

JOHNNY CASH

His music has stood test of time

By VAN ROSE

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To most country music fans, Johnny Cash is known as The Man in Black. But to others, the legendary singer will always be a boy named Sue.

“I can live with that.” Cash said in an interview with the Times Leader. “I’ll always be associated with “A Boy Named Sue” as long as I live. It’s one of my all-time favorite songs.”

“I’ve never performed a concert where they haven’t made me sing “A Boy Named Sue.” It’s always one of the highlights of my show.”

More than likely, fans will be on their feet screaming when Cash performs “A Boy Named Sue” during his concert tonight at the Bud Light Amphitheatre at Harvey’s Lake.

Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets are available at the gate.

The Carter Family, including Cash’s wife, June Carter Cash, and his son, John Carter Cash, will also perform at tonight’s show.

Not to mention Sue.

“I don’t think I’ve ever recorded a song that triggered a greater reaction than “A Boy Named Sue,” said Cash, 62. “It’s a song that grabs you the first time you hear it.”

When the song was first pitched to Cash in 1969, he said he knew it was something special.

“I was in California at the time,” Cash said, “I loved the song right away.”

Apparently, fate intended for the song to fall into Cash’s hands.

“When we went in to record it, we did it in a single take,” Cash said, “I took the lyrics out of my pocket and sang it.”

Even though he thought “A Boy Name Sue” was an exceptional song, Cash said he never visualized its success.

“I didn’t realize at the time what a big hit it would be,” Cash said. “It certainly surpassed my expectations.”

“A Boy Name Sue” of course was a runaway No. 1 hit in 1969.

Does Cash believe the song would have enjoyed the same kind of success if it has been released in 1995 instead of ‘69?

“I think it would still get on the radio, because it’s a good song,” Cash said. “Country music fans always react positively to a song if they like it, even if it’s different.”

Another classic that will always have a special place in The Man In Black’s hear it “Ring of Fire.” It was one of his first big hits.

“It’s also a much requested song,” Cash said. “It seems to me like it’s been covered (re-recorded) by hundreds of artists.”

Cash and his music have stood the test of time.

For the past 40 years, he has championed the cause of the working men and women of the world with songs that explore every aspect of human existence.

Cash has more than 135 *Billboard Magazine* certified hits to his credit, a total equivalent to The Beatles and Frank Sinatra combined.

In 1980, Cash was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. He received the Grammy “Living Legend Award” in 1990, an honor given to only seven other musicians.

For the past 10 years, Cash has been part of country music’s most famous quartet - The Highwaymen. His partners in crime are Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson.

“I love working with those guys,” Cash said. “We’ve been together a long time. We work well together. A lot of things we do on stage are spontaneous, but everything always seems to fall in place.”

Later this year, Cash and The Highwaymen are embarking on a world tour that will take them to Australia and the Far East. “It should be quite an adventure,” Cash says modestly.

New country? Not a chance.

The Man In Black is a hard core country music traditionalist, and has no plans to change. He says his music always will come from the heart, without regard to country radio.

Cash has been bumped off the radio by the current country explosion, which is on the cutting edge of pop. He bears no animosity, even though he says today’s music is “overproduced.”

Until recently, Cash never bothered to listen to it. However, he’s been tuning in lately, and admits some of the music is starting to grow on him.

“There are two songs on the charts right now that I really like a lot,” Cash said. He singled out John Michael Montgomery’s “Sold (The Grundy Country Auction Incident).” And Sawyer Brown’s “(This Thing Called Wantin’ and Havin’ It All.”

“The songs have originality,” said Cash.

Originality is something Cash knows about.

After all, he’s one-of-a-kind. “A Boy Named Sue” is proof.

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