

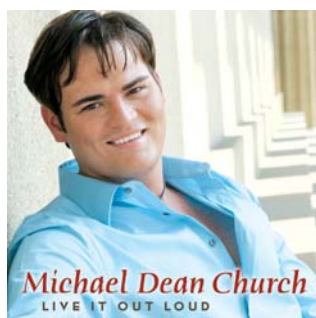


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Singer continues country tradition with songs of love

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There's an old joke that if you play a country song backward you get your dog back and your truck back and your wife back.

But when I listened to Welch native Michael Dean Church's new CD "Live it Out Loud," I thought, "These are true country songs as opposed to the more contemporary style which seems to intermingle soft rock with country."

No, Church doesn't sing about losing his dog and his truck and his wife, but he sings about love, romantic love, love felt from the heart, as songs in the original country style always have.

For instance, his song "Fools Like Us" talks about a couple who take their love for granted and realize it later. This is expressed in lines like "I can't believe how casually we threw it away / We should never say goodbye like we did yesterday / because sometimes love is a second chance to fools like us." And then there is the song "Is That You," which eloquently describes something many of us spend a lifetime wondering: "Ever since I was young / I was taught that there was somebody for everyone / so we go through looking for 'Is that you?' / What if I've already met you / What if I've let you go."

Not that there isn't a bit of sexual energy and flirtation in some of the songs, such as "Oh Linda," which goes something like, "The way she's eating that juicy peach ought to be completely against the law / Oh Linda, I keep crying your name for crying out loud / Just look at what your doing to me."

Described on CDBaby.com as "high energy, contemporary country with a little old school thrown in," Church cites influences of Rascal Flatts and Keith Urban in his style, but notes that he has his own sound, and his voice isn't really comparable to any particular singer.

Speaking on the phone from Nashville, where Church has lived for the past couple of years with intentions of becoming a solid force in the record industry, he said he moved there specifically to be in that environment and make the necessary connections.

So perhaps the title song of his CD, "Live it Out Loud," expresses that feeling best with lines like, "We're only here for awhile / so go that extra mile / That's what life's all about / You've got to live it out loud."

"I was lucky to get hooked up with a reputable producer for this album and we recorded it in Buck Owen's studio with his band," Church said, noting that a lot of success in the music industry is based on "love and luck." He said he loved his music enough to stay around Nashville and keep trying, but was lucky enough to get such a break fairly early on.

Church said he has a number of relatives still living in this area and the bio at his website probably best describes the connection he still feels.

It reads, "Michael Dean Church was born in a part of our country where hard work is just a part of everyday life. Welch, WV isn't glamorous. Dreams there are filled with the day-to-day struggle of working coal miners trying to survive. The work is dark, dirty and dangerous; but it binds the community together like no other profession. Families gather in small churches each Sunday where music becomes a food for their souls. Almost every family has at least one guitar player or banjo picker representing their family and some families have those that can sing. You learn to appreciate your neighbor, developing the skills of respect and concern when you grow up there. All of this becomes a part of who you are. On any given day, something could happen in a coal mine that would change your life forever. Church's father was injured in a mining accident, while Church was just a toddler. Unable to continue mining, Church's father worked in the mine as security.

"By the time Church was twelve, the local mines began to close, leaving his family no choice but to relocate to where work was available. They packed-up the family, and headed for Rome, Ga."

In Georgia, Church was exposed to other types of music and began forming his own style, and after graduating from high school he began testing the waters by performing in the nightclubs around Rome, where he developed a strong following of fans and was often told "you should move to Nashville," so he did.

Churches latest CD can be purchased at CDBaby.com or his own website, www.michaeldeanchurch.com.

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