

Too Cool to be a Cowboy

Royal Wade Kimes puts the Western back in Country.

Forget all the clichés about singin' cowboys—some are just too hard to label, especially when they turn out to be a mix of Southern charm and true grit like Royal Wade Kimes.

If you're not hip to Kimes, then check out one of the fastest rising stars in the Country Western music world—a man who's adding up awards and recognition like Casey Tibbs collected trophy buckles.

What makes Kimes so compelling is his voice, as sensual as Marty Robbins and as sincere as Merle Haggard, and with the same distinctive drawl. His lyrics sound authentic because they are. *Cowboy Cool*, his latest CD, tells it like it is; some cuts are so hot they sizzle.

Raised on a ranch in Arkansas, Kimes punched cows as a kid and all through his teens. His music captures the essence of cowboy life in myth and reality, stories straight out of the Old West and the New. With understated style, he draws musical portraits of lawmen, fugitives, horses and women—a wide cast of characters. With a fresh pen, he probes his subject—a lover, loner, humble hero, anti-hero, coward or avenger—bringing new insights to an old story. As a result, his work feels familiar but totally new. On his latest CD, he even recorded his own version of Bob Dylan's "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," a song written for the 1973 movie *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* with Kris Kristofferson.

Four albums have given Kimes plenty of opportunity to say what's on his mind. Although he's recorded with Garth Brooks, don't look for reverb and heavy steel guitars. His tightly knit backup provides fiddle, keyboard, banjo, mandolin, percussion and bass, plus vocal duets, to great effect. Waltz



"Kimes with his saddle-sore and image-rich tunes makes bedrolls, startit skies and hard rides seem like something I'm missing," writes George Peden on CountryReview.com, which voted Royal Wade Kimes' Cowboy Cool CD as one of the top 10 CDs of 2004.

— COURTESY WONDERMENT RECORDS —



"humor needed."
OLD VAQUERO SAYING

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An artist in many mediums, Kimes discovered another talent late in his life. Drawing has become his second mode of self-expression. When faced with a personal crisis in his musical career a few years back that resulted in him taking personal control of his own recordings, he literally drew his way out of the funk. For nine months, he worked on an intricate pencil drawing of the Cattle Baron's stockyards that he eventually sold for \$15,000. The process launched a period of musical creativity equal in intensity. At his best, he does both extremely well. Most recently, designing jewelry has become another outlet, an effort he shares with his wife Nancy.

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Having survived the trials of Nashville and succeeded in the toughest arena of them all—the Country music industry—Kimes likes to call himself an outlaw. Johnny Cash did too. Kimes has beaten the odds, but he's not done—the West is what he wants to conquer next.

Intrigued by Border music and Southern Blues, Kimes evokes both on his favorite Ovation guitar. "I feel like my last CD broke new ground," he explains. "But my best is yet to come. Just watch. This year, I intend to tour small towns from Virginia to Colorado so I can meet the people. It's something I've always wanted to do."

Be there, America. You'll be glad you did.



Visit twmag.com to hear Royal Wade Kimes' tribute to Johnny Cash, "The White Horse."

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