

# Q&A

# DWIGHT YOAKAM

Country's Renaissance man talks Buck, Lennon and cowboy hats.

There are cool country stars and then there is Dwight Yoakam. The twangy neo-traditionalist exudes a sense of hipness that other artists would empty their bank accounts for. Currently on a lengthy run through North America, Dwight, who released his latest album, *3 Pears*, in 2012, sat down with *Country Weekly* north of the border, at the Cavendish Beach Country Music Festival in Prince Edward Island, Canada. — TIFFANY THORNTON



Your mentor and friend Buck Owens once said you were a rebel and an individualist and that he liked that about you.

Would you agree?

**DWIGHT YOAKAM:**

Funny you mention him. I just wrote the [preface] for his autobiography. I was asked by Buck's sons and nephew, who now curate his estate. The last conversation I had with Buck was the Tuesday before he passed

[in March of 2006], and it was about him writing his autobiography. I said, "Absolutely, Buck, there's a great agent in New York City that's interested." He was ecstatic that there was somebody who cared. He thought that publishers wouldn't be interested and that he



Buck and Dwight



would have to self-publish.

Buck had been telling me the stories about his life that he had written down and recorded for the book. They also used a series of interviews he did from a couple of years before. They were able to

garner a lot of information in his own voice, which is touching at times for me. It's innocent and pure. It's unadulterated in its expression of what he came from. The Dust Bowl culture that blew him to the West Coast as a kid and that stayed with him. It's that Tom Joad element: that inner burning bit of displaced rejection that he felt.

That's part of the Bakersfield Sound.

In the [preface] I recounted a moment when he asked me if I knew what an "anomaly" was. I said, "Well, I probably know how to use it in a sentence, but I can't give you the dictionary definition." He said, "Why not? It's a number that keeps coming up inexplicably and that's what you are!" I will accept any of it as high praise coming from Buck.

The title track to *3 Pears* has some fun wordplay. Where'd that come from?

**DY:** [It] came to me one night after coming home from the studio. My girlfriend and I were in the kitchen and I looked up at the TV and the George Harrison documentary *Living in the Material World* was on. John Lennon is hamming it up for a film crew, mid- to late 1966, '67. He had three pairs of sunglasses on. I began lamenting his loss, and said out loud, "Three *pears* of glasses." I walked across the kitchen and kinda sang those first lyrics and wrote it down on a scrap of paper.

What plans do you have for the future in music and film?

**DY:** A few things are in the works. Some things involving TV may or may not come into fruition, we'll see. There is also a lot of performance of the *3 Pears* album and there is some alternative music surrounding *3 Pears* that may surface this year.

We heard you bought your trademark cowboy hat in 1979 for less than \$50. Is it still the same one you wear now?

**DY:** No, I retired it a couple of years ago, but I had worn that Manuel Cuevas hat for a long time. I don't know how much it cost; I can't quite remember. It wasn't \$50. It must have been around \$125, but I sure got my money's worth, though!



DWIGHT YOAKAM BY RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS/AMER. DWIGHT & BUCK COURTESY NEW WEST RECORDS; 3 PEARS COURTESY AMER. DWIGHT PERFORMANCE BY RANDALL MITCHELSON/ROGERS & COWAN