

## CHARLIE LOUVIN

The term “living legend” gets thrown around quite a bit, but it actually applies to Country Music Hall of Famer Charlie Louvin.

The magical harmonies and depth of feeling found on Louvin Brothers recordings of the 50's and 60's inspired a new generation of musicians, firmly establishing the Louvins' stature as one of the most influential duos in country music history.

In 2006, Tompkins Square label owner Josh Rosenthal reached out to Charlie about making his first new studio album in 10 years. Rosenthal enlisted Mark Nevers, who engineered many country records and produced Calexico, Lambchop, and Candi Staton. Rosenthal says, “I wanted someone who understood Charlie's connection to a new generation of artists, and who could put together interesting collaborations. We chose some of the most important

Louvin Brothers songs as well as early country classics.” Guests on the album include Elvis Costello, George Jones, Jeff Tweedy, Will Oldham, Tom T. Hall, Tift Merritt, Marty Stuart, Bobby Bare Sr., David Kilgour, members of Bright Eyes, Lambchop, Clem Snide, Superchunk and more. Louvin enjoyed the experience. “Mark Nevers is one of the best engineers I've ever worked with. My brother and I cut our teeth on some of those old songs and they influenced us tremendously. I'm glad we're able to remind people of them.”

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Charlie was born July 7, 1927 in Henager, Alabama. He and his older brother Ira worked as field hands on the family farm. In the evening, they would listen to the country hits of the day on their father's Victrola. Inspired by the tight-harmony duets of The Delmore Brothers, Monroe Brothers and Blue Sky Boys, the brothers began developing a distinctive style called “shape note singing” based on gospel harmonies they had learned in church.

The duo nailed down steady work in the 40's on local radio stations in Knoxville and Memphis. They also toured heavily in Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee during this period. On one swing through Dyess, Arkansas, Charlie remembers an encounter with a teenager named Johnny Cash. “We were playing with Eddie Hill. I was selling tickets and I saw this young man standing outside alone. I asked him to show me where the bathroom was. As we walked back, he noticed I had two soda crackers in my shirt pocket. He asked me why, and I said, ‘to keep from starving to death.’ I invited him in to the show – I could tell he didn't have any money. Years later in his book (Man In Black, 1975); he said he always ate two soda crackers before he went on stage.” Cash also recalls the date in an intro to his version of the Louvin's “When I Stop Dreaming” on the recent Columbia/Legacy release, Personal File.

The Louvins scored their first record deal with Apollo in 1947, released a single on Decca in 1949, and recorded 12 sides for MGM in 1951 and 1952. One of those sessions took place with Hank Williams waiting outside for his turn in the studio. Their recording and performing schedule was sporadic due to Charlie's military service during the Korean War. Upon his return to the States, they began recording for Capitol Records, which remained their label home until the brothers parted ways in 1963.

Marking a shift from gospel to secular material, the Louvins scored their commercial breakthrough in 1955 with the top ten hit “When I Stop Dreaming.” They toured in early 1955 with soon-to-be superstar

Elvis Presley as their opening act, and became members of the Grand Ole Opry. From 1955 through 1962, the Louvin Brothers churned out 12 hits on the Billboard country chart, including “I Don't Believe You've Met My Baby,” “You're Running Wild,” “Cash On The Barrelhead” and “Knoxville Girl.” Although the Louvins hit machine had slowed by the early 60's, they instead created a string of themed albums, cult favorites that still resonate with today's alt-country audience, including A Tribute to the Delmore Brothers and Satan Is Real. By 1963, with a shifting marketplace and interpersonal tensions mounting, the Louvin Brothers parted ways. Ira released his lone solo album, The Unforgettable Ira Louvin, in 1964. He died in a car crash in Missouri on June 20, 1965.

Charlie's solo career began in 1964 with the top five hit “I Don't Love You Anymore,” and he followed it with six Billboard-charting singles from 12 Capitol LPs. By the late 60's, a renewed interest in the music of the Louvin Brothers began to take shape.

The Louvins' continued legacy is at least partly attributed to Gram Parsons, who, according to legend, paid people to scour LA record shops looking for their out-of-print sides. His versions of Louvins classics “The Christian Life” from the Byrds' Sweetheart of the Rodeo, or “Cash on the Barrelhead” from Greivous Angel, serve as the blueprint for so much “alt-country” that was to follow. Emmylou Harris' first hit was the Louvins' “If I Could Only Win Your Love.” Uncle Tupelo covered “Great Atomic Power” on their third album, March 16-20, 1992. “The Christian Life” has been worked into The Raconteurs' live set recently.

The Louvin Brothers were inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in October 2001.

In 2003, Charlie was invited to open on a national tour with Cheap Trick and Cake. That year also saw the release of Livin', Lovin' Losin': Songs of the Louvin Brothers on Universal South, a Louvin Brothers tribute album featuring James Taylor, Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, and Johnny Cash among others. The collection went on to win two Grammy Awards in 2004.

Charlie will embark on a national tour with his band in 2007, including special appearances to celebrate his 80th birthday (July 7 th, 2007). Release Date: February 20th, 2007

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