

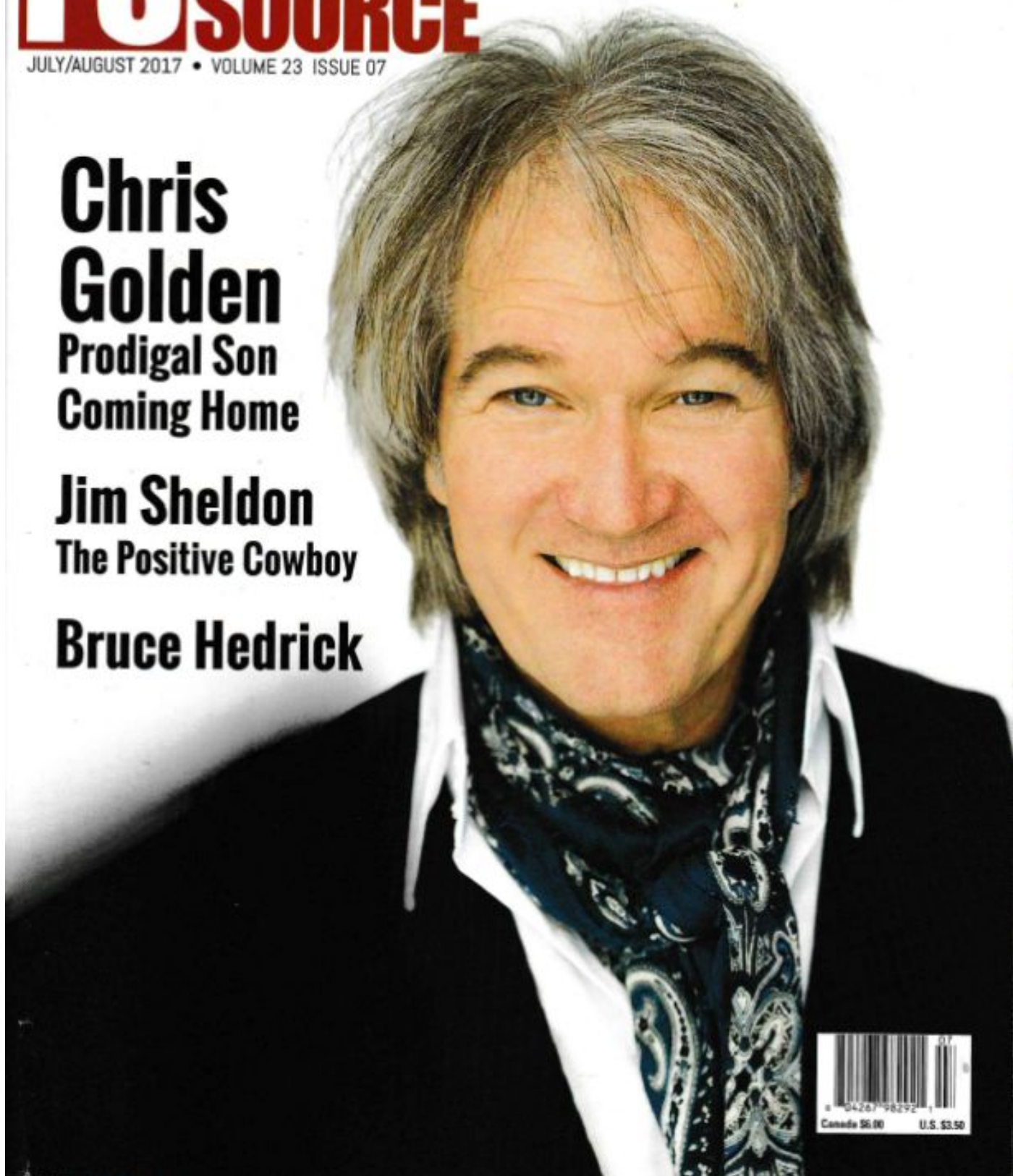
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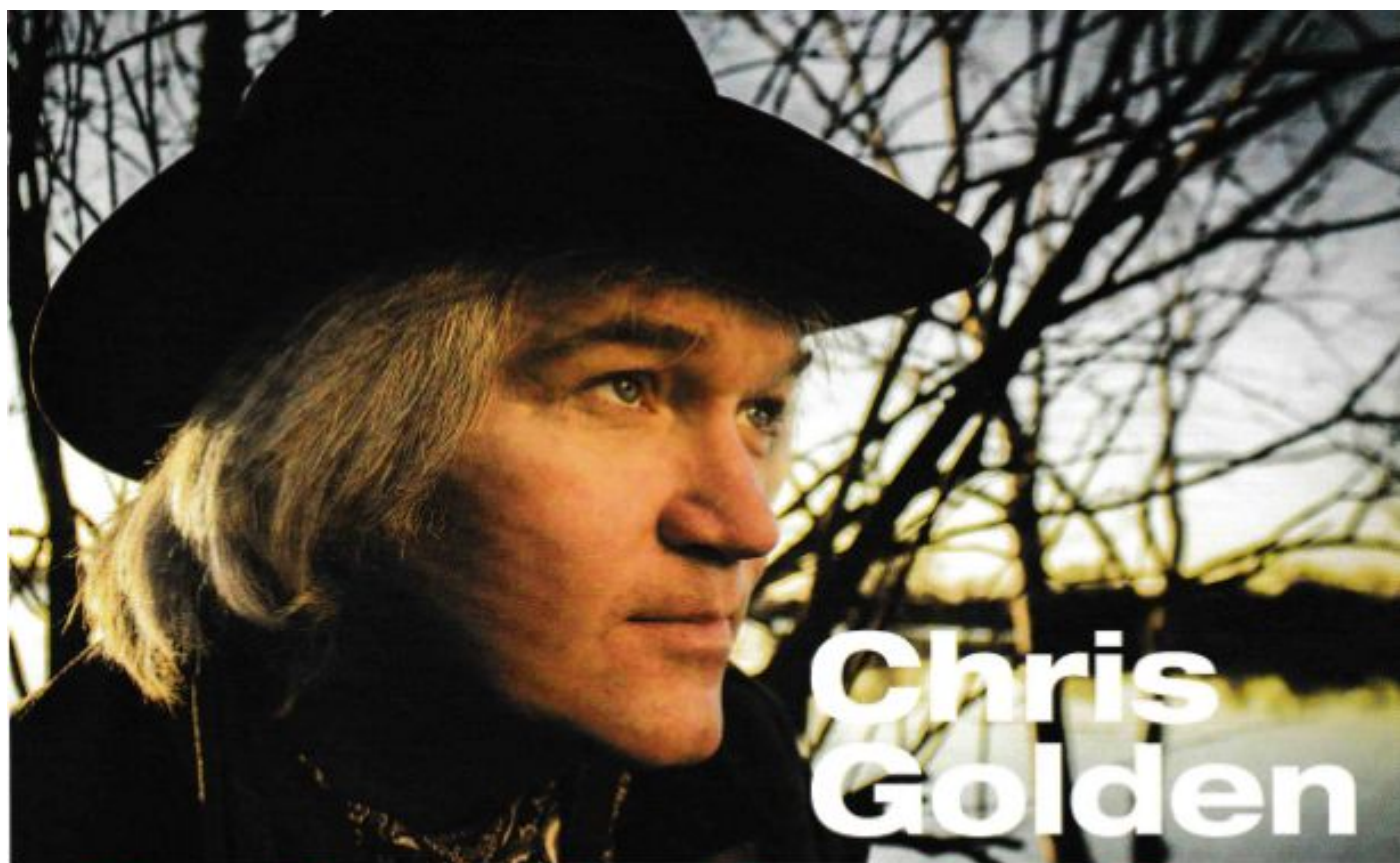
Chris Golden
Prodigal Son
Coming Home

Jim Sheldon
The Positive Cowboy

Bruce Hedrick



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Prodigal Son Coming Home

By Amber Abendroth

When Chris Golden walks into a room, people take notice. You can tell music runs through his veins. Far more importantly, this talented singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist delivers the music of a true artist with a voice that has been described as being like “warm honey.” His passion for music truly shines when he is on stage. Chris always says, “My mission and motto is: Play for the One who gave you the gift.” And, that motto shows in all that he does.

Billboard once stated, “For a select few individuals making music comes as naturally as breathing; Golden is one of those gifted souls.” When you consider his background, it really comes as no surprise. Born into a rich musical legacy as the son of William Lee Golden of the legendary Oak Ridge Boys, he knew early on that he wanted to follow in his dad’s footsteps. He recalls, “From an early age, I was surrounded by music on both sides of the family, and it was something that came very easy to me.”

Today, Chris is having success in various areas of his career performing at a variety of venues and receiving rave reviews on his latest album *Less Of Me* and its debut single “On The Sunny Banks.” The album beautifully showcases the

most important things in his life: God, his family, and music. A surprising and unique element of this album is that Chris personally provided most of the instrumentation, as he does on all his projects. Even more surprising is that he’s never taken any musical lessons; his ability to hear something a few times, and then play it, is clearly a gift from God. This particular album features all his children (Elizabeth, Elijah, and Rebekah), with Elizabeth playing fiddle on the project as well. Chris expresses, “I have been singing most of these songs live for some time but had never put any of them on an album. A highlight for me was having my father and daughter joining me on ‘Thank God For Kids.’ I cannot think of a more appropriate song for three generations to sing together ... Producing a Gospel project was just a natural progression; I always knew that I would. Working with my children has been the highlight of this new chapter of my life. They don’t always get to travel with me, but when we share the stage, it is magical.”

It has been a long, exciting, and, at times, difficult journey to bring Chris to the place he is today. In elementary school, he was already

learning to play drums, piano, and guitar. His musical path was not only shaped by his father, but also his mother's side of the family who Chris states, "rarely gets credit." He continues, "My mother was one of eight brothers and sisters who all played and sang. Her father, my grandfather, played fiddle. Music was a part of every family get together. On my dad's side, my Aunt Lanette and Uncle Rayford played and sang with me. My oldest brother Rusty started playing drums, and I guess a part of me wanted to be like him. One time we were fighting for the sticks, and my dad took me upstairs and taught me 3-4 chords on the guitar. He showed me I could play 'You Are My Sunshine,' 'This Land Is Your Land,' and 'Hound Dog' and encouraged us to play together."

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you the gift."**

While growing up in Tennessee, he spent summers on his grandparent's farm in south Alabama, working the fields and singing in church, which helped him develop a great appreciation for strong family harmonies and a steadfast work ethic. He recalls, "My grandmother used to tell me, 'Do what you love for a living, and you will never work a day in your life.'"

By fifteen, he was touring the Southern Gospel circuit playing piano for The Telestials. Then, upon graduating high school, he began touring with his brother Rusty and The Boys Band. They recorded an album for the Elektra/Asylum label and had a Pop hit that stayed in the *Billboard* top 100 for eight weeks. By eighteen, he had signed on with the popular Canadian band Cedar Creek for a successful stint. The following year, he stepped out from behind the drums and made his lead vocal debut on *Hee Haw*.

In 1995, Chris began performing with the Oak Ridge Boys playing "whatever's left," from guitar, mandolin, and harmonica, to filling in on the drums. Then, from 1997-2014, he became their full-time drummer. On his blog, he stated, "It was a bittersweet farewell. Playing and traveling with the Oak Ridge Boys was more than a job; it was



the world I grew up in. I have to say looking back, I never intended to be there so long, but I found it hard to jump off a moving train. I logged 3,000 plus shows and over a million miles. (That is a lot of 'mau mau's) ..."

When asked if there was a profound moment that put him on the path he's on today, he explained where his motto came from. While halfway through a six-week Christmas tour with the Oak Ridge Boys, Chris was facing a very tough time — something he'd never experienced before. Despite the beautiful sold-out theaters, he was left feeling unfulfilled and going through a terrible phase of self-doubt, loneliness, and depression. Chris said, "I missed my family, wanted to go home, questioned my gift, and thought about giving up on music altogether. I went to check my gear when I saw a figure on the third row. I asked if the room was 'dark,' a phrase often used when





there is a break and no one is on stage ... He said, 'Don't you have enough light around you?' Then, the man approached the stage and said he liked drums. I immediately replied, 'Well, I'm not just a drummer. I play other instruments. I sing, but you won't be hearing that tonight. In fact, they're getting ready to roll out a big fireplace in front of me. You won't even see me. (Ego)'" He didn't realize the man had followed him to the lobby. Chris shares, "He startled me when I turned and saw him. He replied, 'I didn't mean to scare you, but I felt I needed to speak with you ... Man, you need

to quit playing for the people who pay to see the guys that write your check. Play for the One that gave you the gift.' It floored me. The hair on the back of my neck stood up. I was shaking and holding back tears when I asked if he was an angel. He simply smiled and replied, 'I am just a messenger.' I mentioned Hebrews 13:2 about entertaining angels unaware. He repeated, 'I am just a messenger.' He was my angel that day. I went straight to my drums, took out a Sharpie and wrote play for the One that gave you the gift on the snare drum. Every time I change one out, I write it again to remind me. It got me through the rest of the tour with vigor and became my motto. God puts people into our path when we need them most. I may not know if he was an angel until I get to Heaven, but I know Who sent him, and His timing was perfect."

With all of that under his belt, it is his recent solo work that best showcases his talents and his heart. He has released five critically acclaimed solo projects including *CenterStage*, which garnered rave reviews from *Billboard* magazine, and his Gospel offering *Sunday Shoes*, which was named *Power Source Magazine's* Album of the Month in 2011. That album was a powerful reflection of a journey that began with church and hard work in Tennessee and Alabama, continued through many trials in the entertainment industry, with both a stint in Country and Rock music, then finally brought him back to his roots. At the time, Chris expressed his need to "polish up those *Sunday Shoes* that have become scuffed through the years."

When asked what he'd be doing if he wasn't an artist, he replied, "I would have to at least be around music. There are so many jobs associated with it ... from record producer, engineer, manager, promoter, publicist, booking agent, driver, travel agent, road manager, roadie, swag seller, video director, photographer ... I've had to do every one of those things. I love producing, radio, and television." Chris added, "One of the most fun things I've ever done was host a web-based series called *Late Night Nashville*, where I interviewed three to five guests from multiple genres in front of a live studio audience. We shot thirteen

episodes and featured both established performers and up-and-coming acts."

In addition, Chris has some impressive production credits. In 2000, he produced his father's CD Box set, *My Life's Work*. And, in 2012, he produced his daughter Elizabeth's debut album and video which gained national exposure on *The Country Network* and *ZUUS Country*. Chris shares, "Producing an album for my daughter was so natural. I feel God had His hand on it from the beginning.

It started out as a little project to give to grandparents and relatives for Christmas, mostly fiddling. She had started singing; so we picked a few vocal songs to go on it as well. She has always played fiddle and sang ... So, her parts didn't take nearly as long as mine did, LOL ... All three of my children are extremely talented and have music of their own available."

Entering the world of Gospel music was a natural transition. He explains the comradery he experienced within the genre, "When I first started out on my Gospel journey three-and-a-half years ago, Greg McDougal was an encourager and got me my first couple of gigs. He still checks in on me from time to time to see how I am doing, not just musically but personally, and has prayed with me. Music is my life, my gift, my love ... and I feel like I would be turning my back on my calling if I didn't keep doing this. I



was blessed to know my calling from an early age, and I am grateful to be able to do what I do."

He continued, "I've been honored with some amazing experiences, like playing the White House with the Oak Ridge Boys, playing the Trump Inauguration with Alabama, having a solo performance at the Ryman Auditorium to a packed house, and many others ... But, my all-time favorites would be the times I've gotten to share the stage with my children."

When asked what the future holds for him, Chris stated, "I plan to keep singing and making music as long as the Good Lord gives me breath. I hope that I can make a difference using the gifts He's given me. My desire is to touch someone, reach someone, give them hope, faith, encouragement, love, and most of all, to give them Jesus."

He continued, "We have at least two more singles coming off of the *Less Of Me* album, along with a new music video. I plan to release a new album in early 2018. My fall dates include the Gaither Fall Festival, NQC, another trip to Upstate New York, and more Christmas shows. I am also very excited to be in the studio working with Elaine Roy from The Roys on her new solo project. Producing is a passion of mine, and I plan to be doing more of it with select clients."

He and his children Elizabeth, Rebekah, and Elijah live near Nashville. For more information on Chris Golden including his music, booking, and touring schedule, visit ChrisGolden.net. **PS**



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