

BLAKE SHELTON

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
"Herald & Review" newspaper
Decatur, IL.
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According to country singer, Blake Shelton, if it's too late for love to change your mind -- then it's "Goodbye Time."

"Goodbye Time is my favorite song from my current album, Blake Shelton's Barn & Grill," says Shelton, who is scheduled to perform at Nashville North USA in Taylorville on Saturday. "Once we recorded Goodbye Time, it just stood out from the rest of the album, and we knew it had to be a single."

Goodbye Time, written by Roger Murrah and James Dean Hicks, was originally a Top Ten country hit for Conway Twitty in '88.



"I'm a huge Conway Twitty fan," Shelton said. "I always thought the song never got the credit it deserved back then. It's a great song and I'm thrilled to be able to bring it to another generation of country fans."

Goodbye Time is the second single from Shelton's third Warner Brothers album, "Blake Shelton's Barn And Grill." Shelton co-wrote two of eleven songs for the album, including "Love Gets In The Way," and "On A Good Day."

"This album is full of music that I always wanted to record, but was hesitant to do so until now," Shelton said. "It has a lot of songs that I've been holding onto for 11 or 12 years, plus some recent tunes. It's musically closer to who I am and what I want to be as an artist. As a result, its become one of my fastest selling albums."

Shelton, 28, listened to a variety of country music influences while growing up in Ada, Oklahoma.

"By the time I was 16 and old enough to drive, I went fishing every day after school," Shelton said. "Nobody ever wanted to ride in my car with me, because I always had the same music on, every time. I would get stuck on an album and listen to it until I couldn't stand to hear it again. I'd love it to death -- Shawn Camp, Mark Collie, Travis Tritt, and especially Earl Thomas Conley. Nobody in Oklahoma had ever heard of Kelly Willis, but I was just killing her album in my car."

Shelton moved to Nashville in 1994 at the tender age of 17. He worked various jobs to make ends meet until the release of his debut album seven years later.

"Many times I wanted to give up," Shelton said. "After the third year or so, I turned 21 and realized that all my friends were graduating from college. I started thinking, 'Man, this could have been a huge mistake.'"

With such successful singles as "Austin," "All Over Me," "O! Red," "The Baby," and "Some Beach," Shelton's music will endure the test of time.

"I hope people will listen to my music years from and now and know what a true country lifestyle was like during the time period it was recorded in," Shelton said. "I aspire to sing story songs about real-life and the struggles and triumphs people may go through today."

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It wasn't until Blake Shelton became an adult that he was finally able to grasp the meaning of being "*The Baby*."

"My current single, *The Baby*, broke my heart the first time I heard it," says Shelton, 26, who is scheduled for two shows at Nashville North on Saturday, February 1st. "Being

the baby in my family, I know my parents spoiled me and let me get away with a lot more things than my siblings. It's because I was the last child my parents would go through things with, so it was probably difficult sometimes for them to let go."

The Baby, written by Harley Allen and Michael White, is a true-life recollection of being the baby in the family and dealing with the loss of a mother.

"The song had me with the last chorus," Shelton says. "It said, 'I don't care if you are 80, you'll always be my baby.' I smiled, because I've heard my mama say those exact words to me a million times throughout the years."

The Baby is the first single from Shelton's upcoming sophomore album, "The Dreamer." Shelton wrote the title track of the new album and co-wrote "My Neck Of The Woods" with Billy Montana and Don Ellis.

"To be honest, I've kind of been sweatin' it out the last couple of months," Shelton says, whose self-titled debut album was recently certified gold. "Bad things sometimes happen to new artists on their sophomore albums -- they call it the sophomore jinx. But *The Baby* is sitting in the Top Five, so I can kind of breathe a big sigh of relief. Even though my debut single, "Austin" from the first album was number one on the charts for five weeks, my second single "Ol Red," sold a lot of records, but it wasn't a great chart record. So, *The Baby* is kind of getting everything lined up for what hopefully is going to be good street date for this second album."

With his long dark hair, chiseled features and six-foot-five frame, Shelton is a commanding presence. But his goofy sense of humor, easy going demeanor and likeable nature defy all the negative hype usually associated with being a star.



"I'm not about some image or standing for some issue and pounding my fist on the table," Shelton says. "It's not about being a celebrity. All I'm about is good songs.

On the home front, Shelton and fiancée Kaynette Williams are making plans to share a 460-acre farm west of Nashville with their two dogs, Austin and Ol' Red, some chickens and a pet turkey.

"Turkey follows me all around the house," Shelton says. "He is 25 lbs. and a great pet. I can't wait to get home and spend some time with him and just talk to him. Because he talks to you. It's sad, but his hen pretty much ignores him and won't have a thing to do with him. So, I think that whenever I get home from the road, he is just so happy to see someone who wants to talk and hang out with him."

For Shelton, being able to put meaningful words to great music is what it's all about.

"Music has defined my life," Shelton says. "It's bigger than just an impact, it's what I live for. If I wasn't doing it for a living, you can bet I would be involved in it somehow. All I really want to be known as is a guy who sings for the people. I want to be remembered for singing songs that you couldn't forget."