

Michelle Wright

biography

Michelle Wright has been drawing rave reviews for her expressive voice and her distinctive style since her 1988 debut CD *Do Right By Me* on Savannah Records. Over the ensuing years, she has released monumentally successful albums in the United States and Canada and enjoys an international career, one that has seen her grace concert stages across North America, Europe, Africa, South America, Australia and Asia. Michelle has amassed a total of twenty-five Top Ten radio hits in her homeland of Canada and walked to podiums in music centers like Los Angeles and Toronto to accept more than forty major awards. She is the first Canadian-born artist in the modern era of country music to have a Top Ten hit in America (*Take It Like A Man*, 1992) and a Number One video on CMT-USA (*Take It Like A Man*, 1992), and to win a major U.S. music industry award (Academy of Country Music Top New Female Artist, 1993). In September 2011, Michelle was honored with induction into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame.

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Growing up in Merlin, Ontario, a small Canadian farming community near Chatham, Michelle heard the rhythm & blues and Motown hits coming out of Detroit, just forty-five minutes away. But especially she heard the strains of country music, since her parents were both country performers. "My earliest memories of music are singing in the car, or spending the weekend with my father after my parents separated and watching him put on a rhinestone-studded suit to perform in." As a young girl, she tagged along on countless jobs. "We never were a family band, but I got a lot of inspiration and encouragement from my mother. That's where my love of country music really began."

In 1988, she released *Do Right By Me* in Canada on the Savannah Records label and, after a year of college, studying counseling for the mentally disadvantaged, Michelle set off to tour North America. *Do Right By Me* was a major hit in her homeland, with 7 chart singles and sales well over 40,000 copies, and it opened many doors in the United States. The American country music world was impressed, and the new Arista/Nashville label made Michelle one of its flagship artists.

Signing with Arista/Nashville in 1990, Michelle released her first U.S. album, *Michelle Wright*, that same year. American audiences responded immediately and enthusiastically to "that girl singer from up north with the snow in her videos," and her first single, "New Kind Of Love," became her first Top Thirty American hit. As she started work on her follow up CD for Arista, however, it became increasingly apparent that Michelle needed to spend much more time in Nashville to advance her career, so, in 1991, she relocated to Music City, where she continues to reside today. In 1992, Michelle released *Now & Then*, which spawned the U.S. Top Ten radio hit and Number One video at CMT, "Take It Like A Man."

The Academy of Country Music named Michelle its Top New Female Vocalist in May, 1993. Michelle catapulted to superstardom in Canada the same year, receiving a total of twelve music industry awards, including the Canadian Country Music Association's Fans' Choice Entertainer Of The Year award and double platinum honors for *Now & Then*. The

momentum generated by her next release, *The Reasons Why* (1994) and enabled Michelle to headline a triumphant forty-city Canadian concert tour in early 1995, which at that time was the most extensive tour in the history of the country music business in Canada. She hosted the 1995 Canadian Country Music Awards where she finished the evening in grand style, receiving her second award as the CCMA's Fans' Choice Entertainer Of The Year.

In 1996, Michelle released her next Arista/Nashville project, *For Me It's You*. Perhaps her most personal album, it reminds Michelle of the important relationship she enjoys with her fans. "For me it is them, because when I get on that stage every night, no matter what's going on in my world, the audience makes me feel like, for right now, I'm okay, for right now, I'm full of joy." And Michelle shares that joy. Her devotion to her fans and her love of performing have made her a headline concert attraction.

Michelle started to explore her diverse talents and broke new ground along the way. *For Me It's You* marked the first time one of Michelle's own songs, the stirring "What Love Looks Like," was made available to her American fans. After co-hosting the TNN/Music City News Awards show in 1994, and hosting the CCMA Awards in 1995, her ease in front of the camera led to her guest appearance on the syndicated series "Due South." In 1997 she became the first artist to appear on the cover of the Sears catalog in Canada. At the CCMAs later that year she delivered a show-stopping, gospel-tinged rendition of the Curtis Mayfield hit, "People Get Ready," accompanied by a fifty-voice choir. A personal career highlight for Michelle, she reflects, "I still get goose bumps whenever I hear that version."

Shortly thereafter Michelle had the opportunity to participate in a history-making project when veteran record producer Michael Blakey invited her to lend her voice to *Patsy Cline Duets Vol 1*. The album features both legendary and new talent teamed with Cline on some of her most memorable songs. Produced by weaving the contemporary voices into the classic Cline recordings, Michelle duets with Cline on the classic "Walkin' After Midnight." This opportunity continued an association with Cline that began in 1993 when she read letters that Patsy had composed on camera in "Remembering Patsy," the A&E television special commemorating the thirteenth anniversary of Cline's death.

1998 heard Michelle collaborating with pianist Jim Brickman, performing the hit "Your Love" for release in Canada. The video for "Your Love" topped the CMT Canada charts and the CCMA named the single its Vocal/Instrumental Collaboration of the Year. The success of "Your Love" did not go unnoticed by Brickman's label, New York based Windham Hill Records. The collaboration was included on Brickman's CD *Destiny* and released to US Adult Contemporary radio in October 1999. "Your Love" became a Top 20 AC hit in early 2000, Michelle's best-performing single in the U.S. since "Take It Like A Man."

At the dawn of the new millennium, Michelle marked her ten-year association with Arista Nashville with the international release of her latest American album, *Michelle Wright: The Greatest Hits Collection*. The album contained eleven of the songs that shaped Michelle's career since she signed with Arista. They appeared in near-chronological order, rolling out the soundtrack of Michelle's life: "New Kind Of Love," "All You Really Wanna Do," "Take It Like a Man," "He Would Be Sixteen," "Guitar Talk," "Now & Then," "One Good Man," "Safe In The Arms Of Love," "Nobody's Girl," "What Love Looks Like," and "The Answer Is Yes." The album also contained five songs never before found on a Michelle Wright album: two new songs co-written by Michelle, "When I Found You" and "I Surrender," plus "Your

Love,” her gospel version of “People Get Ready,” and her “Walkin' After Midnight” duet with Patsy Cline.

Michelle Wright: The Greatest Hits Collection offered listeners a sonic overview of ten magical years punctuated by highlight after memorable highlight. Michelle is proud of the achievement her Greatest Hits Collection represents. “It felt great to be at that point in my career. Very early on, when I first hit the road with a bunch of guys, crisscrossing North America in an old van, sleeping in the back on top of a couple of Peavey guitar amps, I could only dream about having enough hits to make a greatest hits package. And then there we were.” But the collection is not simply a measure of dreams fulfilled for Michelle: it also chronicles her growth as an artist. “When I listen to the album from start to finish, I can hear my development as a vocalist, and I'm happy with how I've grown and how I sound today. And I'm excited by the fact that these days I'm writing most of my new material: in some ways, ironic as this may seem, it makes me feel like I'm just getting started.”

The twenty-first century has seen five CDs from Michelle generating more sales and more hits: *Shut Up and Kiss Me*, released by Sony/BMG in 2002; her first Christmas album, *A Wright Christmas*, released in Canada in 2005 and around the rest of the world on Savannah Music at Christmas time, 2008; her first full album of country material in ten years, *Everything And More*, released in Canada in July, 2006, and around the rest of the world on Savannah Music in late 2008; the Savannah Music reissue of a remastered and repackaged edition of *Do Right By Me* across North America in August, 2010 and internationally the following October; and her latest project for Savannah Music, *The Wright Songs: An Acoustic Evening with Michelle Wright*, a 17-song collection of many of her hits performed on acoustic instruments and recorded live in Alberta at select venues during 2009 and 2010, released in Canada in late 2011 and internationally in early 2012.

These days Michelle is happily enjoying her Hall of Fame stature as one of Canada's great vocalists. But characteristically Michelle is not content to rest on her Hall of Fame laurels: 2012 saw her hard at work dividing her time between writing and recording a new album and treating her fans to a special twenty-eight date commemorative concert tour, Michelle Wright: Songs From The Halls Tour 2012, which rolled out just after Canadian Thanksgiving.

The unquestionable highlight of 2013 for Michelle was the release of her latest album, *Strong*. Capturing better than ever her distinctive style and expressive voice, *Strong* showcases Michelle's remarkable growth as a singer and songwriter - inspired by the perseverance and strength that she has witnessed in friends, family and strangers over the years. Recorded in Ontario and Nashville, the album was produced by Jason Barry (Dean Brody, Terri Clark, Jason Blaine), Eric Silver (Neal McCoy, Ricochet) and Danick Dupelle (Emerson Drive). Michelle's passion for songwriting has grown with this newest project, for which she co-wrote 10 of its 11 songs.

"I created this record with a group of friends I admire as writers, singers and producers. We had a lot of fun," says Michelle. "The songs are a collection of my observations about life and the people around me and how we're all just stumbling through it. At times there is laughter and joy; at other times, pain and disappointment. Overall, I hope this record is inspiring and relatable to my fans."

Michelle's music and live shows continue to be noticed and celebrated by her peers, who in 2012 and 2013 nominated her for consideration as the Canadian Country Music Association's Female Artist of the Year. She travelled to Saskatchewan to participate in the 2012 CCMA Awards celebration which aired live from Saskatoon on CBC on Sunday, September 9, and helped kick off the awards show telecast live from Edmonton in 2013.

Earlier this year, "Laugh A Little," the latest single from the current album *Strong*, shipped to radio worldwide to an overwhelming response. With the support of her fans and her team (including the addition of manager Chuck Thompson (Thompson Entertainment Group) Michelle Wright is continuing to do what she loves to do; write songs and play them for her fans around the world.

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