



## Wade Bowen Bio

Twenty years and some 4,000 shows into his career, the name Wade Bowen has become synonymous with Texas country music – and for good reason. An artistic descendant of American icons like Guy Clark, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Robert Earl Keen and more, Bowen is another link in a Texan chain of roots-rock poets stretching back more than 50 years – but his ambition never ended at the state line.

“I will carry that flag proudly,” Bowen says of his well earned Red-Dirt distinction. “But I’ve always said I’m not a ‘Texas artist,’ I’m an artist from Texas, and I think there’s a difference.”

Indeed, Bowen has showed the world that difference since 2001 – by going big on integrity.

Seen as one of the genre’s finest and most authentic modern voices, Bowen’s approach stays rooted in tradition, but also stands on the creative cutting edge. His focus remains on writing unique songs with a literary quality, and shifting his sonic territory to match his life. And while the hard-touring troubadour is constantly breaking new ground, his course was set early on.

Born in Waco and schooled in the clubs surrounding Lubbock’s Texas Tech University, Bowen was raised on a steady diet of hardscrabble country realism and rock showmanship. His mother loved Elvis, the Eagles and Creedence Clearwater Revival, while his father spun Texan giants like Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson. His first concert was a peak-theatrics Alabama show, but even then, it was the lyrics which spoke the loudest. He began writing poems and short stories as a boy, drawn to the page with a can’t-help-it creative spark. And then in college, the songs came.

“Writing songs is just something you have to get out of you, it’s something you have to do,” he says. “I think it’s the same reason firefighters run into a burning house to save someone, it’s a calling. You can’t really be taught, you just have to have that instinct.”

In Lubbock, Bowen was skilled enough with a guitar to harbor secret dreams of stardom. But his journey truly started after one fateful night out, experiencing something like musical enlightenment.

“I thought the way to be an artist was to graduate college, then move to Nashville to wait tables and wait my turn in line,” Bowen explains. “But when I saw Robert Earl Keen in concert, it changed my life forever. It was like ‘*Wait. He’s playing his own stuff? And he doesn’t have a major record deal? And the place is sold out?*’ People were going crazy, and it was like ‘*I don’t have to wait? I can do this now?*’ I literally went home and found some buddies, and we started jamming.”

Bowen soon claimed his place as West 84’s front man, then went solo and found a home in now-iconic haunts like Stubb’s Barbecue and The Blue Light. He arrived amid a literal explosion of Texas country artists. But combining all his influence together, always stood out.

Wielding a knack for direct, poetic songwriting that never panders, Bowen slices through the B.S. of country-lifestyle posturing, and matches his gravel-road growl to a sound spanning the whole of Texas. From swaying campfire singalongs with all the mystery of a windblown West Texas sunset, to two-stepping country rockers geared toward Saturday nights in the state's famed dancehalls, he's earned a rep for purpose-driven diversity. And just like his heroes, does everything on *his* terms.

A dozen albums have shown the evolution – including six studio sets, two beloved live collections, a gospel album and an ongoing series of buddy-country hits with fellow Texan, Randy Rogers. *Lost Hotel* was a watershed moment of song craft, boosting his standing in the crowded Texas field. *If We Ever Make It Home* mixed deeply personal writing with a muscular, Springsteen-style rock sound. And 2018's *Solid Ground* reconnected Bowen to his hill-country roots.

Along the way, he's scored hits and accolades based on quality, not quantity – collecting four more trophies at the T3R Regional Radio Music Awards in 2021. But he's also earned the respect of the commercial industry, proving his mettle with *The Given* on BNA Records in 2012 and continuing to make appearances on the Grand Ole Opry to this day.

"I think I pride myself on being universal, and I'm so glad I don't ever just settle for making another record," he says. "It's really important to me to prove a point with every one."

Lately, his *Hold My Beer* and *Watch This* series of albums and tours with Randy Rogers have made a point of exploring new avenues – all while showcasing the pair's fun-loving brotherhood. And as a solo act, Bowen continues to tour hard, overcoming a 2018 vocal surgery and the 2020 shutdowns to retake his place on nearly 200 stages each year. But even that will never be enough.

Just like his heroes – many of whom are now peers – Wade Bowen has spent a lifetime bringing his Texas-bred country music out into the world. After 20 years of success, he's learned without doubt that the "Sun Shines On a Dreamer." But also, that the road really does go on forever.

"Like Ray Wylie Hubbard has taught so many of us, 'You don't have a choice if you're a true songwriter, it just calls you to do it,'" Bowen says. "I really believe that with all my heart, and I just feel like I've got a lot more to do – like I haven't accomplished anywhere near what I set out to.

"It's not a discouraging thought," he adds. "I just really feel like I could be better now than I've ever been."