

TRISHA

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At some point, the scene changes to a Saturday-night juke joint, where Yearwood's singing on stage and the congregation is now dancing up a storm.

The song, written by Clay Mills and Tia Sillers, has sly, clever lyrics, such as, "Well the preacher says when your time is up/You take a chariot to the Lord/Well I'm hoping my chariot's/A torch red Thunderbird Ford."

She sings about the hell of breaking up, but then says, "Oh, but real love's got me back in the saddle/Shoutin' 'Amen!' again."

Though Yearwood's known for her powerful ballads, this song has a hooky groove. It's sure to get the crowd dancing when she performs it Wednesday night at the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall.

It's not only a good song title, but a good album title, Yearwood says. "It encompassed the whole album, it's about all the good and the bad that make you who you are. If you look at my history, I sing big, depressing ballads. We found a lot of great up-tempo songs for this record. It's a nice theme for the whole album. It's all those things together that make you who you are."

The album's a mosaic of different love songs and styles of music: poignant, slower songs, such as "This is Me You're Talking To" and "Nothin' 'Bout Memphis," a song with Keith Urban ("Let the Wind Chase You"), a song with an old-timey feel ("Cowboys Are My Weakness") and a Beatle-esque song ("They Call It Falling For a Reason"). There are "I'm in love" songs, "I miss him so much" songs and "You're no good for

me" songs.

"As a fan, I hate buying a record for one song, and then nothing else sounds like it, or else everything all sounds the same," Yearwood says. "The trick is to be as different and diverse and still have a common thread."

"Cowboys Are My Weakness" sounds like something Patsy Cline could've recorded. Yearwood calls it a campfire song.

"I say it has a campfire feel because it's like sitting around the campfire with a bare bones [accompaniment]: harmonica, fiddle," she says. "You might have heard someone do that in a Gene Autry film."

The song, of course, describes her husband, Garth Brooks, to a T, she says.

"It talks about how great cowboys are, all the great things about them, and he's my cowboy," Yearwood says.

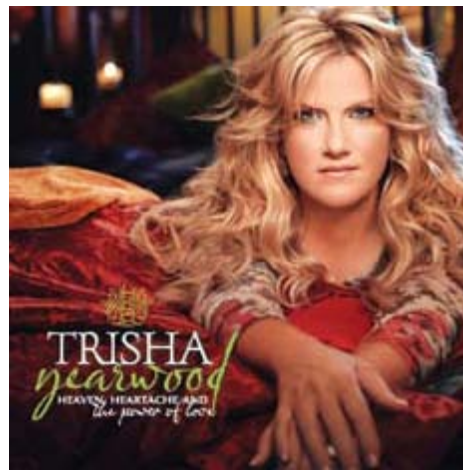
The song would make a great single - it's a crowd-pleaser every time she performs it - but those who approve such decisions are skittish because it doesn't sound like anything else on radio.

"I love what it says; you'll definitely be hearing it live," Yearwood promises.

Last week she shot a video for the CD's second single, "This is Me You're Talking To."

"The song's about running into somebody after a long period of time, and you have this history," Yearwood says. "You're making small talk, but have a conversation going on in your head. That's the theme of the video. I play a singer - easy for me," she jokes. "I get to record it for a movie score, and what's happening on the screen in the movie is mirroring what's happening in the room with the guy who's conducting the orchestra."

The guy happens to be actor John Corbett, known for his roles in "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" and the hit HBO series



"Sex and the City."

"We wanted an actor people would recognize," Yearwood says. "I thought of John Corbett. He's taller - that was a prerequisite. He's 6'5" and I'm 5'9". I love him in everything he's done."

"He made a record in Nashville a year ago. I knew he had a lot of friends in Nashville. It sounded like a wild stretch of the imagination that he might do it, but he said yes. I think having him in the video will make it more special. He couldn't have been nicer; he brought a lot of class to the video."

"Heaven, Heartache and the Power of Love" is Yearwood's debut album on her new label, Big Machine Records.

"MCA was great for me for 15 years," she says. "They grew and grew and merged and merged and a lot of people who believe in you in the beginning are gone. You have to have your group of cheerleaders. Big Machine is a fairly new label, but they've been so successful. It's the only new label that is really competing with all the major labels."

Working with Big Machine "has been great," she says. "It's a close-knit group of people who are on fire for me and my music as an artist. It's important to have your

team excited about what you're doing."

Unfortunately, leaving MCA meant leaving behind her catalog. The label released a "Greatest Hits" album of her songs, and plan to release a love songs compilation on Valentine's Day.

"There's confusion, with people thinking the new single is from their new album. They're releasing things that I have nothing to do with," she says. "I'm very controlling, because it's my music. I'm always involved in song selection and music, and the sequencing of songs, every tiny detail."

Over the course of her career, Yearwood's sold over 10 million records, received three Grammys, three Country Music Association honors and had nine No. 1 hits and 20 top-10 singles. She's the highest-selling female artist in country music history, with four platinum records, one double platinum and one quadruple platinum record. A member of the Grand Ole Opry, the Georgia Hall of Fame and the Hollywood Bowl, her songs have been featured in "Sex and the City" and in movies such as "Honkeytonk in Vegas," "Stuart Little" and "Hope Floats."

Yearwood always knew she wanted to be a singer.

"I got a cassette player for Christmas when I was 6 years old," she remembers, "and it came with two cassettes: Elvis Presley's 'Greatest Hits' and Carole King's 'Tapestry.' Santa Claus has a really great sense of music. At 6 I knew I wanted to be a singer, absolutely. That was the hit music of that era, and that led me to some of the music of the '70s that really influenced me. I loved Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris and The Eagles. And I combined that with my parents listening to Tammy Wynette, Patsy Cline, George Jones and Hank Williams, Sr."

"I guess what I ended up with was a combination of those things." ■

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