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ROCK&ROLL

CHECKING IN

## Dwight Yoakam Goes Back to the Barrooms

Country star returns to his cowpunk roots on the fiery 'Second Hand Heart'

**F**OR 38 NIGHTS LAST FALL, Dwight Yoakam brought his rhinestone-bedazzled honky-tonk show to arenas for the first time in more than a decade – but instead of headlining, Yoakam was the opening act on Eric Church's *Outsiders* tour. "A lot of

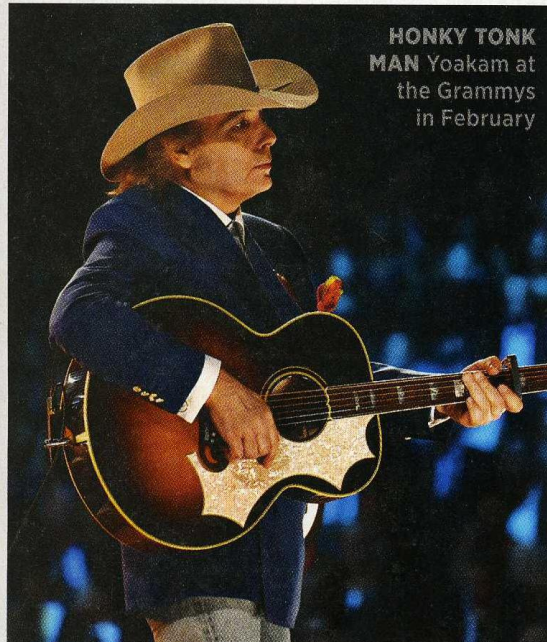
*ond Hand Heart* (due April 14th). It's a return to Yoakam's fiery "cowpunk" sound, which he discovered in the late Seventies, after striking out in Nashville, moving to L.A., and opening for punk and rock bands like X and Los Lobos. The album features his best songs in years: from the title track, a Roy Orbison-like ballad about falling back in love that's built around a Stonesy riff, to a revved-up punk take on "Man of Constant Sorrow." "It's that collision of Bill Monroe meeting the Ramones that embodies the nightclubs we came out of," Yoakam says.

The man Johnny Cash called his favorite male singer has never been a typical country star. Yoakam favors complex Beatles-influenced melodies, has been a successful actor (see *Sling Blade*) and never drank alcohol or did drugs. "I had enough problems without flicking the match in that dynamite shack," he says. His 1986 debut featured hits like "Honky Tonk Man" and "Guitars, Cadillacs," and Yoakam went on to sell 25 million albums over the next decade. The hits dried up in the mid-Nineties, around the time Yoakam's acting career took off.

Yoakam went seven years without releasing an album of original songs, breaking the spell with 2012's *3 Pears*. That album included

two cuts co-produced by Beck, a collaboration Yoakam says was the catalyst for him to rev up his sound again on *Second Hand Heart*. Now, Yoakam is back playing theaters and casinos, and he no longer cares about making the charts. "I don't have that burden on me at this point," he says. "I had a great run."

PATRICK DOYLE



HONKY TONK MAN Yoakam at the Grammys in February

the audience was new to anything older than three or four years old in country music," says Yoakam, 58. "It was almost like walking out and playing early in my career when people were just getting to know me."

The feeling of plunging into his past extends to Yoakam's upcoming album, *Sec-*