up his career when he married my grandmother because she didn't want him playing in bars," Young says. "But he never stopped loving music. Hearing him play music changed me somehow. I understood why he loved it so much."

Young's old soul vocals lends an up-to-date, contemporary edge to traditional country music.

"We've been kicking around the term progressive traditional as a possible way of describing our music," Young says. "I do a lot of things the way Vern Gosdin, Marty Robbins, and Keith Whitley would have sang and interpreted songs. But there's still a lot on this album that's just me, that's new, and definitely current."