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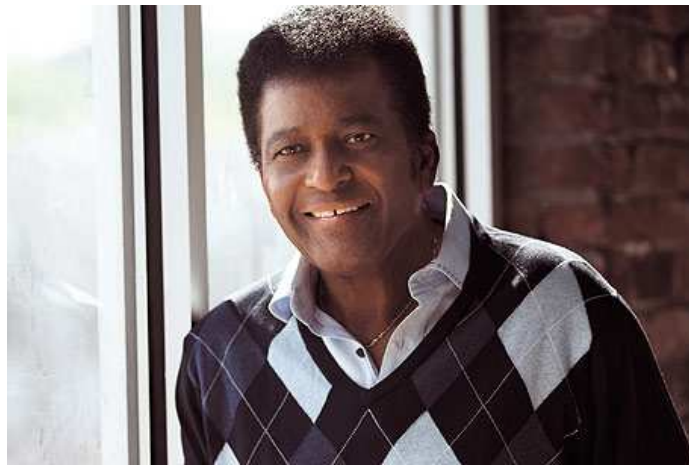
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AOL ORIGINAL

Charley Pride Hits Another Home Run With 'Choices'

Posted Mar 8th 2011 3:45PM by Deborah Evans-Price Comments [0]

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Ben DeRienzo

If there's one thing [Charley Pride](#) enjoys as much as making music, it's playing baseball. This spring, the country music veteran is indulging his passion for both. He's releasing a new, self-produced collection of country songs, 'Choices,' and he's been training with his beloved Texas Rangers.

"I'm going to show them how good a hitter I used to be," Charley tells *The Boot*.

Early in life, his ultimate goal was to hold the record for hitting the most home runs. "Every kid has a dream and my dream was to go to major league and break the records by the time I was 35 or 36 years old and then go sing. That was my dream and then when I didn't make it, I said I'll just buy my own club and put my self on the roster." Now I've been blessed enough to be a part of a group that has bought the Rangers."

Though he's known as one of the greatest country singers of all time, Charley came closer to realizing his baseball dreams than most kids who pick up a ball and glove. One of 11 children in a poor sharecropping family, Charley grew up in tiny Sledge, Miss., with a deep love for sports. His athletic prowess earned him a spot on the Negro American League's Memphis Red Sox.

He tried out for the New York Mets, but a career in baseball just wasn't his destiny. Instead [Chet Atkins](#) signed him to RCA Records and in January 1966, his first single, 'The Snakes Crawl at Night,' began climbing the chart.

Since then the Country Music Hall of Famer has become one of the industry's legendary hitmakers, responsible for such classics as 'All I Have to Offer You (Is Me),' 'Kiss an Angel Good Morning,' 'Burgers and Fries' 'Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone?' and 'Crystal Chandeliers.' He's scored 36 No. 1 hits and sold more than 70 million records. He's a three-time Grammy winner and member of the Grand Ole Opry.

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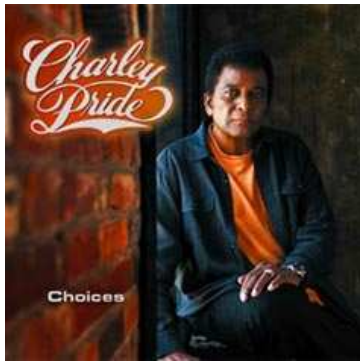
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'Choices,' which hits the streets March 8, is his first album of new material in five years. In recording 'Choices,' Charley again turned to some of the writers responsible for his legendary hits. Ben Peters, who penned 'Kiss an Angel Good Morning,' wrote the beautiful ballad 'Except for You.' "I've recorded so many of Ben's songs and that's one I just think is wonderful. I love the words. He's such a good writer."

Ted Harris, who wrote 'Crystal Chandeliers,' contributes 'The Choices She Made,' 'You Can't Sit Still' and 'You Touched My Life.' "The best songs

that I could find, that's what I was looking for," says Charley, praising the talents of his old friends.

"We cherry-picked and that's why I feel the album is such a good album. We picked the best that we could out of the 20 some that we had."

'Choices' includes 'Cajun Party Time,' written by [Eddy Raven](#) and veteran Music Row publisher Charlie Monk. 'Miss My Home' was written by Burton Collins, Bruce Wallace and Charley's youngest son, Dion Pride. "He's been opening for me," says Charley. "He opened for me in Canada and in Ireland and he gets a standing ovation."

Charley and his wife, Rozene, have been married since 1956, and have raised three children, sons Dion and Kraig, and a daughter, Angela. "If there ever was any one meant for each other, then this is it," Charley says of his marriage to Rozene.

He also credits his wife with encouraging him to pursue his music. "When I met her she was a cosmetologist and then a lab technician. I picked cotton and grew up with an 11th grade education. I told her one day when I was working at this smelter up there in Montana, I said, 'I'm better than this,'" Charley recalls. "I'd see her go in her nice lab technician uniform and I felt kind of small, but I always felt I was better and I said that to her."

Rozene encouraged Charley as he pursued baseball and then a music career. "She's contributed so much to our success," he says. "She took care of the kids while I was out there trying to make it in this business and not only that, she used to keep all of the books and make sure all of the taxes were paid and all that kind of stuff before we were able to hire someone to do that."

Though Charley could easily sit back and rest on his laurels, he's just as excited about his career as ever. He's anxious for fans to hear 'Choices,' and he'll be maintaining a busy tour schedule this spring with upcoming dates in Oregon and North Dakota as well as numerous dates throughout Canada.

"My fans think I'm singing as good or better than I ever did," he says, "so why not keep doing it? It's not a burden. It's an enjoyment."

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