

## *Dear Readers and Subscribers,*

With heavy hearts we announce the death of our dear friend and mentor, Bruce Elrod. At age 74, the music industry leader passed away peacefully at his home in South Carolina on October 12, 2023, surrounded by friends and family.

Bruce was born in 1949 and grew up in Columbia, South Carolina. He would become a record collector as a young lad, buying his first 78 RPM (revolutions per minute) of Billy Hayes singing *The Ballad Of Davy Crockett*. With the help of his parents and a vocational grant, right out of high school, he opened his first business, Elrod's Record Shop & Gas Station. The year was 1968, gas was \$.18 a gallon, Coke and Pepsi were \$.10 a bottle (and returnable for cash), 45 records were \$.39 and LPs were \$3.88. Folks would drive up for a fill-up and order 45s. Bruce would go on to USC to study meteorology but became a social worker. The record shop closed in 1972.

Elrod would take a music hobby and create a business called Your Hit Parade Golden Oldies. The business bought old records from stores and radio stations, then resold them. As inventory dwindled, he realized that 45s, 78s, and LPs were not being produced any longer. Elrod's business brainstorm was with the startup of Lost Gold Records in 1986. The company's first LP was artist Roz Bowie, an amazing black lady vocalist from Oklahoma. She did the recording for the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Her version of *Dixie* was perhaps the best version ever recorded, with both Billboard and Cashbox giving it tremendous reviews. On through the 80s, master tracks from various and major recording artists would duplicate into well over one-hundred CDs, each selling very well.

A conversation with Merle Kilgore and Hank Williams, Jr., about the old Cash Box magazine prompted Bruce to do some research. He secured a web domain name and, later, on July 4, 2006, the magazine went live as an online publication. The name was modified from two words – Cash Box – to one word, Cashbox. The cover was captured by Rebel's Creek from Burnsville, North Carolina. Bruce was quoted as saying, "I never realized nostalgia was as big as it was. Cashbox exploded on the internet!" With the purchase of Record World Magazine in 2013, Bruce stated, "I look for great things in the future, before I go to that great Cashbox in the sky."

In 2015, Tommy Smith, CEO of Canyon Creek Records, introduced Wilds & Associates CEO Randall Wilds to Bruce. Through this acquaintance, a business partnership was eventually established, and Wilds & Associates would become the publisher of Cashbox – reviving the magazine somewhat to its former glory as a bi-monthly, printed publication. The first printed edition of Cashbox published in November of 2018 by Wilds & Associates featured Country music artist, Blake Shelton. After a few printed issues, it became apparent that the publication was being highly received by music professionals and entertainment industry leaders. The magazine continues to grow beyond what anyone could have imagined.

Cashbox Magazine is now a part of the Wilds & Associates conglomerate, with Randall Wilds serving as C.O.O. of Cashbox and Tommy Smith as Marketing Consultant. "Bruce was an intelligent man and, as a



**BRUCE CLIFF ELROD**

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music historian, he could tell you just about every song and artist that had ever been released to radio. Music was his life," stated Tommy. He continues, "Bruce and Randall worked together well for many years. Every time I would talk to Bruce, he would comment on what a great job Randall had done. Cashbox is in good hands with Randall, and I believe it will be the major charting magazine that all music genres will be paying close attention to for years and years to come. Thank you, Bruce, for loving Christ enough to include our artists in your charts. Bruce would always make reference that he was a Christian Jew and was proud of it. He will be missed by all."

Randall adds, "Bruce was truly a pleasure to work with. He was a good man, and a savvy businessman. As a mentor to me, he taught me so much about the music business and about the history of Cashbox magazine. I am sure it could be said of Bruce that he was an expert in the field of music. I'm so thankful to have known him, and very grateful to him for the opportunity to be a part of re-establishing such an iconic music trade publication. Because of his vision and tireless efforts, Cashbox is thriving once again, and still growing."

With each Cashbox issue forward, Wilds and Associates will be striving to excellently and professionally present every singer, songwriter, producer, talent agency, concert event, and record label in a deserving spotlight, a platform, if you will, for the brand-new artist hitting the stage, or for the artist hitting the comeback stage.

Randall and the entire staff of Cashbox say they desire to continue the publication with integrity and pride and preserve the legacy of its founders and former owners – the late Bill Gersh, George Albert, and Bruce Elrod.

*Editorial Staff, Cashbox*