

## 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 October 27, 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. (Cars and driving frequently appear in Jackson's lyrics.) 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.

One of Jackson's early self-penned singles, 1990's "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow," underscores how his father encouraged his musical aspirations. A year later, the romantic "I'd Love You All Over Again" became the first of Jackson's twenty-six #1 singles.

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

Throughout his recording career, Jackson has abided by a simple edict: "Keep it country." He has taken pokes at the music industry, penning "Three Minute Positive Not Too Country Up-Tempo Love Song" and recording hits such as "Gone Country" and "Murder on Music Row," the latter a Country Music Association award-winning duet with George Strait. Jackson has also revived songs recorded by Country Music Hall of Fame members Jim Ed Brown ("Pop a Top"), Tom T. Hall ("Little Bitty"), George Jones ("Tall, Tall Trees"), and Don Williams ("It Must Be Love"). In fact,



Jackson recorded an entire album of covers of classic country songs in 1999, titled *Under the Influence*, with faithful remakes of hits by Charley Pride, Hank Williams Jr., Merle Haggard, and more.

"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 CMA Awards, and the response to the song's message of healing and reassurance was

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### LISTEN

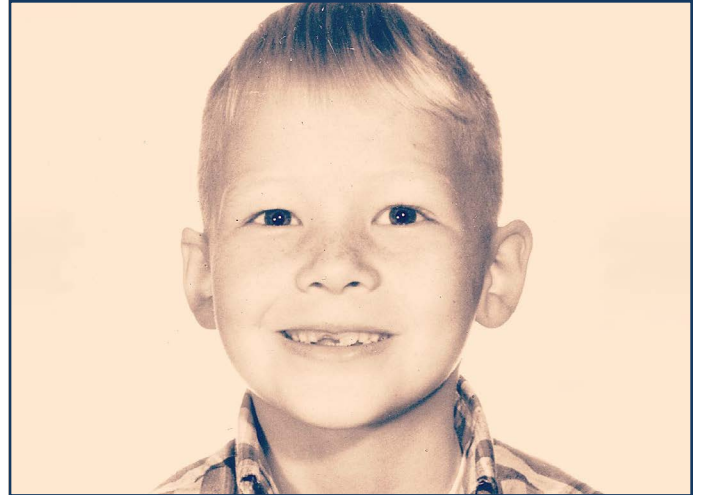
"Chasin' That Neon Rainbow," "Drive (for Daddy Gene)," "Small Town Southern Man," "Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)"

## ALAN JACKSON: SMALL-TOWN SOUTHERN MAN (CONTINUED)

immediate. 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 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 has kept returning to his roots for many more hits, including 2002’s “Drive (for Daddy Gene).” His three daughters co-starred in its 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” endeared him to a new generation of fans.

Jackson has sold more than sixty million albums, won two Grammys, and been named CMA Entertainer of the Year three times. In 1991, he became a member of the Grand Ole Opry, and he was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2011 and the Country Music

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. In the second to last paragraph, what does the word “endeared” mean in this context? Circle any clue words and phrases that help you understand the meaning, and define this term below in your own words.

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2. What is the main idea of this article? Explain your answer, and underline sentences that provide evidence to support it.

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3. Highlight three influences in Jackson’s life that had a significant impact on his success. Which of them has had the greatest impact? Explain your answer in at least three sentences.

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