

WESTERN HORSEMAN

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Cowboy Culture >> on the scene

BARDS & BALLADEERS

Old Meets New

INTERVIEW BY JENNIFER DENISON

He's opened for Don Edwards, Chris LeDoux and Ian Tyson, but Brenn Hill isn't content pigeonholing his music as cowboy or country. It's simply his music – a blend of classic and contemporary.



MUSICIAN: Brenn Hill

HOMETOWN: Hooper, Utah

FAMILY: Wife, Sylina, and two sons, Quayden, 5, and Briggs, 20 months.

ALBUMS: *Rangefire* (1997); *Deeper Than Mud* (1999); *Trail Through Yesterday* (2000); *Call You Cowboy* (2002); *Endangered* (2004); *What A Man's Got To Do* (2007).

EARLIEST CHILDHOOD MUSIC MEMORY: "Just needing to hear music, create it and play it," Brenn says. "Music was my outlet, my escape."

POETIC JUSTICE: "I'm a poet and songwriter first and foremost," says Brenn, who got his start at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, when he was a teenager. "A friend once told me that if you read a song's lyrics and if they stand alone as poetry, then it's a good song. My songs have to pass the recitation test before I'll record them."

COWBOY OR COUNTRY: "I don't necessarily think of myself as a country or cowboy singer. My parents listened to a broad range of music when I was growing up, from B.B. King to Bruce Springsteen. I took it all in and didn't distinguish between musical genres."

THE SONG WITHIN: "I've never had any aspirations of being a superstar," says Brenn,

who's been nominated for and won several Academy of Western Artists and Western Music Association awards. "My motivation begins with the music. I live for the next song. Songwriting fuels my passion."

MUSICAL MOTIVATION: "I strive to craft words and melodies that are meaningful, and make people stop and reconsider the importance of the West, the values it represents and the real people who live there."

ON A MISSION: "I'm pretty opinionated," says Brenn, a sixth-generation Utahan who composes songs about issues facing agriculture and life in the West. "Whether or not people want to hear about the issues, they need to start listening. The agricultural way of life needs to be discussed, and the issues need to be at the forefront of people's hearts and minds. That's the crusade part of what I do. We are, like never before, losing our farm- and ranchland. If it continues, our way of life will vanish, too."



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MENTORS: “I wouldn’t be the artist I am without my mentors. These include Don Edwards, Chris LeDoux and Ian Tyson. Their influence and friendship has been a big part of my life. They’ve not only influenced me as an artist, but also as a human being.”

LATEST PROJECT: Brenn’s latest album, titled *What A Man’s Got To Do*, marks his debut as a producer. “You have to stand back from yourself as an artist and be absolutely critical of your work,” he says of the experience. “That gave me a new perspective on my work and what’s involved in producing an album. I enjoyed the freedom in the studio.”

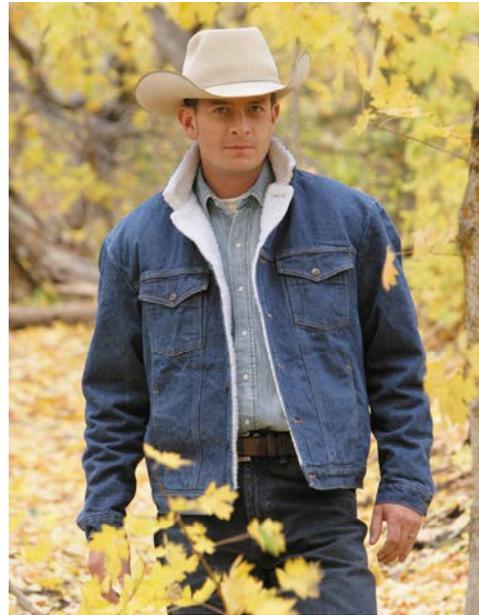
REACHING OUT TO RADIO: “I believe that Western and cowboy music should be played on the radio. I think people are ready for it to be played. My goal is to make the best record possible, using the best technology and musicians. That way, if it finds its way to radio, it’ll be competitive.”

HORSEMAN’S PERSPECTIVE: “Horses are an important part of my life and songs. You have to build a relationship with a horse through mutual respect. That relationship has taught me to be more objective, observant, and introspective in my relationships with other people. I’m always looking beyond what I see to determine what others are feeling and to what they’ll relate.”

RENEWED SPIRIT: “Riding in the mountains inspires me to write. When I’m not feeling connected to the people and the land I write and sing about, I saddle up and get away. A little bit of that gets my creative juices flowing.”

FAVORITE SONGS OF ALL TIME: “The Gift,” by Ian Tyson; Buck Ramsay’s version of “Goodnight Loving Trail”; “Someday Soon,” by Ian Tyson; and “El Paso,” by Marty Robbins.

MY BEST IDEAS COME ... : “Unexpectedly. I’d be a much wealthier guy if I could answer that question. My inspiration comes when it comes.”



MOST MEMORABLE GIG: “In 1993, I was invited to play at the Best of the Cowboy Music Jamboree in Elko, Nevada. Don Edwards, Ramblin’ Jack Elliott, Buck Ramsey and Peter Rowan were all on the bill that night. I don’t remember what I sang, but the crowd was warm and receptive. I don’t think I deserved the applause they gave me, but it was sure encouraging.”

DREAM DUET PARTNER AND THE SONG THEY’D SING: “I’d like to write a classic country ballad and sing it with Patsy Cline. I also hope to one day sing a duet with Ian Tyson.”

IN HIS TRUCK’S STEREO: “My music collection is pretty diverse. Right now, I’m into traditional blues artists.”

WHAT HE HOPES PEOPLE HEAR IN HIS MUSIC: “I hope people hear honesty, integrity and originality. I’m not trying to go down a road someone else has taken. I’m just trying to do something nobody else has done, and I hope that’s what people hear.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Call Red Cliffs Press at (615) 369-0810, or visit brennhill.com.