

Q & A WITH COUNTRY MUSIC STAR SCOTTY MCCREERY

THE 2011 AMERICAN IDOL WINNER COMES TO THE SHARON SEPT. 16

Scotty McCreery chatted with The Villages Magazine in anticipation of his sold-out Sept. 16 concert at The Sharon. At 22, the Billboard chart-topper and Platinum artist opens up about faith, family and a whole lot more as he prepares to release his fourth album.

Q. Where did you get that deep, deep voice of yours?

A. It changed about the same age as every other guy out there, and to me it just kind of fell off a cliff instead of gradually. It's what I got.

Q. Well, your fans love it! They can't wait for your concert Sept. 16 at The Sharon. What can they expect?

A. I'll give them a taste of who I am and what I do. I put on a high-energy show and try to take them on a journey and bring them through the roller-coaster life I've had. I've got fans from a couple years old to retirees. I try and make a show for all ages. We do a whole section of the show where we throw it back to Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Roger Miller, Alabama. I'll perform a mix of every album so far and some songs that haven't been released yet that we're playing for the crowds and seeing what they like.

Q. Have you heard of The Villages before?

A. I'd heard of The Villages — I think through my folks because we've got family down in Florida. We have some in Orlando and we had some in Melbourne for the longest time but they just moved. I have a couple of cousins at Florida State (University).

Q. You're known to golf while you're on tour. Will you check out the courses here? There are 630 holes...

A. I golf a lot. I could hang out there for awhile.

Q. There are a lot of Elvis Presley enthusiasts here. You've always been a big admirer, right?

A. It was a little strange for a kid in 1998, 1999. My grandma gave me a book when I was 4 or 5 that was all about Elvis, and I read it cover to cover and fell in love with the guy and his music and what he was about. That was all that I was listening to while my friends were listening to the Backstreet Boys. He was my guy. He's still my guy. I went to Graceland a couple years ago. I might have to throw some of his songs in when I come (to The Villages).

Q. A lot of wonderful grandparents live in The Villages. Are you close with your grandparents?

A. My grandparents are huge. I still have both my grandmothers. My grandfather we lost in January. He was jumping off the diving board and eating Oreos until his last days. He was my guy. My songs are about my life, and they've been an influence in my song writing and over my career. I was lucky enough to know all my grandparents and have a really strong relationship with them.

Q. In May, you released your first book, "Go Big or Go Home. The Journey Toward the Dream." What inspired you to write a book?

A. I wasn't exactly expecting it at 22. I kind of tell stories for a living anyway through songs and writing songs. It was an interesting process. I enjoyed it. Most folks wait till they're older in life to write a book, but I got my career started at 16 and it's been a crazy ride.

Q. There's a beautiful quote in your book, "God gave me a voice, and America gave me a chance." Can you share more about faith's influence upon you?

A. Faith has been a huge impact in my life, Christ specifically. I grew up in the church but didn't know what it meant to have a relationship with him until I was a teenager. Ever since then, he's been my rock and it's been necessary with me with the career I've chosen. It keeps me grounded and gives me something to lean on when it gets tough. Sometimes, you're exposed to crazy things on the road just like in the movies, so it's nice to have that rock.

Q. You got your big break winning American Idol in 2011. What was it like five years later, when you returned to perform and mentor this past season?

A. It's pretty awesome getting the chance to go back and see everybody and say thanks and just to have fun — one last hoorah and family reunion. It was pretty special.

Q. You've supported a host of charitable causes like hospitals, schools, music and sports for kids. What inspires you to give back?

A. I think the reason I was given this platform is to make a positive impact in people's lives, whether through my music

or through giving back in other ways. Operation Christmas Child I've been doing since I was a kid. After the Newtown, Connecticut, tragedy at Sandy Hook, I had a chance to go up there and talk to some kids and help raise funds for a performing arts center to help kids reach their full potential. We want to do as much as we can.

Q. Your fourth album drops later this year. What can your followers expect?

A. I'm an old soul when it comes to my musical tastes. It's one of those balances I have to try to accomplish. I try to mesh the old school and new school together. In this next album, we're probably taking one step closer to the traditional side than the new-school side. The cool thing about my music is that my music grows up with me. I put out my first album when I was 17, my second one at 19, my third at 20 and for this one I'll be 23. I'm kind of maturing with my music and my records.

— COMPILED BY KATHRYN DEEN

CONCERT IS A VILLAGER'S DREAM COME TRUE

Villager Dot Bannar is about as McCreery-crazy as they come.

So, when she met with The Sharon's booking coordinator in May 2015, requesting to bring the young country singer to the new performing arts center, she came armed with a CD and a poster.

"I drive all over the U.S. going to nice places to see Scotty," Bannar said. "I thought, this is a beautiful venue right in my backyard. I have to get him to come here."

Booking Coordinator Elizabeth Constant reassured her that residents' requests are taken seriously.

One year and four months later, Bannar's dream is coming true.

McCreery will perform Sept. 16 at The Sharon.

"I was just thrilled," Bannar said. "It's pretty special."

You'll find Bannar in the front row with her husband, Tom, and several friends.

"The voice is what grabs your attention the first moment," Bannar said. "And it's the person that he is. He's a really good Christian man."

Bannar logs into five McCreery fan club websites daily. She's been to 10 of his shows and has met him almost as many times.

"He knows me as Grandma Dot," Bannar said.

She even got a shout-out in his 2016 book, "Go Big or Go Home: The Journey Toward the Dream."

Her quote describes coping with "post-Idol depression" by joining social media to connect with other fans and to learn more about McCreery.

Grandma Dot can hardly wait to reunite backstage with her favorite country music sensation.



Bannar meets McCreery in 2013 in South Carolina.

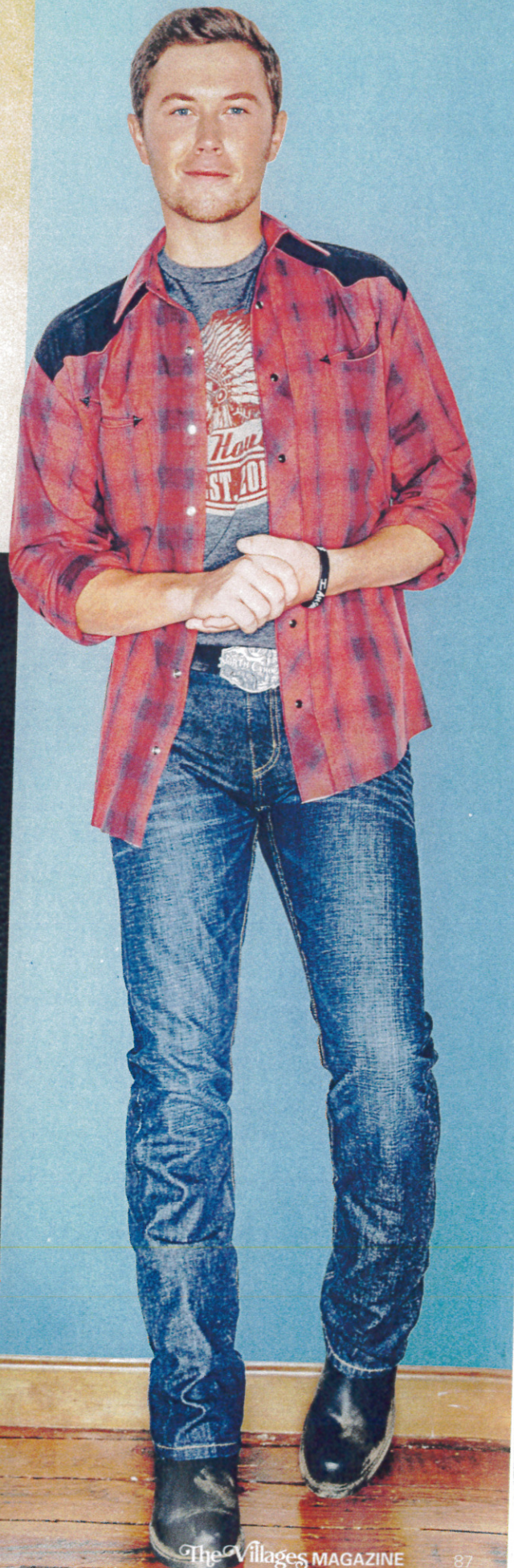


Photo courtesy of Jeremy Ryan