

Mark Wills Biography

Mark Wills, the multi-platinum selling country star, is living the newest chapter in his career with newfound passion, energy, joy, and abandon.

"When people come to my shows, they're going to see a country boy having a lot of fun," says the chart-topping performer. "More than anything else, I want to entertain people. My goal is to always make my show something that leaves people feeling happy. The band and I play everyone's favorites from my past albums as well as songs from the new record '*Familiar Stranger*' being released in November 2008."

"When performing in concert, music doesn't always need to be perfect and sterilized. It's that natural energy and emotion during a show that an audience connects with that makes live shows so exciting. That's the philosophy I took into the recording studio this time when recording my new record. We brought some of the country's most talented and aggressive players into the studio to create a 'live' sound. I wanted the record to feel like my live show. Like a real band just having fun and connecting with our audience. The new record is me and the guys in the studio recording LIVE...the way records used to be made. We just rehearsed the songs and rolled the tape and boy you can hear and feel the energy in every track. "

The robust new Mark Wills sound is on vivid display in the hurricane-strength party rocker "Panama City." You can also find it in the eccentric lyrics of "Hank," which is built on the premise that the music of Hank Williams can bring us all together, no matter what our cultural or political differences.

Elsewhere on his upcoming album, Wills takes a joy ride in the guitar rocker "Days Of Thunder," confesses through the energetic "Rednecks Anonymous" and roars to the rafters on the stomping "Crazy White Boy." Guitars wail and percussion pumps through the all the tracks making "*Familiar Stranger*" an adventurous and fun musical experience.

Even the ballads have a powerful, full-bodied sound. And when he slows the tempo down, he turns to strikingly genuine and creative lyrics. The touching "Entertaining Angels" is as powerful a story as he has ever sung. In "Her Kiss" Mark holds on to romance with a permanent reminder of her lips. "What Are You Doing" and "The Likes Of You" are all performed in his electrifying, soaring, and powerful tenor vocal range.

The award winning Mark Wills has scored 8 top 10 hits and has made a name for himself as the gifted interpreter of such tender sentiments as "Wish You Were Here" and "Don't Laugh At Me." The Academy of Country Music's Top New Male Vocalist of 1999 has staked his claim as one of country music's top male performers by carving out a niche for himself by creating his own moving renditions of such R&B love songs as "Back At One" and "Almost Doesn't Count." His hit-packed musical legacy includes his unforgettable ballads "Places I've

Never Been,” “I Do (Cherish You)”, and “She’s In Love.”

“I still love all those songs, and they are a true representation of a major part of who I am”, Wills comments. “They’re great songs that I’m very proud of”. But on my new album, *'Familiar Stranger'*, I have a chance to show the other side of my personality. The side that rocks!!! My new album is by far the best well-rounded portrait of me ever as an artist..”

“The new music is going to impact my live show, giving me several new high energy songs and more opportunities to make the show even more entertaining. It’s going to be fun for sure. Playing live for the fans has always been my greatest thrill.”

Born in 1973, Mark was raised in Blue Ridge, GA. As a young boy, Mark was a fan of country stars such as Alabama and Ronnie Milsap, as well as some of the rock acts of the day such as Poison, Bon Jovi and Motley Crue. After winning a local talent contest at age 17, Mark announced to his parents that he was moving to the big city of Atlanta to follow his dream.

Mark Wills found both personal and professional success in Georgia’s capital city. He adopted his stage name because there was another country singer named “Williams” in Atlanta. Then he became the “house” entertainer for five years at the famed Buckboard nightclub, where he met his wife Kelly. They married in 1996, which was the same year that the upbeat “*Jacob’s Ladder*” jump-started his country career. That single was followed by a string of Top 10 smashes. His 1998 album *Wish You Were Here* went Platinum and *Permanently* (2000) then went Gold.

With its heartfelt message of tolerance and charity, the Mark Wills hit “Don’t Laugh At Me” garnered nominations from the Country Music Association for Single, Song, and Video of the Year in 1998. The same year, Mark and Kelly’s first daughter Mally was born. Again, career success dovetailed with personal happiness.

In 1999, Wills took home the Academy of Country Music’s coveted award for *Top New Male Vocalist*. A year later Mark was chosen as the voice of Huck Finn in the star-studded animated feature film *Tom Sawyer*. Two of his musical performances also appeared on the soundtrack.

In the new millennium, his career heated up again. In 2002, his bopping, fun-loving single “19 Somethin’” spent six weeks at No. 1 on the charts. At year’s end, both *Billboard* and *Radio & Records* magazines named it the top country hit of the year. Then in 2003, the family welcomed second daughter, Macey.

Later that year, Mark Wills signed up to entertain our military troops overseas and has returned each year since then. Mark has traveled to Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea and has made numerous military appearances all across America. “I am so fortunate to be able to play music around the world, and it is all because the men and women in our military risk their lives to protect our freedom. It is a way

for me to say thanks and hopefully, for a moment, help them forget that their lives are in danger and they are away from their loved ones.

In 2004 Wills sang "Fooled Around And Fell In Love" on the tribute album *Southern Rock Country Style*. He released his first live album in 2005. Then came a surprise: a No. 1 downloaded track on iTunes in 2006. It was his version of "What Hurts The Most". A track from his three-year-old album *And The Crowd Goes Wild*. When fans went in search of the chart-topping remake by Rascal Flatts, they discovered Wills' original recording of the song and downloaded his version instead.

"The new album, *Familiar Stranger*, all came about when I started listening to songs, looking for something different," Wills relates. "Sometimes you get pigeon-holed as to what you can do or what is expected of you. I heard several things that were unique sounding and noticed Brett James was the writer on all of them and that he was the producer on them too. I basically went to him and groveled: 'Dude, I love this sound! This is the band sound I grew up with.' And I asked him to work with me."

"When Brett and I started talking, I said, 'I want players who aren't afraid to step outside of the normal studio pattern. I want them to listen and feel the music. Most importantly I want them to have fun with it. I want them to have a sense of ownership about this sound.'"

"Getting this record out and sharing it with the fans is going to be a great experience. I'm looking forward to getting back on the road, playing for the fans and putting this new music out there. That's all I've ever wanted to do since I picked up my first guitar."