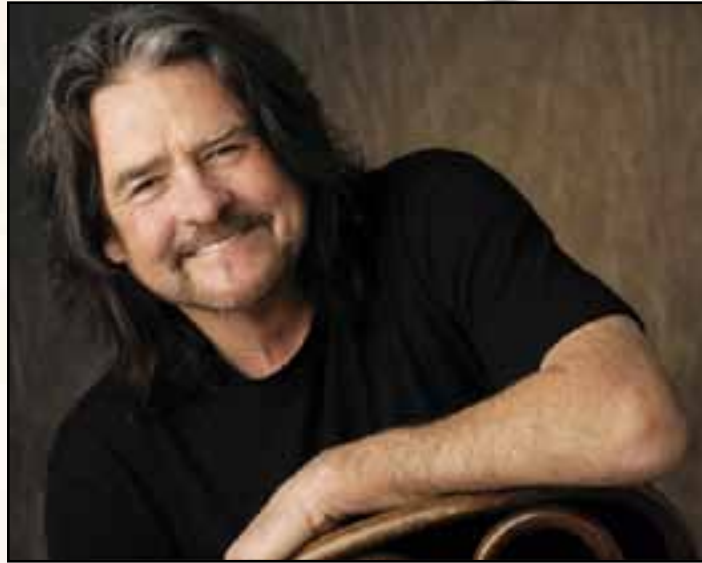


# Dave Gibson



Story by Marty Lanus

You might say that Dave Gibson has storytelling in his DNA. As a child, the maternal grandfather who helped raise him, Jason Woodard, used to tell the gullible tyke that the white cows give white milk and the black cows give chocolate milk.

Gibson was probably about six years old before he caught on to that one, and he's been making up and telling his own stories ever since.

A master narrator, prolific songwriter and country artist, it's the writing part that has sustained Gibson's enviable career.

"I've known Dave since my radio days in San Antonio, before I came to Nashville," says longtime broadcaster and WSM morning man Bill Cody. "So after 20 years, I've watched his wonderful body of work grow to the point he'll always hold his rightful place among the elite in Nashville's songwriting community. His talent and hello-old-friend smile and kindness have never wavered."

However, it might have been the triple combination of storytelling, songwriting and performing that caused Gibson to launch his year-and-a-half-old business, Savannah Music Group that eventually took the artist back into the recording studio.

At the end of June, just in time for Father's Day, Gibson released 'King Me' a touching single about a young man's relationship with his grandfather that was coauthored with one of Gibson's writing partners, Craig Monday.

At first blush, it seems far from his days at the namesake of the Gibson-Miller Band that recorded such chart climbers as "Red, White and Blue Collar," "Big Heart," "Stone Cold Country," and "Texas Tattoo." And while the staple country music themes of women, heartbreak, and growing up in a working class environ are all typical of Gibson's early song-

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writing, many people miss the obvious: most of his early work was about telling a good story as well.

Now, with his new single and music video "King Me" Gibson takes the craft of storytelling to a new level. "King Me" is an intensely personal narrative about a young man sitting across a checkerboard from a cagey old man. Each, in turn, "told some lies and told some truths," until in the end, Gibson reveals with his trademark wry humor, that the old man is actually his grandfather.

Monday's paternal grandfather Bill Monday. The two had written the lyrics on the back porch of Savannah's headquarters on Music Row, but were stymied for an ending. It wasn't until later that Monday called Gibson with the final phrase of the song, "I learned it all from you, grandpa."

Perfect. Both writers and artists remember their grandfathers fondly. Gibson laughs as he acknowledges that Woodard "used to cheat at checkers," and suspects that all grandfathers worth their salt did the same thing. Monday observes that he did far more watching than playing with Grandpa Monday, who played game after game with Monday's elder brother. Monday was only four when his grandfather died, a bit young for the game.

Gibson has come a long way in his musical meanderings. Born in El Dorado, Arkansas, his mother moved his sister and him to Odessa, Texas when he was 18 months old and his parents divorced. Growing up, he was drawn to the writings of and profoundly influenced by fellow Texans Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison, just as he later would be intrigued by the phenomenon of Elvis Presley. As a teenager, Gibson's family reunited and he and his sister moved back to Arkansas. Both cultures would be seminal in Gibson's work.

As a young man, he packed up a rickety Ford van headed to Nashville. He brought only his raw talent and determination. A keening baritone with a wry sense of humor, Gibson was always drawn to the story-telling part of country music, and loved to deliver a surprise last line with his signature guffaw. It wasn't long before the jaded office doors of Music Row creaked open and Gibson found himself in front of an array of power brokers, including producers Tony Brown, Norro Wilson, Oak Ridge Boys, Duane Allen, and Doug Johnson.

He landed a publishing deal with The Oak Ridge Boy's company, Silverline Music, and began co-writing with an enviable list of hit makers. The industry soon took notice of this fledgling writer and he started getting cuts by Steve Wariner, Joe Diffie, Confederate Railroad, Tanya Tucker, Alabama, Pam Tillis, and Montgomery Gentry. He earned six number ones, and Alabama's "Juke Box in My Mind" stayed at number one for an impressive four weeks. Gib-

son became both a sought-after writer and writing partner in Nashville.

Still, Gibson wanted to perform. He teamed up with rocker Blue Miller, the legendary guitar player for the Bob Seger Band. "While originally, I didn't know him, I knew if he played with Seger, he had to be great," says Gibson.

Together they formed the Gibson-Miller Band, and quickly scored favorable reviews and sell-out dates. In 1994 they received the Academy of Country Music Award for New

Vocal Group. Blue Miller was partner and co-writer and co-founder of the band. He played electric as well as acoustic guitar and did vocals. Doug Kahan was bass player and did background vocals. Mike Daly played steel guitar slide and dobro (resonator) guitar, and Steve Grossman was on drums. The band toured together for four years.

Next to music, Nashville is known for its dining, and not surprisingly, area eateries have played a role in Gibson's career. It was at the Bluebird Café that Gibson met aspiring songwriter and performer Daisy Dern. She remembers the meeting as if it were yesterday.

"Daisy, what kind of name is Daisy? No one is called Daisy anymore," Gibson reportedly said.

Gibson has no such recollection.

At some point, Dern asked Gibson to listen to her demo tape. "I remember thinking that I'm falling in love with this

woman, so I sure hope that she can sing."

Fortunately, he had nothing to worry about on that count, and he would later both marry

Dern and produce her first album.

Nashville is another area restaurant that played a part in the life of the songwriters. It was there that Gibson and Dern met with Silicone Valley entrepreneur Jeff Cohen in June of 2008, and over three bowls of matzah ball soup would cement the agreement that would become Savannah Music Group. Cohen had a guitar company, Voyage-Air Guitar, and was looking to leverage his company with a music publishing company and record label.

"The synergies were obvious," says Cohen. "I had a very unique product, a guitar that folds for easy transport, and Dave and Daisy had the contacts on Music Row, the publishing background and the instincts to spot upcoming artists of quality."

It seems a story worth telling. By the time of the matzah ball lunch, their daughter, Savannah, after whom they named the record company, was eight years old, and Dave the storyteller was following his grandfather's penchant for both a good narrative and a corny pun. However, the way Gibson sees it, there's a big difference between him and his grandfather.

He confines his storytelling to his songs, and his daughter Savvy has always been told honestly exactly where that chocolate milk comes from.

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