

Sept 15 Wednesday
Restless Heart

The original is still the greatest. Restless Heart is back.

Restless Heart was one of RCA's greatest band success stories of the late '80s and early '90s, turning out a series of gold-selling albums, garnering a host of award nominations, and crossing over to the adult contemporary charts before dissolving in 1996. Their hits included "I'll Still Be Loving You," "Tender Lie," "Why Does It Have To Be (Wrong or Right)," "When She Cries," "Bluest Eyes In Texas," and "Dancy's Dream."

The Restless Heart story began when Larry Stewart, who had moved from Paducah, Kentucky to Nashville, Tennessee and enrolled in Belmont College, met fellow, future Restless Heart member Dave Innis at a recording studio on campus. The two became friends, and Innis asked Stewart, who was much in demand as a demo singer, to demo some songs for him. Innis later introduced him to producer/songwriter Tim Dubois. Innis and Dubois invited Stewart to audition for the band they and some other friends from Oklahoma were putting together, the band which eventually became Restless Heart. From the start, there was intensity and conviction in the sound made by Stewart, drummer John Dittrich, guitarist Greg Jennings, pianist Dave Innis and bassist Paul Gregg. The group blended its back roads country training with the punch of contemporary pop, the layered harmonies of West Coast country-rock and the tight professionalism that only the finest Nashville players can achieve. The secret to the sound was a mixture of the polished sheen of the musicianship with the soulful, from-the-heart quality of the vocals.

During their ten year history, Restless Heart scored three gold-selling albums which produced seven number one singles in a row; they received a dozen Grammy, CMA, and ACM nominations and were named ACM's Vocal Group of the Year in 1990. Larry Stewart left in 1990 to pursue a solo career. He released three solo LPs and had a Top 5 Country song with, "Alright Already," but nothing matched the impact of his years with Restless Heart.

When Stewart departed, Restless Heart continued with four, then three, of the original members and were successful with their crossover hit, the catchy yet haunting "When She Cries," with John Dittrich singing lead. "When She Cries" was named BMI song of the Year for 1993 and it was followed by another top ten crossover single "Tell Me What You Dream." Still it wasn't the same and in 1996 the group disbanded with Greg Jennings to tour with Vince Gill and John Dittrich to work with The Buffalo Club.

Through it all, the guys stayed in touch. In 1996, four of the original members of Restless Heart – Larry Stewart, Greg Jennings, John Dittrich and Paul Gregg – reassembled in Jennings' studio to make a tape for a fan who was ill. It sounded great and they hadn't lost a thing. That good-will gesture "planted a seed" for a reunion. In 1998 the four reunited for a greatest hits package that was released by RCA that summer. Larry Stewart was recording a new album at that time so he appeared courtesy of Windham Hill Records. The tour began in Denver, Colorado in mid-January and they joined Vince Gill on his tour beginning that summer and continued touring with Vince through the end of the year 1998.

Dozens of country-music groups have appeared during the past few years that sport top-notch instrumental abilities, flawless harmony blends, songwriting talent and onstage showmanship. Virtually all of them will tell you that they were inspired by the virtuoso performances of Restless Heart. The group's brilliant 1985-94 string of successes remains unmatched for sheer technical finesse, heartfelt vocal emotion and downright audio charisma. None of those succeeding bands has recaptured this special magic.

The years have shown that, whatever its origin, Restless Heart has earned its place in music as a consistent No. 1 chart act, as a strong record seller and as a committed touring attraction with a strong fan following. Restless Heart will be touring again with all the original members; Larry Stewart, Paul Gregg, John Dittrich, Dave Innis and Greg Jennings.