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## Connie Smith still busts out that country charm

By: Tom Lanham | 08/23/11 3:28 PM

With a little bit of channel surfing, you can find it: the so-rural-it's-hip RFD cable TV network. Then if you're flipping around on Sunday nights before, say "Curb Your Enthusiasm" or "Breaking Bad" start, you'll probably stumble across their re-airings of the classic C&W show from the '70s, "Hee Haw." Which is worth the effort just to watch the great Buck Owens and his Buckaroos just tear it up, every episode.

But if you're really lucky, you'll catch a program featuring a real fireball of an old-school belter, a protégée of Bill Anderson's named [Connie Smith](#). And it's just jaw-dropping to time-travel back to an era when Country was king, and view its uncrowned queen, bellowing through her signature hits like "Once A Day" or "Nobody But A Fool (Would Love You)." She was one of the genre's brightest stars, who — for some inexplicable reason — never broke through to the Dolly Parton mainstream.

Admittedly, it's a bit belated. But that could all change for Smith this year, starting today with the release of her new retro-twanging album "Long Line Of Heartaches," her first set since 1998, and only her second since, believe it or not, 1978.

At 70, she can still wail, and she does on tunes by Kostas, Harlan Howard, and — on "A Heart Like You" — her longtime collaborator Dallas Frazier, who himself broke a 30-year silence to compose for her again.

Smith (who married Marty Stuart back in '97) also let her daughters Julie, Jeanne and Jodi in on the comeback action. They chime in on the Gospel hymn "Take My Hand." And Smith is defiant about her style.

"I've had people ask me what this album was going to be like, since it's been a long time since they've heard me on record," she says. "But my musical tastes have remained the same — I wanted this to be traditional country, and it is. We can talk about the music slipping away, or we can do something about it."

As they so aptly put it on "Hee Haw," "Saaaa-LUTE!"

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