

JOSH TURNER

MCA Nashville recording artist Josh Turner, while a multi-platinum-selling star himself, is a country music fan first and foremost. He's even concocted his own version of Mount Rushmore conceived solely of country music legends. Turner's "Mount Rushmore of Country Music" boasts five faces rather than four (it's his mountain, after all) — Randy Travis, John Anderson, Johnny Cash, Vern Gosdin, and Hank Williams.

The giants carved into the granite of Turner's musical soul form the core of his aptly titled new album, *Country State of Mind*. "I've always said that any song you hear coming from my voice, you're going to hear bits and pieces of those five guys," he says. "They taught me how to be Josh Turner."

The dozen songs on *Country State of Mind*, including songs from those five legends among others, span more than half a century of classic country music, encompassing both well-known standards and deep-catalog cuts. The album shows a singer in dialogue with the songs and the artists that shaped his vision. It's a conversation — relayed in the distinctive, resonant baritone that brought Turner #1 hits and five gold and platinum albums — between the past and present of country music. And on half the tracks, Turner invites other voices — some heroes, some contemporaries — to join him in the conversation.

"I knew the artists I wanted to represent," explains Turner, "and I chose songs that exemplified who each of these artists was from my perspective." The result is a multifaceted album that reflects a distinctive mix of popular and personally meaningful songs. "Forever and Ever, Amen" marks Randy Travis' first recording session since an incapacitating 2013 stroke. John Anderson, who has written and recorded with Turner in the past, joins him to reprise Anderson's 1993 hit "I've Got It Made." Early in his career, Turner often performed Vern Gosdin's first chart-topping single, "I Can Tell By the Way You Dance (You're Gonna Love Me Tonight)," and has long dreamed of re-introducing it to a new generation of listeners. Turner plays guitar for the first time on one of his albums on his renditions of Johnny Cash's "The Caretaker" and Hank Williams' "Alone and Forsaken" — the album's oldest, and darkest, songs.

"When I was growing up, before I moved to Nashville, I was crazy about sad songs," he says. "There has always been a part of my heart that has loved those sad, lonesome, and slow songs."

Turner chose his guests as carefully as he did his material, selecting artists who shared his love and respect for the material. "I wanted artists I knew have an appreciation for traditional country music," he says. Besides heroes Travis and Anderson, Turner invited Country Music Hall of Famer Kris Kristofferson to record a new version of his 1973 chart-topper "Why Me" with him. The title track, originally a 1986 hit for Hank Williams Jr., becomes a duet with fellow Grand Ole Opry member Chris Janson. The members of Runaway June take George Jones' part on "You Don't Seem to Miss Me," and Maddie & Tae sing with Turner on "Desperately," a 2004 single for George Strait and the album's newest song.

Country State of Mind also includes songs originally made famous by Keith Whitley (“I’m No Stranger to the Rain”), Waylon Jennings (“Good Ol’ Boys” Theme from The Dukes of Hazzard), and Alan Jackson (“Midnight in Montgomery”).

From the very start of his career through chart-topping hits like “Your Man,” “Would You Go With Me,” “Why Don’t We Just Dance,” and “All Over Me,” Turner has immersed himself in country music’s history and its iconic figures. After all, this is someone who, as a student at Nashville’s Belmont University, took an open gate on Johnny Cash’s property as a sign he should knock on the legendary singer’s door and introduce himself.

“The doorknob wiggles, the door swings open, and there stands Johnny Cash,” Turner recalls. “He and I both jump back, because he didn’t expect to see me, and I sure didn’t expect him to answer the door.”

Later, as the hits came, along with multiple GRAMMY, CMA, and ACM nominations, Turner joined the Grand Ole Opry. One of country music’s oldest and most hallowed traditions, the Opry once counted Hank Williams Sr., Johnny Cash, and George Jones among its ranks; now, Turner shares membership with heroes like Randy Travis, Alan Jackson, and Patty Loveless, as well as guest Chris Janson.

For nearly two decades, Turner has been one of country music’s most recognizable voices, selling more than 8.5 million units and amassing more than 2.5 billion global streams. He has never kept his reverence for traditional country music a secret, but, with this latest album, Josh Turner is definitely in a Country State of Mind.

Really, though, he always has been.

For more information on Josh Turner, visit www.JoshTurner.com.