

biography

the gary bennett story



Music has always been at the heart and soul of award-winning musician Gary Bennett. He was born October 9, 1964 in Las Vegas, Nevada to country music loving parents. After living in Conroe, Texas for the first 5 years of his life, and a year more in southern California, the family settled in the small Northwest logging town of Cougar, Washington. Nestled at the foot of Mt. St. Helens, Cougar had only about a hundred people there at the time.

Gary attended a grade school of about 25 kids that spanned first through fifth grades. It could very well have been the last of the “two room school” era. It was here that he learned to play the guitar, taught by his schoolteacher.

Always a “deep thinker” even at an early age, Gary immediately took a great interest in and excelled at music. At age 8 he wrote his first songs – which were gospel tunes -- and performed them in his local church.

By age 16, Gary was playing Bass for a gospel band from a nearby town, and began to get a taste of the musician’s life on the road.

After high school and a series of logging jobs, Bennett began performing as a solo act in his hometown bars every weekend, playing the traditional country songs he had learned as a boy from his parents’ record collection, along with a growing repertoire of original songs

He eventually answered a classified ad in a Portland, Oregon newspaper which threw him directly into a full-time job with a Portland Band. For the next few years, Gary trudged around the local circuit. Bennett eventually formed his own band with nephew Jason Capps and another ex-logger turned full time musician, Lin Poulson. They were received well, but Gary knew that in order to really succeed in the music business, he had to be where the business was.

In 1993, he loaded his pickup truck and headed for Nashville. Unfortunately, he arrived at a time when “real country music” had been all but forgotten.

After attending many fruitless songwriter nights, Gary began hanging out in the honky-tonks in the historic “Lower Broadway” area of downtown Nashville. “I decided though it was a destitute scene, it was also wide open for something to happen there,” he reminisced. Within a month, Bennett took a solo gig at a bar there. Eventually, he fronted a band at Roberts’ Western World, a boot store by day, honky-tonk by night. It was about this time that he met Chuck Mead, a singer-songwriter from Lawrence, Kansas, and the rest as they say, is history.

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bio/cont.

The two formed a band and after various personnel changes, it became "BR549". Less than six months after arriving in Nashville, they were on their way to becoming the darlings of Music City. BR549 graced the cover of Billboard Magazine before they even had a record deal. The industry magazine hailed them as having single-handedly revived the soul of country music in Nashville. Shortly thereafter, the group was hounded by every major record label in town, eventually signing with Arista Records.

Within the next seven years, the band received three Grammy nominations and countless industry awards.



Several world tours and five albums later (four with Arista, and one for Sony), Gary grew restless of the constant traveling. He felt as though the musical freedom BR549 once enjoyed had become stagnant due to the "retro" pin tagged to them. In 2002, Bennett made a decision to step away from the group and let his head clear.

"I took a couple of jobs just doing regular things," revealed Gary. "I was a "loader" for Home Depot, did a paper route, you know just to prove to myself I was still the same ol' country boy inside." Bennett's hiatus from the music world was short lived. "Getting back in touch with real people in the real world gave me the inspiration to start writing again," he smiled.

In 2004, Gary endured a double tragedy when his friend and musical "soul brother" Lin Poulson, was killed in a car crash in Nashville only a week after the murder of his nephew, Christopher Capps, in Beaumont, Texas. The incidents had a profound effect on his outlook. "It's been the darkest funk of my life. When death comes so close to you, it forces you to re-evaluate your own life, to contemplate your own mortality and your purpose here. There is no time to waste," he reflected. "I know that music was given to us to smooth the rough, bumpy road of life," Bennett says. "I believe that whether I'm walkin' down the sidewalk, or on a stage, my purpose is to try and help people. Songwriting is what I've been given. But, it's a thing you have to give away to be able to keep. If you put things down in a nice way that people can really enjoy and relate to, it makes them feel better."

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Gary is now back in the recording studio with what he feels is his best "pile of songs" to date. At his side is top notch producer, R.S. Field and a handful of musicians whose names look like a list of "who's cool" in Music City, all toting impressive track records themselves, having toured and recorded with the likes of Emmylou Harris, Lucinda Williams, Brian Setzer, Billy Joe Shaver and many others.

The result, a CD expected in the spring of 2005, will be his first solo effort since coming to Nashville. ♦