



STAYING IN TOUCH

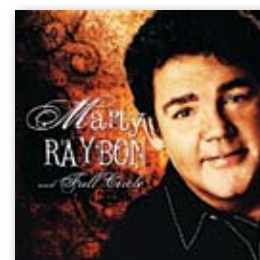
Marty Raybon's new single, "Daddy Phone," is making a true connection with fans nationwide.

Marty Raybon is still learning to work his cellphone and is vaguely familiar with the iPhone. But the device that really got his attention was the "Daddy Phone," the title of his touching new single that has fans literally buzzing all over the country.

"When they first played the song for me, it really hit home," says the former lead singer of Shenandoah from a songwriter's office in Nashville. "Daddy Phone" was actually inspired by the true story of a recently divorced father, Joe Mastran, the brother of the song's co-writer, David Mastran. Joe wanted to stay in touch with his son, who was living overseas with his mom and her new husband, but the geographical distance proved a considerable barrier. In the course of dealing with the problem, he hit on the idea of buying his son a phone and programming it so that the boy could "just push one," as the lyric states, any time he wanted to call. He ended up referring to it as a "Daddy Phone."

Marty recalls, "The first thing I thought about was being the child of a divorced family myself and having a daddy who always stayed in touch with us. Our relationship kind of compared to this song because my daddy always insisted that that there wasn't anything that would ever keep him from me."

Marty plans for the song to be



included on a new, upcoming solo album that is still in the works. But that's not all that's occupying his time these days. Though he's known mostly as the frontman for Shenandoah—which produced No. 1 country

hits like "The Church on Cumberland Road" and "If Bubba Can Dance (I Can Too)"—Marty has recently begun revisiting his bluegrass and gospel roots with his band, Full Circle. He and the band released an album in 2009,



This, That & the Other, and are also touring extensively throughout the U.S.

"I grew up on The Osborne Brothers and Jim & Jesse, and the music we do is kind of in that same vein," Marty explains. He adds that his father "burnt that music into me" when he was still a youngster growing up in Florida.

"Dad played fiddle and he always enjoyed it so much," Marty says in a warm, nostalgic tone. "He taught my brothers and me how to harmonize with each other, the way The Osborne Brothers and some of the other bluegrass acts did. And that's what struck a note in me, pardon the pun, to want to make a career in music."

But what Marty remembers most about his father, who is now deceased, was his unswerving commitment to his children. "My dad was very insistent on spending time with me," Marty recalls. "He would always pick me up on Friday to spend weekends with him—I don't think he ever missed. Needless to say," he adds with a laugh, "I always looked forward to Friday."

That's a shared experience, Marty believes. "There are so many people who went through the same thing, and that's why 'Daddy Phone' has caught on," he says.

Fans have rallied behind "Daddy Phone," requesting it at radio or purchasing a copy through the *daddyphone.com* website. The video for the song tallied high audience marks when it premiered on *cmt.com*.

"The song ministers to people and it has substance," Marty says. "I think it's something that people want to hear right now."

—BOB PAXMAN



Marty (center, with guitar) was the lead vocalist of Shenandoah before pursuing a solo career.

MARTINO CONNOR/WORTMAN WORKS; MARTY IN SHENANDOAH IN 1994 COURTESY TNN