

## REVIEWS

## VINCE GILL &amp; PAUL FRANKLIN

**Bakersfield**

[MCA Nashville]

Longtime friends and bandmates in the Western Swing supergroup the Time Jumpers, Vince Gill and pedal steel virtuoso Paul Franklin embark on a labor of love with their new album, saluting country's classic Bakersfield Sound and its two biggest stars, Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. Gill demonstrates his versatility as a guitarist and singer, flattening his vowels to match Owens' inflections and even singing his own harmonies. Franklin doesn't sing a note, but he delivers a heart-wrenching solo on "Together Again" and swaggers through closer "The Fightin' Side of Me." Amid obvious choices, *Bakersfield* includes deep cuts like "But I Do," a Tommy Collins song Owens recorded in 1963. "He Don't Deserve You Anymore," written by Owens and Arty Lange, is a fantastic shuffle, while Haggard's "Holding Things Together" is a poignant ballad about single parenthood. *Bakersfield* is an enthralling album that sounds effortless and timeless. Buck would be proud. —Juli Thanki

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