

Still writing between the lines.

Kinky Friedman releases his *Circus of Life* and the only surprise is why the hell did it take 40 years.
 “If you want to thank a veteran, be an American worth fighting for.”

By Jan Sikes

IT HAS BEEN FOUR DECADES SINCE Kinky Friedman released a new music album. Think about that for a minute...four decades. But, after a phone call from longtime friend, Willie Nelson, that is exactly what Kinky has done. *Circus of Life* was released on July 3. In Kinky's own words, here is the story about the phone call.

“Willie's given me a lot of advice over the years so he's kinda' become like a shrink to me. And, he called one night at 3 o'clock in the morning. He was in Hawaii and I was on the ranch in Texas. He said, 'What are you doing, Kinky?' and I said, 'I'm watching Matlock.' He said, 'That's a sure sign of depression. Turn it off, Kinky. Turn Matlock off and start writing.'”

“Well, I hadn't written any songs in about forty years although I've written a lot of prose. So, I got inspired. I think it was because of Willie's wisdom over the years. It may sound like a joke, but if we all could turn off whatever our Matlock is, God knows what we could accomplish.”

Food for thought

NOW, THERE'S SOME FOOD for thought, folks.

The result of Kinky turning off Matlock is his new CD, *Circus of Life*.

Kinky continued. “I found myself in Dallas at a Denny's one night and it gave me the inspiration for the first song of twelve that I wrote in the space of a month. I was miserable. I was unhappy. You know, you've got to be unhappy. That's the first step to becoming an artist of any kind. So, I fight happiness at every turn.”

The story goes on for a while in true Kinky fashion. But, to basically sum it up, a guy came

into Denny's that night wearing pajamas and a green knit hat. He appeared to be mentally challenged or messed up in some way. He tried to sell Kinky some coupons or something.

Kinky confesses that he didn't have any cash to give the guy, so he blew him off and left. But, he was overcome with guilt and went back to Denny's about five minutes later. Not only was the guy gone, but the cashier and waitresses declared they had not seen him.

“So, while driving from Dallas to Fort Worth, that song was written, 'Jesus in Pajamas,' which is arguably one of the best I've ever written,” Kinky concludes.

Once he had the twelve songs written, he called Willie back.

“Willie told me to send them to him,” Kinky said. “Then I asked him how he was doing because I'd heard he was having some health problems. Willie said, 'Well, you know, the usual. A little up and a little down. By the way, Kinky, what channel is Matlock on?’”

You've gotta love Kinky Friedman's no-holds-barred philosophy.

Kinky said, “You know when you get older, you don't want to be helping out young people. It irritates you. Winston Churchill's step-father told him that he was the biggest failure of the long history of the Churchill family.

sixteen-year-old girl at a tailgating party and that's too damn bad, but it's the truth.

The whole country music scene has gotten completely homogenized, sanitized and trivialized. However, the pendulum is swinging.”

And Kinky is helping that pendulum swing with this new

ute to a close friend.

Another favorite on the album for me was “Sister Sarah.” I had to ask if there was any bit of truth in the song.

“Well, yeah, that one is about Sarah. So, it is real and saying goodbye to the girl in the peach colored dress was real. Miss Texas 1986 was the great love of my

Kinky Friedman, The Kinkster, has worn many different hats in his lifetime and I wanted to know which hat fit the best.

He paused before he answered, “I think the one experience I enjoyed the most was being a songwriter in Nashville back before it became a corporate



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—KINKY FRIEDMAN

He was angry because he was old and dying and all these young people, including Winston, were running around doing their bullshit.

“That irritates old people. I'm irritated by young people even now. And you know what? They like me for it.”

Switching gears, Kinky spoke about his popularity in Europe.

“In Germany, I've become like their new David Hasselhoff. I'm very popular with young people over there.”

Back to the album.

“I DECIDED IF IT AIN'T broke, break it. I was going to go against every rule. It doesn't matter if people think the record is tragic or wrong or the subject matter is too intelligent for them.

Country music today consists of getting a committee together and writing a song about a

album of songs that you can hear the lyrics and think about them while he's singing.

“Back to Grace” was a song that fit that description with multi-dimensional lyrics.

“Now I'm tumbling down the subway steps/Mumbling to myself/If life's a twelve-step program/I just bounced off number twelve...” It is a mixed paradox of grace from a religious aspect and a woman named Grace.

The title track of the CD “Circus of Life” talks of life's tragedies, dying candles of youth and regrets.

With signature accordion licks from the legendary Augie Meyers, “A Dog Named Freedom,” like many other songs on the album has layered meanings written between the lines.

“Copper Love” has an almost bluegrass feel with predominate mandolin and an uplifting trib-

life. So, all the love songs, are for her.”

The Kinkster lives

HOW FITTING THAT THIS album includes a tribute song to Willie Nelson with “Autographs in the Rain.”

Kinky said, “That's something I saw Willie do. There was a long line of people waiting to get his autograph. It started raining and Willie just stayed there, and they stayed. And, I saw him do that a number of times. And also, anytime I've ever asked anything of Willie, he's always said yes. He's never said no to the Kinkster. Well, there was one time when he said no.

“I asked him to be on some program with me and he said, ‘Find another sucker.’ So only one time has he told me no. This song was my thank you note to Willie.”

brothel. There was something really pure and beautiful about that and I miss it.”

In closing, he left me with one story and another bit of Kinkster wisdom.

He said, “It's not the pot of gold. It's the rainbow.”

What a deeply profound thought. We often miss the rainbow that is real while looking for the pot of gold that is imaginary.

“I just spoke to a thousand Green Berets and Special Forces guys at a convention in El Paso,” Kinky said. “I read them the story about my dad, ‘The Navigator.’ And, afterwards, a young guy in a wheelchair told me this. ‘If you want to thank a veteran, be an American worth fighting for.’”

On that last thought, I'll remind everyone that *Circus of Life* is available and visit kinkyfriedman.com for his latest scheduled performances.