

Q&A with Dolly Parton: 'I'm as old as yesterday and as new as tomorrow.'

Written by By TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
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A few weeks prior to the release of her latest record, "Blue Smoke," country music superstar Dolly Parton sat down to visit with journalists selected by her publicist.

During the 30-minute teleconference, Parton proved to be smart, dedicated and blessed with a delightful self-deprecating sense of humor.

According to her website, Parton is the most celebrated female country artist of all-time. Achieving 25 RIAA certified gold, platinum and multi-platinum awards, she has had 25 songs reach number 1 on the Billboard Country charts, a record for a female artist. She has 42 career top 10 country albums and 110 career charted singles over the past 40 years.

All-inclusive sales of singles, albums, hits collections, paid digital downloads and compilation usage during her Hall of Fame career have reportedly topped a staggering 100 million records world-wide. She has garnered 7 Grammy Awards, 10 Country Music Association Awards, 5 Academy of Country Music Awards, 3 American Music Awards and is one of only five female artists to win the Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year Award. Dolly was inducted as a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1999.

Here's a transcript of the pre-release interview.

Jill Wilderman - Spotlight Country: Talk about what's been most special about making this album.

Dolly Parton: Well, I always get excited with any and every album I do. I always think it's the best one yet.

I wake up with new dreams every day.

I wanted to do an album that really kinda had all the colors of my whole career.

That's why we have some bluegrass stuff, some gospel-flavored things, we have some mountain style.

I love choosing other people's songs, doing some cover things, so it was a special album to do. It was fun to do.

I get a chance to work with a lot of the same musicians who perform in my road show. That makes it even nicer because we all can get excited together, knowing that we're going to get to perform these songs together on stage. It's always fun just to write them, sing 'em and get up there and do 'em.

Michael Ragona – Huffington Post: When you look back at the young Dolly Parton and

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then the Dolly Parton that just made "Blue Smoke," what would tell the young one?

Dolly Parton: I'd tell her I'm pretty proud of her. When you get older, you really reflect and really think.

One of the things I think about it just how fortunate I've been to see my dreams come true. I know so many people who can't say that. There are people far more talented than me ... who have worked just as hard ... who came to town about the same time I did ... who never really made it big. You wonder. You go back.

Why Me, Lord. You think about all those things.

More than anything, I think that little girl who headed out from the Smoky Mountains that moved here back in 1964 to try and make those dreams come true and now here I am 68 years old and have seen so many of them come true.

What's so funny [is] I still feel like that little girl. I'm still dreaming big. I've still got new dreams I hope to come true. I've still got dreams to dream. I just love the music. I just love to write. I love to perform and I hope to being doing this until I keel over dead in about 30 years.

Dan MacIntosh – Roughstock: You wrote a lot of songs on this new album. Are there any particular songs on this record that you are most proud of?

Dolly Parton: It's like I've always said about my songs, they're my children. I hope to have them support me when I'm old. It's true. It's like your kids. You love them all. Some are a little more special. You can sense that and know that doesn't mean you love them less.

Some of the songs I really enjoy singing. "If I Had Wings." It's got that old world feeling. [It reminds me of] songs I used to sing growing up ... spiritual flavor to it.

I love the little song, "Miss You, Miss Me." It comes from a very personal place from something that's happening in my own family. I think so many people can relate to it because so many people are divorcing and the kids wind up suffering the most.

So, those two are real special to me, but I enjoy doing songs like the re-write, reworking of "Lay Your Hands on Me," the Bon Jovi song.

It's fun to get in and cover songs like the Bob Dylan "Don't Think Twice." It's always a challenge and it's always fun to experiment with new things.

Jessi Stone – The Mountaineer: What is touring like now compared to 30 years ago?

Dolly Parton: It's better now because I've already built an audience. I used to worry if anybody was going to show up. More than anything, it's a great relief. They're telling me tickets are selling really good.

It's fun for me still because I love the audience. I love to perform. Of course, I love to write songs. I love to get out on stage. I still enjoy it as much as I did in the old days.

□ **Terry Mathews - Sulphur Springs News-Telegram:** How do you get ready to tour?

Dolly Parton: That's a very good question. Most people don't think deep to think about what all goes into a tour.

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I tell you, it's a good year and a half's work before you hit the road. First of all you have to decide if you really want to do the tour. Second, you have to decide what you want the show to be. Then you've got get with your promoters and the people who try to sell it and see what time of year is the best time to go.

Then you've got to get in and work weeks and weeks and weeks rehearsing the show. It's only after you hit the road that you can really rest. [Laughter.]

I'm serious. I always think Lord, just let us get on the road so I can get some sleep.

Once you've got your lighting, your sound and your people, which is major, major work to be done by so many people; after that, all we have to do is a sound check in the afternoon and a show at night. The rest of the time, we can rest and read and write or whatever you want to do, but your show is together. It's a lot of work, but it's a joy.

□ **Lisa Iannucci – *My Body & More* magazine:** Sticking with the tour. What do you do, even though you have a lot of time to rest, what do you do to make sure you and your crew stay healthy on the road? And especially your voice, since you are travelling internationally.

Dolly Parton: That's a very good question, too. We travel overseas. We have our own caterer that's with us all the time. We really have a great chef/caterers that really provide really good food, in addition to junk, if we want it.

I don't have anything to do after the show. I rest my voice and read and lay around or write, where I don't really talk. I don't do interviews during the day when we are on the road, because I do have to rest my body and my voice, along with everybody else. We're all pretty health conscious because we're all older. We've worked together for a long time and we all know what we need to do.

There are some who get out and get rowdy. They pay the price, but they're younger. They can afford a hangover, but some of us can't.

Steve Batlin – *Grammy.com*: Grammys are well known for their performances. Who would be your dream collaborator on stage?

□ **Dolly Parton:** In Nashville, we have the famous Goo Goo Clusters, those chocolate and nut candies. I send them out to everyone. I always thought that me and Lady GaGa got together, we could be Goo Goo and GaGa. [Laughter.] That would be good on the Grammys.

Allison Hussey – *The Daily Tar Heel*:□ You framed "The Banks of the Ohio" differently. What made you want to rework the song?

Dolly Parton: I'm glad you asked that because all of my life, I've been singing that song and it was just an old folk ballad which they say is a true story, which is like so many of the old ones are. I've always liked it, but it was such a man song to me.

I decided that I was going to write a little part as if I was a journalist or reporter going in to interview somebody in the prison. I thought that would be a clever little way for me to say "he said, she said." It just seemed to me it would leave it more open for other women to sing it.

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If a woman decides to sign it, I hope they'll use it [that part I wrote].

□ **Laura Olsen – *Broken Records* magazine:** You fans range all ages. How do you stay so loved and relevant? You always seem to have your finger tapped into what people truly like and you stay honest in your work. How do you stay that way.

Dolly Parton: [Laugh.] First of all, people are always going to have the same heartaches, no matter what's going on in the world, whether it's our true feelings or faith in God or our faith in family ... our love for one another and our children.

I love life. I've kept a good attitude about it. Who knows why we are truly here, so I figure we need to make the most of everything while we're here.

I have just enough talent to get out there and make a living at it. I've always said I have more guts than talent.

I wanted to make a career out of doing this. I just love people and have allowed people to know me.

I think people think of me more as an aunt or sister because they've grown up with me. The reason I think I have a lot of young people because a lot of older ones have played my records.

With the little kids, [it's] my Imagination Library, where I give books out to children and that I was Hannah Montana's aunt on that very hip show, so that gave me a new audience. I just always manage to be on the job. I didn't want them to forget me, so I try to stay out front.

Jacob Elyachar – *Examiner.com*: "Blue Smoke" marks your 42nd studio album. How has the recording process changed over the course of your career?

□ **Dolly Parton:** Everything is so different since I first came to Nashville.

In 1964, when I came, it was so different. You'd go into the studio and do a three hour session with five songs. You'd just go from one song to the next.

You don't even have to be in the studio to record. With all the technology, you can sing from your living room.

But I still love to go into the recording studio with my band, which is mostly the same people that I travel with and some of the great musicians, especially out of Nashville. I still like doing it like we used to so we can keep that feel. I'm an old timer and I think all the new technology is wonderful, but I still love to feel the music and work with the musicians and get in there and sing and do it much like we used to.

I don't know if I would make it in this day and age if I was starting right now. I'm just thankful that I got in it early and I'm still hanging around.

Koko Ntuen – *Ladygunn* magazine: What do you do on your down time. What do you do to relax?

Dolly Parton: I'm very close to my family. Lot of time I'll babysit with my nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews. I live on a farm. They love to come out with me. We get on a golf cart and go all over the place. We pack a picnic lunch and go out in the field and have a

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little picnic. I love to read.

My husband and I have an RV and we go out every weekend and either pack a picnic or pick something up and go down on a riverbank and stuff.

I look like a party doll, but I don't do much partying.

Kevin Ott – *Columbia Daily Herald*: Your gospel cover really blessed me. Have you really experienced a miracle where God has done something like that?

Dolly Parton: Yes I have. I've seen it and I've felt it and I believe it. When we were growing up we were very poor. We couldn't get to go out and get a doctor every time we were sick. I remember my mom and my grandpa laying hands on the kids, and yes, I have seen some wonderful things. I have seen prayers answered. I grew up that way and I have a lot of faith.

God has been good to me through the years. I've had a lot of prayers answered on my behalf as well.



Michael Cook – *Out in Jersey*: The LGBT community has always been fans. We adore you. What do you think it is about the gay-lesbian community that keeps us coming back to you?

Dolly Parton: People pass judgment or whatever. I never did pass judgment on anybody. I love everybody.

In my early days, I was so condemned because of the way I looked or the way I acted or talked. Even now, I get a lot of that. I just look for the God-light in everybody. Everybody should shine with their own God light.

I don't think it's anybody's place to judge another. That's God's business who we are and God loves us all. I think people know I'm open and accepting of all God's people.

Mike Ragogna: You've been such a role model. What is your advice for new artists?

Dolly Parton: Well as I've often said, I try not to give advice, I just try to pass on some information.

But I think it's true with anything, like that old saying, "To thine own self be true," I think there's really so much to that, that people know what they really want, they know what their strength and their talent really is and I think you need to be willing to sacrifice that if you have to. You've got to protect it, you've got to fight for it and if you really are that good and you really have that much faith in it, if you really stay in it long enough changes are it will happen and if it don't I've always said, if you're really dreaming an impossible dream, you should know that it's okay to change dreams in the middle of a stream.

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If it's something that's not going to happen you can still rework it and apply what you've learned from the other stuff to a new dream.

Jacob Elyachar: Talk about social media.

Dolly Parton: It's a new day and age, that's for sure. You can cover more ground in 10 minutes in this day and time than you use to in 10 years. I think it's great that people are aware. I try to surround myself with younger, talented people.

I'm as old as yesterday, but as new as tomorrow. I try to get myself in a good position so I can get my message out.



KoKo Ntuen: Name greatest loves of your life.

Dolly Parton: My husband. I will be with my husband 50 years in May. [We] married 48 years ago this May. [He] definitely is my greatest love. I've known some great loves.

Everything is not a love affair, but I've had a relationship with so many people through the years.

My love for Kenny Rogers, our friendship and our business relationship as singers. That's been a great love through the years. It was never romantic, but it was passionate and loving.

I'm had some wonderful people in my life down through the years.

Lisa Iannucci: Do you have a routine in writing?

Dolly Parton: I write all kinds of ways. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and write something down that I've dreamed. Or if I'm taking a bath, I keep a tape recorder or note pad somewhere.

Flying, I carry note pads and recorder so I don't miss a melody. I can write anywhere, anytime for any reason.

But my favorite thing to do is to plan in advance – I'm taking off two weeks and do nothing but writing. Don't bother me. Don't call me. I don't want to hear from nothing or nobody. I love to either go up to my old mountain home or go to my big house and really kind of get in the spirit and really just let it flow and just write, write, write, write, write until I get tired of it and then I come back home. Usually I will take off my set of long acrylic nails so I can really play guitar.

When I'm all done, I come back home and get a new set of phony nails put back on and get back at it.

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The moderator said, "We have time for one more [question]."

No one spoke, so Parton piped up:

"If y'all have nothing to ask, I have something to tell. Yes, they're real –they're real big."

There was a huge round of laughter. Then, she was gone.