

Mp3 Johnny Bush - Devil's Disciple



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Johnny Bush is king of the Texas honky-tonks. On this album he goes "unplugged". Very unique and eclectic. 15 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Traditional Country, COUNTRY: Country Folk Details: If he had done nothing but write honky-tonk standards like "Whiskey River," "Sound of A Heartache" and "When My Conscience Hurts the Most," Johnny Bush's place in the country music pantheon would be secure. If he merely contented himself with singing standard-setting versions of barstool anthems like "Green Snakes On the Ceiling," "There Stands the Glass" and "A Moment Isn't Very Long," Bush could look back on a career well spent. If he hadn't fronted his own acclaimed ensembles, including his groundbreaking Western Swing big band, the Bandoleros, Bush could take justifiable pride in putting the swing into Ray Price's Cherokee Cowboys and Willie Nelson's early group, The Record Men. In the course of a long and colorful life and career, Johnny Bush has done all of that and more. And in the process, he has met and surmounted a challenge to his life and livelihood that is almost Shakespearean in its diabolical irony. Now, with the release of a new album, HonkyTonic, Bush demonstrates that, in his fifth decade of performing, his mastery of country music literally spans generations. In addition to his old friend, bandleader and mentor, Willie Nelson and fellow honky-tonker Tommy Alverson, Bush is joined on the album by the cream of Texas' new generation of country-rockers, including Kevin Fowler, Cooder Graw and Stephanie Urbina Jones. Born John Bush Shinn III in 1935 in the hardscrabble blue-collar neighborhood of Kashmere Gardens in Houston, Texas, Johnny became an early devotee of the Western Swing music of Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, and the honky-tonk hits of Ernest Tubb, Marty Robbins and Lefty Frizzell. Thanks to the encouragement of an uncle, Jerry Jericho, who had a radio program on KTHT in Houston, John and his brother made fledgling broadcasts that helped infect John with the performers' virus. It proved to be a lifelong condition. After a move to San Antonio following his parents'

divorce, Johnny 17 began to immerse himself in the honky-tonk universe of wine, women and song. He even picked up a residency at a local club, the Texas Star Inn. Thanks to an announcer's trip of the tongue, the new vocalist was introduced one night as "Johnny Bush," and the name stuck. Bush discovered a natural affinity for the drums, which served him well during his associations with dancehall bands like the Mission City Playboys, the Texas Plainsmen and the Texas Tophands. But when he joined Ray Price's Cherokee Cowboys in 1963, (along with a brash young kid named Willie Nelson), Bush finally became a member of the honky-tonk Dream Team. Price's inimitable voice and his mastery of the Texas shuffle dance beat (his massive hit, "Crazy Arms," is the classic example) made the Cherokee Cowboys the top-shelf country band in the nation. Bush played drums for Price for three years in locales as far-flung as New York and even Paris, getting an invaluable education in country music at the hands of one of its masters. His association with Price led Bush to Nashville in the mid-60s and he soon got a deal with a song publisher and began singing demos. Soon he had segued from Ray Price's band to Willie Nelson's group. Bush's first recording split his own tune, "Sound of A Heartache" with Willie's "A Moment Isn't Very Long." Nelson was just a blip on the country music radar (he was best known at the time as a songwriter, not a performer), but Bush found him infinitely inspiring and creative. Nelson produced Bush's first album, *Sound of A Heartache*, in 1967. The friendship and mutual admiration that the two struggling Texans crafted in Nashville endures to this day. A series of regional hits on the Stop label, including "You Gave Me A Mountain," "Undo the Right," "What A Way To Live" and "I'll Be There," marked the ascent of Bush as a popular performer in his own right. Most of the tunes reached No. 1 in the Texas market, and in the Top 10 or Top 20 nationally. Sharing bills with Nelson and working on his own, Bush became an assured and charismatic bandleader and performer. In 1969, he was named the Most Promising Male Vocalist in country music by *Record World* magazine, an extremely prestigious designation. By 1972, he had achieved many of the goals of any aspiring country musician. He was newly signed to RCA Records, whose Nashville division was headed by the legendary Chet Atkins. His first single for the label, "Whiskey River," was well on its way to becoming the biggest hit of his career. He was headlining in and selling out enormous clubs, like his home base at Dancetown USA in Houston. Then it all came crashing down. "It was the summer of 1972," Bush related, "and a few months earlier, something strange had happened. I began to experience a tightness in my voice. The high notes which in the past had come as easily and naturally as breathing became raspy and strangled. It was as if my throat was being choked off. What I felt

was fear." Though neither he nor the doctors and specialists he consulted for many years were able to diagnose it properly, Bush had become afflicted with a rare condition called spasmodic dysphonia. SD, as it is called, is an unusual neurological disorder in which the vocal cords are affected by uncontrollable spasms. For the man whom admiring writers had dubbed "The Country Caruso," it was literally his worst nightmare come true. He lost half the range of his singing voice in short order, and could not talk at all. RCA dropped him from its roster in 1974 after three albums. Bush became addicted to Valium and was consumed by performance anxiety when he was able to perform at all. Worst of all, he did not know what was wrong with him. Finally, in 1978, Johnny was correctly diagnosed with SD. Although his career was struggling by this time, his song Whiskey River had already been cut several times by his friend Willie Nelson, and the royalty checks came at a most needed time. Though Bush's concert bookings dropped sharply and his mood was often bleak, he never stopped performing; he simply developed tricks that would enable him to deliver shows with his limited vocal capacity. And he never stopped looking for a cure for his affliction. His was a courageous battle against an intrusive enemy. In 1985, with the aid of some radical exercise techniques developed by a speech therapist named Gary Catona, Bush was able to reclaim a large part of his singing range and some limited speech. In 1994, Bush released a big-band Western Swing album entitled Time Changes Everything, recorded at his old friend Willie Nelson's studio outside of Austin. It was the beginning of a career renaissance. Between 1998 and 2001, he released a series of albums, including Talk To My Heart, Lost Highway Saloon, Johnny Bush Sings Bob Wills and Green Snakes for the Lone Star/TMG label out of Austin. It wasn't until 2002 that a new treatment involving injections of Botox into the vocal cords restored Bush's speech to a near normal pattern. He has, in recent years, come to be a spokesman of sorts for people afflicted with this still-mysterious disorder. Also in 2002, Bush was honored with the Annie Glenn Award (named for the wife of the senator/astronaut John Glenn) by the National Council of Communicative Disorders for his work in bringing attention to the condition of spasmodic dysphonia. Somewhat to his surprise, the renewed visibility has made him a mentor figure to younger Texas musicians who revered the honky-tonk/hardcore country sound that Bush has helped embody. Austin musicians such as Dale Watson and Cornell Hurd sought Bush out to play on their albums, and his audiences began to swell with fans that weren't even born when "Sound of A Heartache" was a hit. Bush has shared the stage with the cream of the new generation of Texas country artists, including Pat Green and Cross Canadian Ragweed, just to name a

few. In 2003, he was inducted into the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame; Willie was on hand to do the honors. Now, with the release of HonkyTonic on the BGM label, the wheel has come full circle. Younger Texas artists such as Kevin Fowler, Stephanie Urbina Jones and Cooder Graw join Bush contemporaries Willie and Tommy Alverson for a jukebox-friendly collection of shuffles, drinking songs, broken-heart ballads and beer joint singalongs precisely the sort of stuff that Johnny Bush has made his life's work. He's finished his autobiography, but don't ask him about retiring. "Retire from what? Breathing?" he asks rhetorically. "People only retire from jobs they hate. Performing is not a job it's what I do and what I love."

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