

## SPOTLIGHT



Eddie Montgomery, Troy Gentry

## MONTGOMERY GENTRY

The enduring country duo returns to the sound that made them famous

"WE'RE NOT MAINSTREAM COUNTRY," says Troy Gentry. "That's one reason we've had the longevity that we've had. We've always been just different enough to hang in there."

When Gentry and fellow Kentucky native Eddie Montgomery arrived in Nashville in 1997, they were already as influenced by southern rock as they were inspired by outlaw country. By the time the duo released their debut album *Tattoos & Scars* in 1999—driven by the hit single "Hillbilly Shoes"—they were being lauded by critics and radio for having brought back the snarly '70s sound of twin electric guitars.

Montgomery Gentry's latest, *Folks Like Us*, is their eighth studio album, but it's the first in a decade to return to that signature sound. The duo tapped producer Michael Knox, best known for his work with Jason Aldean, to make that happen. Knox had worked with the pair early on in their career, selecting some of their most identifiable hits.

"It made his job easier coming into the studio—he knows what we're supposed to sound like," says Gentry, who notes that he and Montgomery were more comfortable and relaxed in the studio than they had been in recent years.

Knox had plugged songs for Montgomery Gentry when their sound best represented who they are as artists—a sound

they drifted away from toward the end of their relationship with Columbia Nashville. "I think by the last couple of singles there, we were trying to chase radio," Gentry recalls. "We were trying to be relevant and stay on radio, and some of our music dipped and changed in those days."

Montgomery Gentry's first three albums—*Tattoos & Scars*, *Carrying On* (2001) and *My Town* (2002)—were all certified platinum. They also scored five No. 1 hits including "If You Ever Stop Loving Me," "Something to Be Proud Of," "Lucky Man," "Back When I Knew It All" and "Roll With Me."

Sixteen years after releasing their debut, the pair is grateful to still have a career, largely thanks to being embraced by country radio for so long. But at this point, they simply want to record the songs that best represent who they are and how they've always intended to sound—and that includes those twin electric guitars.

"From here on out, our object is to have longevity like the heroes we looked up to," says Gentry, who name-checks Charlie Daniels, Gregg Allman, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings. "Outside of Waylon, those guys are still alive and they're still making music, and that's all Eddie and I can ask for."

—Keith Ryan Cartwright

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