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## **The *Revival* of Radney Foster**

**By John Goodspeed**

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Radney Foster watched himself on a flat-screen television monitor strumming an acoustic guitar and singing "I Know You Can Hear Me," an emotional message to his father, retired Del Rio lawyer John Radney Foster, who died last year in San Antonio.

On the screen, Foster stopped singing in midverse and said, "I can't finish it right now."

In the darkened room, Foster said, "It's still hard to watch."

The others in the ProductionCorp office on Isom Road, including director and producer Jeff Horny and film editor Joe David Garza, could only nod their heads at the powerful moment.

It was one of many in "Behind the Confessions," a documentary that accompanies the release of "Revival," Foster's first album in three years. He plans to sing most of the new songs when he plays Sam's Burger Joint on Friday.

The album is one of the most personal yet for Foster, known for edgy and intuitive country music straddling the line between rough-and-tumble Texas and mainstream Nashville.

In the same year he lost his father, Foster pretty much gained a son.

Thirteen years ago, his ex-wife remarried and moved to France, taking their son, Julien, with her. Foster rarely got to see him. Now the 17-year-old is in college about two miles from Foster's home in Nashville.

"The best thing I know how to do as an artist is to capture a portrait of where I am emotionally and where I am musically at the time," Foster said. "So I did what I encourage all young writers to do -- I wrote what I know.

"Thus the roller-coaster ride of this record."

The songs range from the party tune "Trouble Tonight," which Foster wrote with fellow Texas star Jack Ingram, to moving reflections of current events, such as "Angel Flight," a co-write with Austin artist Darden Smith about military pilots who fly their fallen brothers home from the Middle East.

But "A Little Revival" laid down the album's theme of struggle and rebirth, with "Forgiveness" continuing that spiritual premise.

So when Foster approached filmmaker Horny, the idea for a couple of YouTube-type videos grew into a documentary.

"The content of this album is something I thought would be a good message, and that's the kind of movies I want to make," said Horny, a 1988 graduate of Clark High School who has appeared in a number of films and television series including "The Drew Carey Show" and "Party of Five."

Horny explored the album's themes of revival and forgiveness through interviews with everyone from recovering drug addicts and prostitutes to such Nashville luminaries as Vince Gill and Brad Paisley.

"I think there is a lot of hope in this film," Horny said.

Scenes range from a street preacher in front of the Alamo and Foster with KJ97's Randy Carroll and Jamie Martin to a guest appearance at a Keith Urban concert in Dallas and Foster's 50th birthday party at Hill's Café in Austin with the likes of Pat Green, Cory Morrow, Kevin Fowler, Joe Ely and Roger Creager.

Intimate glimpses of Foster's life are there, too, including wife, Cindi, and their children, Jack, 10, and Maureen, 8; his mother, Bette; and Julien, who is a budding songwriter.

"The most revealing part of the documentary is that Radney is just a normal guy, a real family man," Horny

said.

The film was well received during a screening at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville during the Americana Music Association conference a few weeks ago, Horny said.

"People laughed at the right places and cried at the right places," he said. "After the screening, I had one guy come up to me and start bawling.

"It takes people on the roller-coaster ride of emotions like Radney's music."

*Radney Foster performs at 8 p.m. Friday at Sam's Burger Joint, 330 E. Grayson. Zack Walther & the Cronkites will open.*

*The documentary is available at [www.radneyfoster.com](http://www.radneyfoster.com).*

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