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BRENN HILL



THE WORLD'S NUMBER 1

Country Music

& LINE DANCING MAGAZINE



Brenn Hill

by Gaye Teather

When presented with the word 'artist' one immediately conjures up an image of either a painter of pictures or a singer/musician. Brenn Hill is one of those rare individuals who embodies both concepts. Through the ears of his listeners he reaches that canvas of imagination whereupon his words flow like brushstrokes creating pictures and scenes so vivid that his audience can 'see' as clearly as if they were viewed through their own eyes, the vision that he sets out to convey.

Brenn Hill is a young man in his early thirties but unlike many of his contemporaries who are hell bent on Turning Music Row into Disco Drive, he remains wholly and passionately Country in the traditional sense. His songs pay homage to Western music's greatest traditions but also depict life in the modern mountain west, a place with which he is familiar and which is very dear to his heart.

Home for Brenn is Hooper, Utah which is about 50 miles north west of Salt Lake and it was from here that Brenn spoke to me about his music and the beautiful scenery and landscapes that surround him and give him inspiration for his songwriting. Relaxing in his living room (or trying to, with his German Shepherd and Retriever dogs crawling over him), Brenn's contentment with his environs was evident as he chatted about his home and the attraction that the area holds for him. 'This is an agricultural community which is still very much a farming and ranching area', he told me. As we spoke, his horses grazed outside on the couple of acres of land upon which his home stands and his love for animals and nature is evident. 'There's the bond with the animals and the bond with the land, it's something that we all long for.' During our conversation, Brenn made frequent reference to 'painting' and 'pictures'. It is a particular talent of his to bring to life scenes and situations, especially for those of us not privileged to have visited the places he describes in his songs. Is this the idea he has in mind when he writes? 'Definitely', he agrees. 'That's the idea, to bring together people from all walks of life, all parts

of the world so that they can see what you are painting.'

Brenn's fascination for words began at the age of 14 or 15 as he recalls, 'writing poetry and short stories always seemed like an escape to me. I liked to find a blank piece of paper and start writing. I'd try to conjure up stories to connect places, people and events that were meaningful to me through emotions that everybody could relate to.' Eventually those short stories evolved into songs as he continues, 'songwriting to me is very efficient. A song lasts three and a half to five minutes. You really present an idea, try to support it, build a melody around it and sort of leave it there for the listener to dig in. The best songwriters to me are those lyricists that present an idea and leave it out there for the audience to digest and interpret. I think that's why my writing evolved into songwriting. Once I got a guitar in my hand, it just kind of fell together.' Given his inspiration, how long does it take to write a song? I wondered, hours, days, months? 'All of the above', he laughs. 'Some fit together like a puzzle. I formulate an idea and present it. I usually have a formula in mind when I start to write with an end in sight.'

His writing skills were gaining recognition for him at the young age of 16 when he performed at the famed, National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, North Virginia and by the age of 20 he was a popular performer on the Western music circuit. His debut album, Rangefire, earning him the Rising Star Award from the Academy of Western Artists. Four further albums followed, each one attracting increased interest and filling up the walls of Brenn's home with numerous awards including the Academy of Western Artists' Album of the Year in 2000 for Trail Through Yesterday and Male Vocalist of the Year for his 2004 album, Endangered. Being such an accomplished songwriter, Brenn need never look further than his own compositions when deciding what to record but he told me of one artist that he makes an exception for. 'One artist I've covered is Ian Tyson, a Canadian singer/songwriter. He has been a



mentor and teacher to me.'

When describing his own style Brenn says, 'I'm a little bit George Strait, a little bit of Bruce Springsteen and a whole lot of Ian Tyson and John Denver.' Whilst the styles may be representative, the voice of Brenn Hill is distinctly unique. In the way that one instantly recognises Dwight Yoakam or Josh Turner for their inimitable vocals, Brenn, likewise has his own exclusive sound making him stand out from the crowd.

His latest project is the new album, What A Man's Got To Do, marking Brenn's initial move into production. 'It is an album with 15 songs of such diversity they will stir your soul, make you laugh and break your heart all within the space of an hour. Brenn was especially pleased to hear of the line dance inspired by his song, Casa Blanca taken from the album. 'This song is near and dear to my heart. Casa Blanca is a winter resort where myself and my wife spent our honeymoon.'

Brenn Hill has that knack of nurturing and keeping alive Western music's best traditions whilst embracing and exploring new and contemporary themes. Of the Western way of life, he says: 'Music is a way I can try to bring that lifestyle back to the forefront of people's hearts and minds. If I can activate the people who live this Western lifestyle as well as the people who are fascinated by it, maybe I've accomplished something beyond making music.'

