

## THE AMERICAN GENRE by John Reilly

I suppose it's become easy to vent disillusion with our country given the current petulant political atmosphere. Watching the nightly news or reading the daily newspapers or listening to the drive time talk shows and trying to decipher what's real and what's agenda-driven narrative has become something akin to Alan Turing and his Bletchley Park cryptanalysts huddled around prehistoric machinery in a hectic attempt to crack the Enigma Code. And it's at these times, when my conventional position defaults to assume that it's very likely everyone is lying to me, that I do the one thing that always reminds me how great this country is.

I switch on 102.5 and listen to Country Music.

I'm being only slightly hyperbolic here, but I'm really not exaggerating when I state that Country Music has profoundly impacted me and, in a way, the entire American subconscious. Born out of a necessity to provide a voice to those that had none, Country Music takes the experiences of everyday people, the American working class, and turns their history into our toe-tappin', shack-shakin' songs.

Throughout the relatively short history of the United States, these songs have become our anthems, delivering messages that surely would have received undivided endorsement by the delegates who created the framework for our government at the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

In 1992, Billy Ray Cyrus provided us a reminder how we all got here in the first place...

*All Gave Some, Some Gave All  
Some stood through for the red, white and blue  
And some had to fall*

And when Faith Hill released "*American Dream*" in 2012, she sang of the traditional American family values that have allowed this country to prosper. And being thankful for every opportunity we've been offered...

*Another dollar, another day, another cup of coffee  
Thank you Lord for giving me one more  
That life is hard, so she takes it on  
With an American Heart*

Finally, songs like Miranda Lambert's "*All Kinds of Kinds*" preach the type of inclusivity and diversity that is both politically topical and significant...

*Now some point the finger, let ignorance linger  
If they'd look in the mirror they'd find*

*That ever since the beginning to keep the world spinning  
It takes all kinds of kinds*

Country Music isn't simply about our history. It is a blueprint our lives. These songs have provided us with a roadmap for achievement and, through the context and the lyrics, represent our nation's strength and integrity. And if you can look past the occasional fun ditty ("*You're Wife is Cheating on Us Again*") and seek the pulse ("*Love Wins*," Carrie Underwood; "*God Bless the USA*," Lee Greenwood) – it's there you will find the heartbeat and the soul of this country. These are the lyrics of the people, for the people and by the people. I am not American because I love Country Music; I love Country Music because I am American.

Now...could somebody please turn the radio on in Washington DC?