

Fifteen years strong

Casey Donahew puts together *The Wild Ride* with new recordings of fan favorites
By Jan Sikes

WHEN CASEY DONAHEW STARTED HIS career, he had no idea where the ride would take him. All he knew was that he had a passion to play music and write songs.

Now, fifteen years later, with fourteen No. 1 singles on Texas Music charts and four independently released albums, he's not slowing down.

"It's been a good run," he said, "and we're just fortunate to make it happen."

What kept him going and pushed him forward for all these many years?

"I think you just have to love music. You gotta love being on stage and the process of writing songs and telling stories. Because this is a grind. It's a tough road. It's often glamorized, but that's not really how it happens. There are lots of late nights, bad food, terrible hotel rooms and you're stuck on a four hundred square foot bus with a bunch of guys. And that's anything but glamorous.

"So, you have to love the music because that's what gets you through."

To commemorate this monumental anniversary, Casey has released a new album, *15 Years – Casey Donahew – The Wild Ride*, produced by Josh Leo and Donahew.

There is something unique about this album. The fifteen songs on it are all new recordings of Casey's biggest hits.

He had this to say about the reasoning behind the project.

"These are all songs we picked

from our first three records except '3 AM,' which is a cover that we've been doing live for a long time.

"When we started talking about this, I thought we'd just re-record our first CD because when we first started out, we didn't have any money. We went and made the cheapest record we could make.

"We didn't even have a lead guitar. We spent about \$1,500 doing one take with an acoustic guitar, bass, and drums. Then we had a guy go in and go over the top of the songs one time."

And yet, that first album charted three No. 1 singles.

Casey continued, "But then after I thought about it and we talked more about it, we decided the songs that have been with us for a decade and a half deserved better than their first recordings. So, we picked the fan-favorites and decided to completely redo them to pay tribute to the songs and to our fans who come to our shows night after night and sing the lyrics along with us."

The songs

ALL THE SONGS ON *WILD Ride* have stood the test of time.

The album opens with Casey's anthem, "Stockyards." This is Casey's salute to Fort Worth, and as the lyrics say, "The Stock-



He and his band are scheduled to perform at Billy Bob's Texas on December 23: Casey Donahew

yards, it's my backyard/The place where I grew up/I drank my first beer/Cried my first tear..."

"Double Wide Dream, Casey's first No. 1 single off the *Double Wide* album, rose to the top of the charts in 2011. "Nowhere Fast," "Runaway Train" and "Ask Me to Stay," follow this chart-topper with hot guitar licks and vocal perfection.

The first song Casey wrote, "Fallen," was my favorite cut on the album. I loved the honesty and baring of the soul in the lyrics.

It is followed by "No Doubt," "Back Home in Texas," and "Shine on Me."

"3 AM" is the only cover tune and was written by Rob Thomas, Jay Stanley, John Leslie Goff and Brian Yale. The Casey Donahew Band has been performing this song live for years, and they all agreed this staple should be included for the fans.

"12 Gauge" is a story about fighting back, about getting a belly full and doing something about it. "There's a 12-gauge

shotgun lying on the floor/She's not sure that he's breathing anymore/She's sitting on the corner of the bed in her room/Sirens are blaring they'll be there soon..."

The next three songs, "Alabama Slammer," "High" and "White Trash Story" helped define and shape the Casey Donahew Band.

The album ends with "Angel," a tragic tale often too familiar. "She's got lines running up her arms like an L.A. Freeway/I've dropped her off at rehab seven times, but she just won't stay/She never climbed a mountain, but she's seen her share of snow/She got locked up in Johnson County for selling pills and blow/She's an angel who's lost her way..."

Fifteen tracks on *Wild Ride* represent the fifteen years the Casey Donahew Band has been making music, racking up miles and gathering fans.

Inspiration

When asked what inspires him, Casey does not hesitate. "It's my

kids. My kids keep me grounded and keep me focused. They're the light that brings me out of the darkness."

Casey has two boys, a nine and four-year-old. He says the nine-year-old plays piano, likes to travel and be on the road but shies away from the spotlight.

What's next for the CDB?

"We stay on the road. We're doing a lot of promoting and touring; keeping our name out there. We're doing a bunch of writing and trying to get ready for another new record."

What advice would Casey Donahew give to new up-and-coming writers and performers?

"You've got to love to play music. You've got to keep writing songs, and you've got to get in front of people and build a fan-base. If you want to have a long career, the only way I know to do it is to have a loyal fan-base that sticks with you for a length of time. So, you've got to get out in front of people and make fans. Treat this like a real business. Watch your money and be care-

ful about who you let into your circle. Try to do everything by yourself as long as you can."

What changes has Casey seen over the past fifteen years in the music business?

"One of the main things would be social media. When we started, there was very little, mainly MySpace. Now there are countless outlets of social media, all kinds of ways to interact with fans and reach people. The other thing that has changed the music business drastically is streaming. There's no good formula for the small guy to get a cut from all the streaming sites."

One thing remains unchanged for the Casey Donahew Band, and that is the fact that they'll be touring and making new records for many years to come.

They will be performing at Billy Bob's Texas on December 23, so don't miss a chance to see them and pick up this new CD, *Fifteen Years – Casey Donahew – The Wild Ride*. For more, visit: caseydonahew.com

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