

ROYAL WADE KIMES

...Riding to the Rescue

By Marvin O'Dell

IF Nashville western recording artist Royal Wade Kimes is anything, he's extremely opinionated about the world of cowboy music. And the Ozark native definitely has strong opinions about what it will take to get the rest of the world to sit up and take notice of this particular music genre.

Not only that, he's unusually visionary when the subject of cowboy music arises. "I want to see it just blow up," Wade says. "It's been idle for 60 years...sittin' there idle like a good V-8 motor, and it's revvin' up and gettin' ready to go."

When Royal Wade Kimes speaks, it might be a good idea to listen. He has realized success with a country album, a Christmas album, and four western and country albums (worded that way because they are far more western than country). He has also persuaded his friend Garth Brooks to perform with him on one song that became a Top 20 song in Nashville. His mentor is the late Eddy Arnold. He has established his own recording and publishing company and has also written his first western novel.

Wade, as he likes to be called by his friends, spent 10 years as a songwriter in Nashville before releasing his first album. Before launching a music career, he worked as a ranch hand for Loretta Lynn. He is no pretender when it comes to cowboy life. His website, www.royalwadekimes.com, will tell you that Wade has "sat tall in the saddle, seen



Royal Wade Kimes

the vastness of the range, roped and chased breakaway steers; he's ridden the trails, taken the falls, in the truest sense of the term, and survived." In a 2004 interview, Wade said, "Yeah, I've always been a cowboy. I don't remember not wearin' cowboy boots, and I rodeed for years. What my music is," explains the singer, "it's country with cowboy attitude." One listen to his CD's will tell you that he also sings *passionately* – which seems to be consistent with his approach to the music business.

An independent artist, Wade has taken his music into places others only wish their music could appear. Through

hard work, diligence, organization, and just plain ol' confidence mixed with a little bit of cockiness, Wade has taken the bull by the horns and delivered his work into the hands of those who can stir up some recognition for his labors. *Billboard*, *True West*, and *Country Weekly* magazines are a few of those who have given ink and paper to Wade's accomplishments. XM Satellite Radio has offered him his own show for the presentation of western music. His Christmas CD has sold in airport gift shops around the country.

Since making a decision to emotionally step outside of Nashville and its non-stylistic, formulaic approach to music, Wade has ridden the western music trail as an outlaw as far as Music City is concerned. However, he recognizes that

he's not the only cowboy singer out there. Although a recent *Country Weekly* story failed to mention it, Wade attempted to explain to them that there are lot of good cowboy singers and that there is more to western music than singing good cowboy songs. Wade makes the comment, "I told them, this is more than just music, guys, this is a way of life". His mention of the Western Music Association and its efforts also failed to make print along with informative comments about saddlemakers, SASS (Single Action Shooting Society), horsebackshooters, etc. Alas, "Nashville just ain't interested."

When it comes to western music, however, Royal Wade Kimes is not to be deterred. "I'm going to do everything I can to bring it to the forefront," he says. It's Wade's belief that country music has strayed so far from its roots that young people growing up today will never learn where those roots formed. However, he believes that western music can fill a void and bring people back to an understanding of where the music originates. "What I think will happen," muses Wade, "is that western music can take over. And between you and me, all it's going to take is a consolidated effort and somebody to lead the charge. I want western music to BE the music."

One of Wade's most cherished possessions is a signed

book and photo that came from Johnny Cash three weeks before his death. Cash's agent delivered the items and told Wade that Johnny had sent a message saying, "Tell Wade to keep on doing what he's doing." With this inspiration and shot in the arm, Wade says, "I'm filled with emotion and determination about this western music business. I'm psyched about it. I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing whether I get support for it or not."

"I think that western music is primed to blow wide open," Wade unapologetically states. "We just gotta have a really tight consolidated effort. And I want to help push it to the top. It can't be denied that Roy Rogers and Gene (Autry) existed. What we have to do is let them know that we exist out there, too." He feels that doors for western music have been opened just a little more by the recent articles that have appeared about him in the aforementioned publications.

Wade speaks positively about the Western Music Association (WMA) in its current state. "You're wanting to see what I'm wanting to see. You've got a vision. And if we put all our visions together, it can be big. And I want to see it explode – and I think it can." After commenting that the WMA should have 10,000 members by now considering how long it has been operating, Wade makes this comment: "We gotta have people who are willing to take chances...that are willing to step out there and try to pull the impossible together. We can't just say we want something to happen. That's great, but actions have to happen. And we have to have concerted efforts from everybody."

Drawing, no doubt, from his years of experience in Nashville, Wade believes that a show of professionalism is important if the WMA is to get adequate media coverage or make a significant impact for western music. He believes that western entertainers who attend the annual awards show should come "dressed to the nines." "Make this thing something special," he asserts. "Make it where (attendees) pay to get there. Make it something that (people) seek to have. Push the envelope – do all we can."

Wade sees his XM Satellite show, "Tales From the Trail", as an opportunity to expose more western acts to the listening public. His most recent show featured the Rockin' M Wranglers (Jim & Jeanne Martin) and Myra Pearce. The station was inundated with e-mails after the show – more than any debut show ever on XM.

Royal Wade Kimes doesn't claim to have all the answers for the advancement of western music. He is doing something right, though, and it would behoove other aspiring artists to pay attention. And if you're willing to listen to a few opinions, he's willing to share a few. But don't tell him that western music is going nowhere. Something tells me he won't take the time to listen. Negatives usually don't sit well with a visionary. And when you get around an *opinionated* visionary like Royal Wade Kimes, one might do well to, as Jim Jones sings on his latest CD, "lead, follow or get outa the way!"

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