

FISHIN' WITH MERLE

BOBBY JOHN HENRY



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ABOUT BOBBY

Bobby John Henry, known in Nashville as "The Baker of Music Row" is a singer, musician, businessman and prolific songwriter. He has over half a century in the music industry and an impressive catalog of songs. He is a man of many interests who has stepped in and out of the industry to pursue many other goals. Now, at 81 years old he is jumping back into the music business. He wrote a get-well song for his friend Merle Haggard back in 2015 called Fishin' With Merle. He made an iPhone video and sent it to Merle before he passed away. A new version of that song will be released in the next few months.



THE STORY OF BOBBY AND MERLE

The first version of "Fishin' with Merle/Praying for Merle" was originally intended just as a get-well song and fan letter to my friend and one of my hero's Merle Haggard, who had been having serious health problems for a couple years.

Summertime in Bakersfield always centered around that fun, but dangerous Kern River. Our friends Oscar Whittington, a great fiddle player had a club called Democrat Hot Springs, and we spent a lot of time sitting in with the bands and having fun on the Kern. When I was off the road I'd play shows at the Inn and we rehearsed every night after work. Merle would come in late and practice playing that fiddle with my band.

Looking back, I realized I never really told him how great he was and what an influence he'd been in my life. I spent the best part of a year writing this song about Merle and fishing in those roaring waters of the Kern, sitting on a river bank talking music to the man. Ironically, Merle spent that same year writing his last song "The Kern River Blues", a song about the Kern River being dry which was one of the reasons he left Bakersfield.

I recorded this song at Jay's Place on Music Row on April 6th, 2016. As we finished, it came over the news that the Corp of Engineers in California had released the water from Lake Isabella and the Kern River was roaring wild again down the canyon to Bakersfield. Ten minutes later it came on the radio that Merle Haggard had passed away. It was surreal.



ALL OF US WERE STUNNED. IT TOOK ME A MONTH TO GET MY BEARINGS. I BEGAN TO THINK HOW MY DREAM OF FISHING WITH MERLE WAS A METAPHOR.

THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF YOUNG SINGERS AND WRITERS THAT WERE INFLUENCED BY THIS MAN'S EXTRAORDINARY GRASP OF THE HUMAN CONDITION. HE ALSO HAD THE MAGIC TO TOUCH US WITH HIS FANTASTIC VOICE AND MUSICIANSHIP. I THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT THIS SONG IS ALL ABOUT. IT TOOK ME OVER A YEAR TO REWRITE THIS NEW "FISHIN WITH MERLE".

**NOW, I'M STILL WISHING
I WAS FISHIN' WITH MERLE...**