

kinds of stuff. I think that's what's kept me going, because I can do so many things.

Women have created a knicker-throwing ritual during your performances.

What can you tell about a woman based on the type of knickers she throws?

I think it's just the more outrageous they are, they think that I would take notice of them more. But I don't think you can really find out anything about the person from that.

You collaborate with younger artists and explore different genres, but what is the common thread in a song or an artist that makes you say, "I want to be a part of that"?

The music itself needs to be vibrant. Whether it's an up-tempo song or whether it's a ballad, it's gotta say something and it needs to have something that perks me up. Like "I'm Alive" [by Tommy James and the Shondells], for instance. It drives. It keeps saying the same thing: "I'm alive and I'm red, I'm yellow, I'm black, I'm tan, I'm alive." You know, I'm a man and I'm here and this is it. But it's different from other songs. The same thing with ballads—they have to be cleverly written. Even sometimes they can only be two chords, it's still interesting. There's another song on the CD that Bruce Springsteen wrote called "The Hitter," which has only got two chords in it, but it's a very interesting story and that's why I wanted to do it.

The song and video for "24 Hours" are so stark and solemn. This is a side of you that we rarely get to see.

Well, the song came from the middle part of "Green Green Grass of Home." I recorded that song, and it's about a man in jail and you don't know it really until the end... he's gonna be executed. So ["24 Hours"] is about the last part of a man's life. Lisa Greene was one of the writers and she said, "When I got up today, I had the end of 'Green Green Grass of Home' on my mind. Do you think we could write the song just concentrating on that?" And I said, "Okay, we'll try." And we did. It sounded very interesting. Once we finished it I thought,

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—TOM JONES

well, maybe it's a little too morbid, but we'll try it and see what people think. I did it on a couple of TV shows and that video we did, and it sort of had an impact.

You were more involved in the songwriting process for this album than ever before. What was the most challenging part of the experience?

Well, I have written before, but not so much. I wrote some in the '60s with my original manager Gordon Mills because he was a songwriter, and when he would get stuck I would sort of help out. I've always dabbled in it, but not as much as this album. And the reason

being is that it came out of necessity. They say necessity is the mother of invention. Well, this is what happened with this album. There wasn't enough available material around that I liked. And so I said to Steve Greenberg of S-Curve Records, "I don't like the stuff that we've got here," and he said, "Why don't you get more involved with it if you feel that way?" That's what sort of got me writing with these people. I thought, "I've got to get in here. I can't wait for songs to come my way; I have to help create them."

How has your live performance evolved over the years?

I think the pacing is better. I used to sort of try to open the show with a closer and top it, and you can't. You get burned out like that. You can't attack all the time—it gets people nervous. You need to try and bring the audience along with you, like a musical journey—ups and downs, lights and shades of songs.

You've received so many awards, played at so many prestigious events; you're an icon; ladies love you, men want to be you... so what are some of the most boring things about you?

There's nothing boring about me. [Laughs]



24 HOURS is available now from S-Curve Records