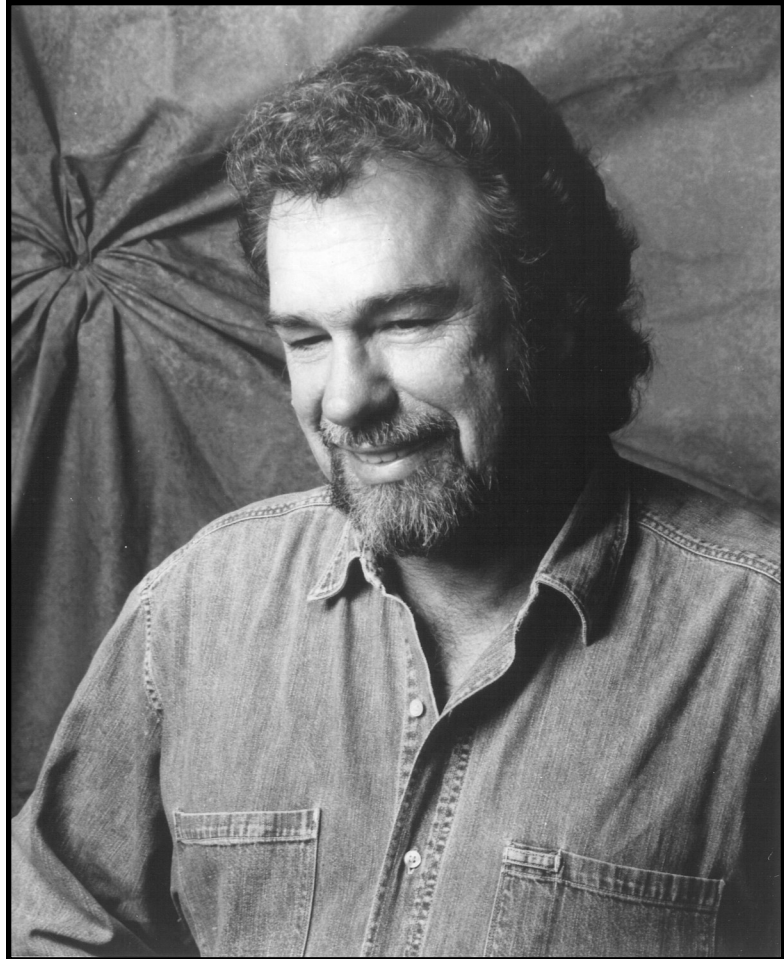


GENE WATSON

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
"Our Brown County" magazine
Nashville, IN
© 2007

For legendary country singer, Gene Watson, great music stands the test of time.

"My current album, *Then and Now*, is a compilation of songs I recorded in the past," Watson said during a recent phone interview from his Houston, Tx. home. "It's the first of a boxed set featuring tracks from earlier days in my career. This album, which I like to refer to as *Volume One*, contains 13 newly re-recorded and digitally mastered tracks including "If I'm A Fool For Leaving" (1969), "Baby Me Baby" (1982), and "Back In The Fire" (1988).



Watson and his Farewell Party band members will make a return performance to The Little Nashville Opry at 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 24.

"I've been playing at The Little Nashville Opry ever since I got started in the country music business," Watson said. "Just like everything in life, things change over the years. But the one thing that has remained steadfast at The Little Nashville Opry is the audience's great appreciation for country music."

Watson's shows are unique in the fact that he tailors each performance according to a specific venue's audience.

"No two shows are ever alike because we never have a set playlist," Watson said. "My musicians have to pay close attention to me, because the only thing that lets them know what the next song will be is from the way I introduce it. I'm a people's entertainer and we are a people's band."

Watson's ability to choose just the right songs is found in the '75 debut smash, "Love In The Hot Afternoon," No. 1 hit, "Fourteen Carat Mind," and more than twenty Top Ten hits including, "Paper Rosie," "Farewell Party," "Should I Come Home (Or Should I Go Crazy)," "Nothing Sure Looked Good On You," and "You're Out Doing What I'm Here Doing Without."

"I've always picked my own song material," Watson said. "To me, a great country song is one that gets and keeps your attention, tells your life story, or relays something good or bad that has happened to you. It has to be something you can relate to, otherwise you won't listen."

Watson's honesty, loyalty, consistency, and pure traditional country vocals has earned the respect of fans and music industry peers alike.

"One of the greatest compliments I've ever received came from the noted Nashville music critic, Robert K. Oermann," Watson said. "In one of his writings, Oermann called me a 'singer's singer' and stated 'the world stops spinning when Gene Watson sings. In his voice is all the ache of existence.' I'm not sure if I live up to it, but I still find those words so humbling."

Watson, who was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2001, continued to tour even while undergoing intense chemotherapy.

"I lost my mother, father, and my oldest brother and sister all from cancer," Watson said. "And even though cancer runs in my family, I felt that I had to fight, take care of myself, and do whatever I had to do to beat the cancer. I've never been one to sit down in life. I had surgery to remove the cancer. During the weeks I didn't have chemotherapy, I felt like I had to exercise, go out on the road, and not let myself get stale. It was what I had to do. Fortunately, it worked for me, because today I have a clean bill of health."

Watson is currently in the studio working on an album of all new material, scheduled for a late 2007 release.

"I've had my day in the sun with chart-topping singles," Watson says. "Now I'm recording strictly for the fans and because I love it. Country music has been so good to me in so many ways over the years."

Watson's lengthy career has introduced his music to an international and multi-generational catalog of listeners.

"The younger audience members seem to really enjoy what we do," Watson says. "They come up to me after the show and say that their parents raised them on my music. Which says a lot for the timelessness of traditional country music."

GENE WATSON

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
"Our Brown County" magazine
Nashville, IN
© 2006

Country singer and songwriter, Gene Watson, and his Farewell Party band members are looking forward to returning to the Little Nashville Opry on Saturday, March 25, at 7 p.m.

"We have a lot of fans and friends at the Little Nashville Opry," Watson says. "Everytime I can remember playing there we've packed the house. It's a great venue to play and we always enjoy working for them."

Always a hard worker, Watson and his six siblings traveled with their parents from one sawmill town to another to find work in the mills or picking crops. The converted school bus they rode in was also home when they got to where they were going. The family finally settled in Paris, Texas, where they engaged in the auto salvage business.

"I'd get out of school and ride my bicycle to work where I'd take cars apart to sell the used parts," Watson says.

The Watson family often escaped the harsh realities of a hard life through music.

"We did most of our singing in the Pentecostal Church," Watson says. "My dad also played the blues. Singing was a way of life back then. Music came naturally to me. I did it all the time. I couldn't imagine anybody would ever pay me for doing it."

Watson and his younger brother began performing professionally as teenagers by playing at local functions and clubs.

"My brother and I were still in school at the time," Watson says. "We went to Dallas and Ft. Worth and played on some of the big jamborees that were broadcast on the radio where it was sort of a package-type thing. We were just a couple kids that people liked listening to. My brother eventually gave it up, but I stuck with it."



Married at 17, Watson settled in Houston and supported his wife and children by finding daytime employment in car engine and bodywork repair. During the evenings, Watson's no frills and easy-flowing vocal style made him a favorite performer amongst area honky-tonks and night clubs.

"To entertain people, I think, is one of the things that I do best," Watson says. "Even as down and out or tired as you can get running the road and keeping up with the schedule, when you step out on the stage and see the people that paid their money to come and see you perform -- that's everything."

Watson's ability to choose just the right songs is found in the '75 debut smash, "Love In The Hot Afternoon," No. 1 hit, "Fourteen Carat Mind," and more than twenty Top Ten hits including, "Paper Rosie," "Farewell Party," "Should I Come Home (Or Should I Go Crazy)," "Nothing Sure Looked Good On You," and "You're Out Doing What I'm Here Doing Without."

"I'm a ballad singer," Watson says. "I love truthful songs that tell a story and talk about people and their lives. If a song calls for a tear, then we'll cry. If a song calls for a smile, then we'll laugh. That's what I like to do."

Even though his roots are pure country, Watson's signature sound stems from a combination of musical influences.

"I don't get too far away from the traditional country music that has made me what I am," Watson says. "Although, I might experiment at times with a little bit of jazz , blues or some edgy songs that veer off from what I usually do. I do a lot of blues accents, phrasing and slurs in my singing. I think that is probably anywhere from 50 percent to 75 percent of my style. The other thing is proper diction. I hate to sing a song that the people can't understand the words to it."

Even though times have changed throughout Watson's lengthy career, his vocals have continued to offer the best in country music entertainment.

"I just sing and I'll always be singing," Watson says. "Even if it's just for my own personal entertainment, I would always sing."