

KENNY

**CRB
CAREER
ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD**



ROGERS

What's The Frequency Kenneth?

There's no need to point out the importance of Country radio to Kenny Rogers. After all, he attributes much of his success — the launch of his career, monumental hit songs, the ability to refocus and even his name to the format's influence. He clearly remembers his first station visit, promoting the song "Crazy Feeling" on Carlton Records, and speaks glowingly of his CRS appearance last year. Rogers is returning to radio now with the song "Calling Me," a duet with his longtime protégé and buddy Don Henley. The track, from his latest Capitol/Nashville album *Water and Bridges*, has already garnered a Grammy nomination for Best Country Collaboration, and Rogers was thrilled to work with the friend he'd discovered decades before in Lyndon, Texas. Being recognized with CRB's Career Achievement Award is fitting, as he is the only artist to have charted a record in each of the last six decades.



House Sitting:
Chatting with Gerry at CRS-37.

Radio has always been really good to me, even in the very early days. I went to KNUZ/Houston radio where Paul Berlin was the big jock at the time. Paul noticed my record read "Kenneth Rogers" because that's always been my name. And he said, "Well, you'll never make it with that name, you've got to be called Kenny Rogers." I said, "Oh, I can't do that!" Well, he went on the air and introduced me as "Kenny Rogers." Later, I went outside and a bunch of little girls started screaming. I thought, "Well, maybe I can do that after all!"

My first ever on-air interview was with a guy who, apparently, was at his first day on the job. He had a list of questions he was going to ask me no matter what. He started off by saying, "So how long are you in town?" I said, "Three days, I leave Wednesday [for] New York." And he says, "Okay. Well, where do you go from here?" And I said, "Well, I go to New York, and then I think I'm doing American Bandstand." And he said, "Okay, well, are you doing any television?" It was like he didn't even hear my answers, and that went on for 20 minutes! I kept answering his questions before he even asked them. And to me that was one of the funniest things. Even as a new artist and as frightened as I was, I was so much more secure than he was.

Country radio is a unique animal. It's like all art forms — constantly changing. You have to be aware of that and try as best you can to adapt to where they are. As I've gone through the years the one thing I've learned is, great songs always get a good shot. So I've always focused on finding great songs. And I really haven't tried to live off my past laurels because there are guys out there running radio stations who weren't even born when I was at the peak of my career. When you start expecting favors, then you get disappointed. And when you get disappointed, then you act differently.

I don't think I ever really fully accepted it until one day I went to a station in Cleveland trying to get a song played [from] my first Dreamcatcher record. I did an hour interview and then called my manager when it was over. He asked how it went and I said, "Well, I figured out they're totally in awe of what I've done, and couldn't care less about what I'm doing." It was a sad reality for me, certainly a reality check. I realized I had to concentrate more on standing away from the crowd,

because there's a type of music that's very contemporary out there, the Keith Urbans and Tim McGraws, that I can't compete with. That's not where my heart is, my heart is in story songs. I have to do what I do and that has helped me. Radio has said to me in so many words, do a great song and we'll try it. If it's not good then you're gonna stand in line with everybody else, and I can live with that.

CRS is the highlight, because I'm a very analytical person. I don't just live my life and say, "Gosh, how'd that happen?" As a rule I know why it happened and why it didn't happen, and I love discussing it. It doesn't make me right, but CRS gives me a chance to test my opinion with people like Gerry House when we spoke last time on a panel. It was great fun because we found some laughter in the conversation but we also had a chance to discuss where radio is, where I am, how it works and what's going on.

There was a time when Country radio was more about the message than the messenger, and today it's more about the messenger than the message. That doesn't make it right or wrong, it's just kind of where it is. If you're really, really hot, they're going to play whatever you do whatever it says. And there was a time when country, even before my time, was much more conversational. It told a story and people said, "I can relate to that story, I love that record." Now it's, "I love that artist." That's good. It's healthy. What makes CRS so important is everybody knows what sells in Shreveport, what sells in Nashville, what sells in L.A., what sells in New York. But until they get together and find some unity, it's hard for country music to move as a block.

It's always nice to be appreciated by your peers, and in this case it's the very people who gave me the success I've had. That's very, very important to me and it is a very special group of people...especially since a lot of the guys voting now weren't even born when I had records out. I have a friend who's a psychologist, and I talk about this in my show because I think it's fascinating. He says as men get older, particularly men who have been successful, you stop striving for success and you start striving for significance. So something like this is really a stride towards significance for me. It's historic in its concept, something that my kids can be proud of someday, and so from that standpoint I'm very excited. **CAC**