

Black Country Artist Trini Triggs

Not since the legendary Charley Pride has country music made way for a black superstar. But popular new singer Trini Triggs is looking for room at the top as his talent, good looks, and charm win more fans every day.

Of all the popular music forms in America today, country music often is called the most ethnically homogenous - with virtually all white performers and fans. Triggs was well aware of the color barrier when he took his country music act on the road in the early 1990s. He tested the waters by booking himself into the honky-tonks of small, remote towns throughout Texas. "There were a few stares at first," he says, "but as soon as I started to play, it didn't matter anymore."

Some in the country music industry say the time is right for black performers to make a breakthrough. The Black Country Music Association was formed in 1997 and began organizing showcases in Nashville and promoting black artists to record producers. More and more black country acts are on the scene, and being seen throughout the United States.

Triggs is on the star track. He has released his debut album "Trini Triggs." In addition he is one of the showcase performers on the Coors Roots of the Rhythm Tour.

On Triggs new album he performs an entertaining mix of two-step dance tunes and ballads in country classic style. He even sings a duet with his idol, Charley Pride.

Performing "One Mississippi, Two Mississippi" with Pride was one of the highlights of his life, Triggs says. But even that experience was topped when Pride asked Triggs to appear with him on the Grand Ol' Opry. "It's something every country singer dreams of," Triggs says. "I was so proud and so was my family."

A Louisiana native from the small town of Natchitoches, Triggs learned his love of country music from his mother, who listened to nothing else. As a second grader, he was encouraged to sing in front of his class by his teacher. Triggs performed in every school play and talent show. In high school, he organized and played in bands that mixed rock and country.

After high school, Triggs continued to perform at nights and weekends while he was working various jobs during the day to pay the bills. When Triggs was in his late 20s, a west Texas businessman - John Earl Roe - recognized his potential and offered to become his manager. Herbert Graham, owner of the nationally famous Denim & Diamonds country music clubs, signed on as Triggs' co-manager.

Nashville record producer Mike

Curb, asked Triggs to sing to office staff. Triggs says, "When I was finished, he looked at everyone who was gathered around and said, 'This guy is going to be a star. By the end of the day, I had a record deal.'"

Triggs recently was featured on Nashville's New Faces show, which helped launch the careers of stars like Randy Travis and Brooks & Dunn. His songs are gaining popularity on radio stations, and he's often heard talking to disk jockeys as he travels on his cross-country tours.

As part of the Roots of the Rhythm concert tour, Triggs will enjoy even more exposure. Coors initiated the tour to showcase the artistry and contributions of black performers in a variety of fields - including screen actress LisaRaye McCoy, who has starred in "The Players Club" and other films and Rachel Stuart, host of Black Entertainment Television's Planet Groove music video program. With the addition of Triggs, the series now has its first country music performers as part of the Roots of the Rhythm Tour.

As a breakthrough artist, Triggs is accumulating numerous "firsts" in his career. But there's no question he will be happy with "second" when it comes to achieving Black superstar status in country music. With the passage of more than 30



years since Pride's first, "The Snakes Crawl at Night," observers of country music say the time has come for someone to earn the designation. If

Trini Triggs reaches the goal, his success could pave the way for the entry of more and more black artists in the country music arena.

Volunteers Needed For Blues Festival

Oregon Food Bank invites volunteers to have fun, get funky and help raise cash and food for hunger relief by manning a gate or moving food at the 12th Annual Miller Genuine Draft Waterfront Blues Festival, July 2-5 in Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Volunteers are needed for the following activities:

Gate Volunteers: Gate volunteers work in teams of 10-25 at one of four entrances to the festival. Volunteers ask for donations of food and money, box donated food, provide directions to festival attendees and serve as OFB's goodwill ambassadors.

Food Transport Volunteers: Food transport volunteers work in teams of 12-16 people transporting the more than 80,000 pounds of donated food from the festival gates to the food transport area, where the food is boxed and loaded onto trucks. Food transport volunteers should be energetic

and able to lift 30 pounds.

Fire Squad Volunteers: Fire Squad volunteers perform a variety of functions, including filling in at gates, helping in the food transport area and providing support to the festival staff.

Most Friday shifts are already full. Shifts on Saturday, Sunday and Monday are from 10:00 a.m.-noon (fire squad only), 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m., and 6:00-10:30 p.m.

The Miller Genuine Draft Waterfront Blues Festival has been a Portland favorite for a dozen years, winning raves from fans and reviewers with blues talent, open-air seating, and admission by suggested donation of just \$3-5 and 2 cans of food for Oregon Food Bank. The festival has raised more than \$1 million and 500,000 pounds of food for hunger relief to date, and organizers hope to add another \$200,000 and 80,000 pounds of food to that

total this year.

Throughout the festival, approximately 50 national, regional and local blues acts will perform non-stop on the three stages. For schedule of performers, call 973-REST or check the festival web site at www.waterfrontbluesfest.com



Photo by Valerie K. Davis

Too slim and the Talldraggers bring 4th of July blues fans to their feet at the 1998 Miller Genuine Draft Waterfront Blues Festival.

Good In The Hood

The Good in the Hood Multicultural Music and Food Festival is a three-day event taking place in North Portland on the campus of the Holy Redeemer School at N. Portland and Vancouver Blvds. On June 25th, 26th and 27th. It is a production of the Neighborhood Outreach Association, a non-profit organization run totally by volunteers who seek to present the positive aspects of the N/NE Portland neighborhoods. Police Chief Charles Moose has been very visible honorary chair since the event's inception in 1992.

This Festival showcases the culturally rich resources inherent in this area. It also educates and builds bridges with the greater metropolitan area. Good in the Hood strengthens cultural self-identity, presenting a stage for all groups to explore, present and teach their arts, dances, music & storytelling to other segments of the population. "Hood" also brings contemporary performers and artists to the neighborhoods to educate the residents of the larger possibilities available to them.