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Buzz Cason: The heart of a troubadour



If you only have one scene from a life to know who Buzz Cason is, travel back to 2004, when the legendary singer and songwriter was given some bad news from his doctor. Told that he had a blockage in his chest that would require open heart surgery to clear up, he was given the option to wait a week, or stay in the hospital that night and have it done the next morning when a specialist would be arriving in town.

“I said ‘do me in the morning,’” Cason recalled with a laugh. “‘I’ve got a book coming out.’”

He had triple bypass surgery the next morning.

“That was January; I was on the road by May.”

That’s James “Buzz” Cason, and ten years after that scare, he’s still on the road, still writing, still performing, and if you said his latest release, *Troubadour Heart*, is up there with the best work he’s done, no one would look at you funny.

And that’s high praise, considering that Cason, 74, is the man who wrote “Everlasting Love,” as well as songs covered by the likes of The Beatles, Pearl Jam, and The Oak Ridge Boys, among others. A member of the Rockabilly Hall of Fame, Cason is not content to sit on his laurels though.

“Didn’t Picasso paint until he was in his 80s,” asked Cason. “I think if you still keep your chops up, I just tell everybody ‘use it or lose it.’ But you’ve got to be realistic about it and gauge yourself. When you get into the reality of it, it’s a health issue. It’s according to what your body can bear.”

Apparently, Cason’s can bear plenty, as he routinely drives up to 400-500 miles to get to gigs, motivated by the words of his friend, the late Jerry Reed, who told him “Man, you gotta work.”

“He was an inspiration to me,” said Cason, who has plenty of help in handling the business end of things while he brings his [music](#) to the nation.

“Turning the business over to real able assistants and my sons takes the load off of me and frees me up to write more,” he said. “‘Troubadour Heart,’ I even started that on the road between [Nashville](#) and Texas. I hummed it to Keith Sykes about three years ago. It was a silly little thing, but it’s an example of being on the road and having that freedom to write.”

With that freedom, Cason is still firing from both barrels, and the way he works a song – both lyrically and musically – puts him in a league of his own, especially since there hasn't been a dip in quality over his six decades in the business.

“My old partner Bobby Russell wrote a great song for Percy Sledge, ‘Sudden Stop,’” Cason laughs when asked how he's maintained his high standard for so long. “Uh, oh, we got in the wrong lane man. But I was talking to a friend here, and I said I don't know. Being a writer, you have down periods where you kind of hit a wall or when life gets in the way of your creative juices, but when the songs quit coming I guess I'll slow down.”

Does he ever worry if that day will occur?

“Not really.”

That's Buzz Cason.