

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume 80 Vitamin M, The Healing Power of Music, Part VII: Country Superstar Toby Keith

Country Superstar and Legendary songwriter Toby Keith's career shot to stardom with hits such as "Should've Been A Cowboy" and "How Do You Like Me Now". Toby further catapulted his success with number one hits such as "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (the Angry American)", "Beer for My Horses," and "American Ride". He has many multiplatinum selling albums (over 35 million sold). As a songwriter, Toby is iconic, accomplishing over 82 million radio spins, almost unheard of in country music today. Thank you, Toby!

Susan: Toby, you've have had such a huge career it's hard to know where to start, so let's try this. What led to your career in the music industry?

Toby: I had a garage band right after high school and we worked weekends. After a couple of years of jamming for fun, we started getting gigs and took it on the road.

Susan: Did you come from a family with a strong tie to music?

Toby: Yes, three of my grandparents all played piano or guitar. My mother was offered a recording deal with Capitol Records at age 20 but had me and started a family.

Susan: Toby, you are arguably one of the greatest songwriters of our time, why do you believe you became a singer/songwriter?

Toby: My dad had a very quick wit and with mom being a singer, it was bound to happen. I knew if I was gonna get there I would get recognized easier if I did original music.

Susan: That makes perfect sense. When was the first time you felt like a song you had written really connected with your fans? What was that song?

Toby: I wrote a song called South Texas Vacation when I was 19 that people started requesting; then the time between good songs started getting shorter and shorter.

Susan: The first time you won a National award for your music was at the Academy of Country Music Awards with your blockbuster hit, "How Do You Like Me Now?" You also wrote this song. What did it feel like to be recognized as both an entertainer and a songwriter among your peers?

Toby: I was too busy hammering a career out to stop and think about it at the time. Looking back it was a blessing, I guess, because it wasn't long after that I quit shaking hands and kissing babies. Too time consuming. Too political. It eats too much positive, productive energy.

Susan: Toby, on your way up, you played in several small honkytonks, including one in Indianapolis where we met longer ago than I want to admit. What do you miss about playing in the smaller bars?

Toby: Playing clubs for 7 years was all we knew in the early years. You never forget the intimate crowds and getting to just go out and jam all night....I miss that.

Susan: As a songwriter, you have written several songs that have a strong personal effect on people, what's it like to write music that helps people relate to their own experiences in life?

Toby: I don't write always from personal experiences...but in bits and pieces it comes through. I never sacrifice a great song idea for the sake of making it entirely my life experiences.

Susan: Your songs have helped people laugh, cry and everything in between; no doubt helping them heal through your Music. Have you heard of Music Therapy before? (The application of music for Healing)? If so, what does that mean to you?

Toby: Music is about creating emotion....the song Crying For Me was very healing for me and I can't count the times people have come up to me and said a certain song moved them to a better place.

Susan: What song from your personal arsenal would you recommend to be utilized for music therapy?

Toby: It depends on what kind of release they're looking for. There are too many directions to go. I can start smiling when I hear an old song that was played on my grandmother's jukebox at her club as a kid. Crying For Me and American Soldier get played at lots of funerals.

Susan: Toby, our readers have learned what a rare breed it is to be a both a top entertainer and a renowned songwriter. You have received the highest awards for songwriting many times over. What inspires you as a songwriter?

Toby: Life....I watch people and listen to them talk. Humans are a warehouse of ideas.

Susan: When inspiration strikes as a songwriter, how do you manage to keep the idea afloat before getting to a recording studio?

Toby: I record most ideas on my phone.

Susan: Who are the songwriters you admire the most?

Toby: Haggard...Willie..Roger Miller...John Prine...Roger was incredible.

Susan: What song(s) do you consider to have had the most profound personal effect on your life?

Toby: Should've been a Cowboy is THE song that my career stands firmly on, no question. It was my first and without it...I might have never got the chance to grow into a 20 year career.

Susan: You wrote a very personal song for your friend, Wayman Tisdale called "Cryin' For Me." You wrote this from your heart and gave healing to not only his family, but to many others who

play this during the loss of a loved one. What's it like to give this gift of healing music to folks, especially at a time of loss?

Toby: It was word for word my personal thoughts. I wrote it to perform at his funeral but didn't do it. It was too close to share publicly at the time. I was way too emotional; it took me about 6 months before I could sing it live without tearing up.

Susan: You are a multi-year winner of the coveted Entertainer of the Year award. Having been to many of your sold out shows across the nation; from those basketball arenas to the biggest amphitheaters, I have witnessed how you connect to the emotions of your fans when you sing their favorite songs. What's it like for you to be on stage looking out to see a 30,000 plus crowd singing along with you word for word?

Toby: It's great. It's why singers sing, but it's more gratifying when you write it.

Susan: And those "bus songs", filled with wit, hilarity and maybe even a little sarcasm, on stage are you laughing as you watch people react to them? What's the funniest reaction (printable) you have seen?

Toby: Watching the crowd react to the horn players dancing their skit to Get Out Of My Car.

Susan: Shortly after 9/11, you wrote Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (the Angry American song). This song put into perspective what many Americans were feeling. It gave our great nation a ballad by which to begin healing after this despicable tragedy. Soldiers everywhere have adopted this as their theme song. Essentially, you healed a nation. How does it feel to be the songwriter behind this patriotic song?

Toby: In the days following 911....I heard a talking head on TV say "I guess we do the American thing and just go bomb somebody", and it chapped me.....hellIt's the terrorist thing to do. Then came all the sickos blaming us, while our military was ramping up to go seek justice. I wrote it on the back of a fantasy football sheet while working out in 20 minutes.

Susan: While you were writing "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue" was there a healing effect for you personally?

Toby: I don't know. I just wanted the sons and daughters to know that if your country is asking you to go....give them hell.

Susan: I know you began a USO Tour a few years back and you have been known to be fearless about going into hot zones to entertain even a small group of troops. Most entertainers would not even consider taking this risk. What inspires you to do this?

Toby: My father served and it started as a tribute to him that never ended. 10 years and 192 shows later, we're still going 2 weeks a year as a way to honor the bravest and best on the planet.

Susan: Many times at the end of your shows, you bring active military members on stage with you to help sing Courtesy, giving them the thrill of a lifetime and honoring their service at the same time. Please tell us why you believe so strongly in the men and women who serve.

Toby: They volunteer to go into harm's way to face evil under extreme scrutiny and rules of engagement and still are superior to any military. Thank god we have them.

Susan: Your daughter, Krystal Keith is following in your footsteps, embarking on a career in country music. She is of course a talented performer and also a songwriter. One of the first songs she wrote was for you called Daddy, Dance with me. What's it like for you as a Dad to watch her develop her career?

Toby: She always knew where she was going, even as child. I'm proud she's rockin' it. That song is amazing by the way....made me cry.

Susan: Where can we find more info about Krystal's upcoming single release?

Toby: It just got mastered....coming real soon. (Facebook: Krystal Keith)

Susan: You have created the Toby Keith Foundation which helps children and great causes worldwide. You have given a lot back to those in need. How can people support your foundation?

Toby: Contact the foundation or go to the fan club website. (www.tobykeithfoundation.org)

Susan: If you could choose one thing that people will remember about your career, what would it be?

Toby: I'm bearing down on 100 million spins as a songwriter....to me it out weighs all other accomplishments.

Susan: Toby, many of your fans are praying for you regarding the loss of your good friend and Leader of the Easy Money Band, bass player Chuckie Goff, Jr. I know your faith is strong. Has music helped you move forward through this unspeakable loss?

Toby: Chuck will always live on. He was too strong of a personality to die....We will move on with him instead of without him. My old roommate in the beginning will finally rest in peace.

Susan: How can we keep up with your tour and announcements?

Toby: My website is updated daily, www.tobykeith.com

Thanks again, big guy.

Enjoy! Hope to see you soon and as always, please contact us via one of the following methods. Natural Healing Express: Phone 815 990 8732, email: skscham@aol.com 204 W Main St, Lena, IL 61048.

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