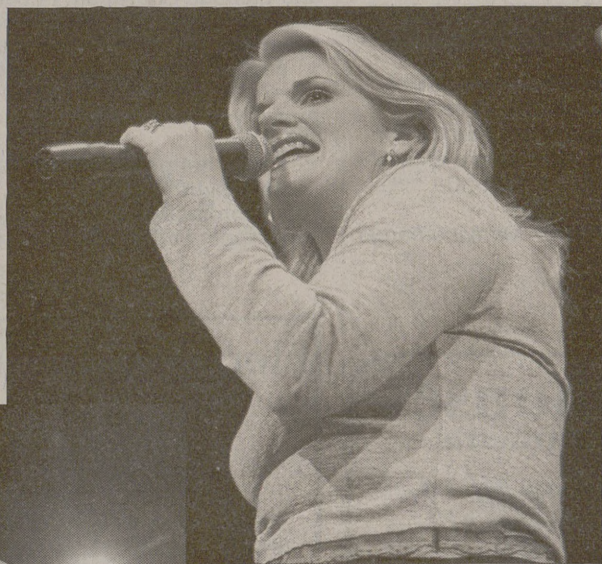
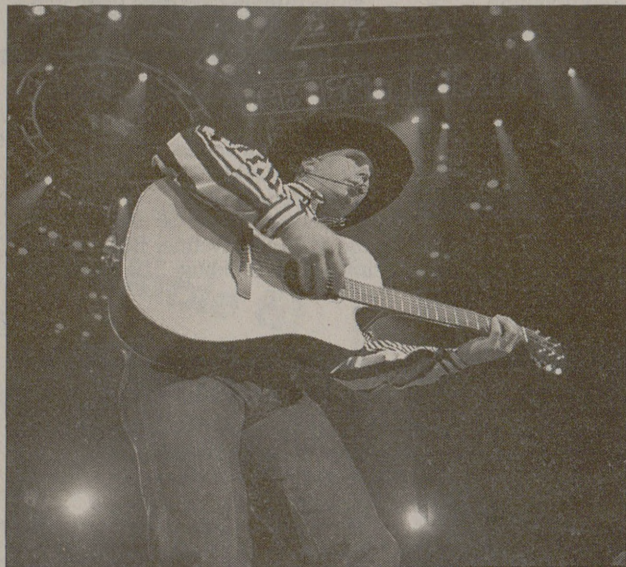


The WORLD according to GARTH



Story by
Kasie Byers

Photos by
Brandon Bollom

Garth Brooks' entrance onto the stage last night seemed more like a scene out of *2001: A Space Odyssey* than a concert. Dressed in a black Stetson, black-and-white-striped shirt and blue Wranglers, the country megastar blasted into Reed Arena atop a white piano and immediately charged the audience with "Back When the Old Stuff Was New" from 1995's *Fresh Horses*. Brooks was pumped, and the energy in the arena was electrifying. "I don't know if you remember," he said after the opening song, "but we were here seven years ago. And we came here tonight for the same reason — to raise some hell and have some fun."

But would you expect anything less from the "King of Country?" He and opening-act Trisha Yearwood performed each song flawlessly, proving that the greatest of entertainers do not need studio doctoring to achieve the sound associated with their albums.

Yearwood performed a wide-range of songs from her past albums, including "A Perfect Love" and "The Song Remembers When."

Brooks covered all six of his previous albums, and took the concert as an opportunity to explore songs off his most recent original album, *Sevens*.

Brooks still has two more performances tonight and tomorrow night in College Station before he ends his world tour.

After that, Brooks said he will concentrate on his family — his three daughters, Taylor, August and Allie, and his wife, Sandy.

"[After Saturday's show] I've got to push through Jan. 1 for my record label," Brooks said in a press conference yesterday afternoon. "Then, I get to stay at the house and with those girls. And that's what I plan on doing — just trying to be the dad I haven't been."

Aside from spending time with his family, Brooks said he can't wait to get back to his ranch in Tennessee and throw hay.

"I've got to tell you," he said, "throwing hay's a blast for me. I just love it. The guys all look at me like I'm crazy, but I just love throwing hay."

And after the hayfields are all cut and the bales are all thrown, Brooks will be back in the studio, working on material for a new duet album with Yearwood.

However, a date hasn't been finalized for the album because the two artists are on separate labels — Brooks with Capitol Records and Yearwood with MCA.

"The labels are having a hard time coming together," Yearwood said in a press conference yesterday, "but they're closer than ever to making an agreement. And then

that just puts us now on the line to find the songs."

Brooks said the album with Yearwood will redefine the meaning of duet.

"We're going to try and stretch what the word duet means," he said.

As for his plans on the last days of his world tour, Brooks said he wants to end the tour on a high note for him, his crew and his fans.

"I think the third show, Saturday, I'm going to emotionally shut down," he said. "This is our baby. This is where it stops for us, and what the future is, nobody knows. So it's going to be emotional."