

INTERNATIONAL COUNTRY GOSPEL MUSIC
ASSOCIATION

Local man takes two awards

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Tylerite Wins Big Awards

Musician Gets Country Gospel Album, Video of Year This Month

By REBECCA HOEFFNER, Staff Writer
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Christian music artist and Tyler resident Terry Davis won two prestigious awards during the 55th annual International Country Gospel Music Association's Gold Cross Awards Earlier this month.

Davis won Album of the year for his newest album "The House is Not Empty" and video of the year for the song "Boots and All."

"I was backstage as a presenter when they announced album of the year," Davis said. "I was shocked; that's a big competition."

Gospel music has always been a part of Davis' life, he said.

"I began singing in church when I was 4 or 5 years old," he said. "I took to it like a duck to water. My father owned small town restaurants in Mt. Vernon, Ala., and he always had me up on tables singing."

Davis served as worship leader at Landmark Baptist Church in Tyler for 10 years. He is president and owner of U.S. Merit Inc. and oversees several restaurants in Tyler.

Davis credits Tommy Smith, of Tyler, owner of Canyon Creek Records, with giving him the courage to allow his songs to be played on radio waves.

"I'm very critical of my singing and songwriting; I'm more confident in my ability to minister," Davis said. "Tommy believed in me."

Davis will open for Buddy Jewel on Aug. 27 at a benefit concert for tornado victims at Caldwell Auditorium.

Terry Davis was dabbling in music and ministry while going to college in 1981 when he stumbled across a man with a ministry and a Burger King franchise.

Today Davis has his own ministry and franchises, several, as a matter of fact, including ones in Marshall, Kilgore, Henderson and Tyler.

Davis, who records on the Canyon Creek Label, recently won the International Country Gospel Association's Album of Year and also Video of the "Year for Boots and All." Now that his businesses are more or less running themselves "with good people in place," Davis said he feels like he has more time to pursue his singing ministry.



"I was going to be in ministry whether I was singing or not," said the urban Christian cowboy. "And I was going to be singing whether I was in the restaurant business or not

- it just might not have been to more of an audience than my wife and shower curtain."

In 2007 Davis released "The House Is Not Empty," which made a splash on the gospel chart, but didn't break the No. 1 spot (in Christian Voice Magazine).

"Josh (Turner) had 'Long Black Train' on the charts at that time. It was on the number one spot for quite a while. He deserves it - it's a good song," Davis said. Chuckling almost under his breath, he added, "But he could have gotten out it for just one week."

Davis will perform at Your Brother's Keeper Benefit along with the Blackwood Quartet, Buddy Jewel, Tommy Smith, Melani Walker and Joe Arview and Thunder, meant to raise money for the people whose homes, businesses and lives were impacted by the tornado devastation in Joplin, Mo., and other states in May. Smith, who is producing the concert, said he has Davis to thank for it.

"He is a major sponsor," Smith said. "This is something he would never tell you himself, but he sponsors a lot of Christian music. He was doing that for a long time before I even knew he could sing. I found out he could sing by accident and told him he needed to be a label."

If you go:

What: Your Brother's Keeper Benefit

Where: Caldwell Auditorium,
300 S. College Ave., Tyler

When: 6:30 p.m. Aug. 27

Contact: (903) 566-3347

Davis' new CD, "It's Amazing," is being pressed and is due to come out "just any day now," Davis said. The breakout song of the CD, "It's Amazing What God Can Do," is No. 8 on Christian Voice Magazine charts, Smith said.

Davis, who said he has played at several Longview area venues, said he is trying to take the message to the people.

"I play at fairs, family reunions, churches and festivals...either good, clean country or gospel music," he said, "If they

won't let me play my gospel music, then I don't need to sing there. I haven't had a problem with that, though. No one has turned it away. In fact, several churches have requested a mix of gospel and country music, especially for dances."

In addition to his music career and businesses, Davis is involved in several charities, including Meals on Wheels and Court Appointed Special Advocate.

"I believe in charities that feed people or involve children," he said. "Spreading the gospel is more than talking about God's love or singing about Jesus. It means taking care of his flock."

That's how Davis got involved with the Rev. James Dill and Shepherd's Heart Ministry, which seeks to mentor pastors and their families dealing with the stresses of ministry life as well as to train and equip them to minister to others suffering from burnout, depression, grief and other serious issues.

"(Davis) is a businessman but he is a Christian first, with a heart for the hurting" Dill said. "He has been gracious enough to provide Shepherd's Heart with the use of a 12,000 square foot building. He pays the electric bill and utilities. This has been huge, absolutely huge, for this ministry."

The reverend will serve as interim pastor at New Heights Church of God in Longview.

