

John Permenter, Texas



My love of country music comes from my father, who grew up in deep East Texas. He used to listen to Hank Williams, live on the radio, from the "Louisiana Hayride." My childhood was filled with the sounds of my father's favourite artists: Hank, Marty Robbins, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Roger Miller, Glen Campbell, and others. I fell in love with the fiddle in 1973 when I heard Johnny Gimble playing on a Bob Wills record. I began fiddling right away, but it took me years to find the courage to try music as a career. In 1977, after hearing Johnny Paycheck sing "Take this Job and Shove it," I quit my construction job and began singing and fiddling for a living, and I have been doing that ever since.

Even though I studied music formally in college, my real musical education took place in dance halls and honky-tonks all across Texas, especially around Houston, Austin, and San Antonio. For several years, I travelled with Johnny Bush (author of "Whiskey River") as his "front man. Later, I worked as a featured singer at Gilley's nightclub in Pasadena, Texas.

At Gilley's, I met European country fans for the first time. They seemed much more knowledgeable and

appreciative of the music than most American fans. I decided that someday I would travel to Europe and play for these people again.

During the mid eighties, I began working in Houston recording studios. That's where I met Clint Black, who hired me to play on his first album. I joined his band in 1987, and toured with him for two years. Next, I went work for Moe Bandy, who was building a theatre in Branson, Missouri. I settled there for most of the nineties, working both as a sideman and a featured performer for Moe, Johnny Lee, Barbara Fairchild, Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede, The Branson Gospel Hour, and The Legend's Show (with Jean Shepherd, Jack Green, Stonewall Jackson, Del Reeves, and others).

I finally broke out as a recording artist in 1995. Liz Anderson (author of several of Merle Haggard's hits, including "The Lonesome Fugitive") gave me a song, "Everybody's Gotta Run Their Own Railroad," which became the title cut of my first album.

Two years later, I recorded my second album, "Wayfaring Stranger." Like my first record, it featured a lot of my friends who worked in Branson –

guys who played for such artists as Moe Bandy, Loretta Lyn, Dolly Parton, Bill Monroe, the Osmonds, Andy Williams, and lots of others.

During the past ten years, my dream of performing in overseas has come true. With the help of some very kind people, I began playing in England, then Ireland and Scotland. This grew into longer tours and bigger venues, theatres, and festivals. In 1999, I joined a theatre show in the Netherlands, and from there branched into Germany and Scandinavia. In 2001, I made my first trip to Brazil, which has a thriving country music scene. Most recently, I began playing in France with the Jackson Mackay Band. Jackson will be distributing my albums there, and it looks like good things are in store. I continue to tour in the U.K. with the fine trio Little Rock; last year we played the biggest festivals including Americana, Ayr, Witton Castle, Calne, Flights, Lichfield, Wolverhampton, Kent, and Bridlington.

“Roots: The Songs My Father Loved” was recorded in Austin in 2001. This was a very special project; sometimes I felt my dad was right there with me in the studio. Some of the finest musicians in Austin helped out, including Red Volkeart on guitar (toured with Merle Haggard and Red Steagall) and Earl Poole Ball on piano (produced Johnny Cash for years). We recorded in the old way – just musicians in a room playing live, with virtually no overdubbing or remixing. The old songs came to life in those two days – songs like Lost Highway by Hank Williams, Shotgun Boogie by Tennessee Ernie, Whisperin’ Pines by Johnny Horton.

My most recent and successful album was recorded live I Holland with my Dutch band, Desperado. We had toured together for years, so it was a simple matter to pick fifteen of our most popular songs and record them in front of an audience. The result was better than I dared hope. In many ways, it’s my best album; you can really hear the excitement of a live gig. The band was cooking and the crowd was into it. Even the imperfections in the performance somehow seemed to add to the special quality of the record.



Today, I find myself on a new plateau in my life. I’m single again and my son is grown. I travel to extraordinary places and make good music with good musicians. The audiences are warm and welcoming; country music seems to attract good people. Between tours, I live on Galveston Bay in Texas. I play regularly at the Liberty Opry near Houston. I do some teaching and I have recently completed my Bachelor’s degree in Humanities at the University of Houston. Someday I may teach more and tour less, but for now, I plan to keep doing the best job in the world. For this, I feel very blessed, and I thank all of you who have been so supportive and encouraging.

I would very much enjoy to play as many new places as possible to meet a lot of new friends and bring joy with my music. For bookings call my Office for Switzerland and Austria



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