



ALAN JACKSON: SMALL-TOWN SOUTHERN MAN

Alan Jackson has built his star-powered career by writing and singing songs about his humble southern roots.

Born in 1958 in Newnan, Georgia, Jackson grew up with four older sisters. His mother was a homemaker, and his father was an auto mechanic who loved country music. When he was eighteen, Jackson married his high school sweetheart, Denise, and the couple moved to Nashville in 1985 so he could pursue a music career.

Throughout the 1990s, Jackson raced to the top of the charts, mostly with songs he wrote or co-wrote. Two fun, clever songs turned him into a superstar: “Don’t Rock the Jukebox,” his salute to traditional country, and “Chattahoochee,” about his teenage years hanging out at the Chattahoochee River.

“Just as far as the modern era goes, I don’t think there’s a more perfect traditional country singer or writer,” says fellow country artist Joe Nichols. “To be able to connect . . . to the common man and write song after song about just regular things, regular life, and have success, I think he’s one of the best.”

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, Jackson was moved to write “Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning).” He debuted it on the 2001 Country Music Association Awards, and Americans rallied around the song’s message of healing. It also revealed another side of Jackson’s artistry.



“I like the sad ones myself better—always have,” Jackson says. “They have a lot of emotion, and as a writer, they’re easier to write. I’ve always included them on albums, and I think they’ve been a part of country music forever—and should always be. I know people out there have a hard enough time, and they like to hear tempo and something fun to make them

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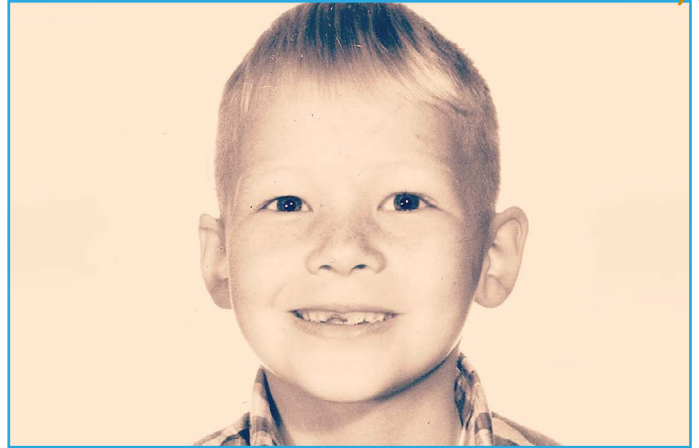
“Chasin’ That Neon Rainbow,” “Drive (for Daddy Gene),” “Small Town Southern Man,” “Don’t Rock the Jukebox”



ALAN JACKSON: SMALL-TOWN SOUTHERN MAN (CONTINUED)

forget about anything. But I’ve had a lot of people that appreciate a heartache song that sounds like what they just went through. It makes them feel like there’s somebody else out there.”

Jackson returned to his roots for many more hits, including 2002’s “Drive (for Daddy Gene).” His three daughters starred in the music video, bringing the family connection full circle. In 2007 and 2008, slice-of-life songs like “Small Town Southern Man,” “Good Time,” and “Country Boy” attracted a new generation of fans. He was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2011 and into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2017.



CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What song did Jackson write in honor of traditional country music?

2. Circle the phrase “common man” in paragraph four. Underline the clue words and phrases that help you understand the meaning of the phrase.

3. Explain Jackson’s greatest impact on music in your own words. Highlight evidence for your answer in the text.
