



Mark Nevers on Beech House Recording and 30 Years of Nashville Rock

From Lambchop to Lone Official, some of Music City's most distinctive music projects passed through Nevers' studio, which closed in June

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Mark Nevers at Beech House Recording, 2006. Photo: Eric England

"The Beech House is actually just a part of the whole Nashville experience," producer Mark Nevers says about the renowned Music City recording studio he closed earlier this month.

The disappearance of Beech House Recording marks the end of an era of Nashville music that saw local rock bands (many of whom Nevers recorded at the unprepossessing bungalow he converted into a studio) begin to achieve international prominence.

"I was gonna mow the yard one last time and let it die in dignity," Nevers tells the Scene. "But I thought maybe it'd be better to let it just haunt for a while and scare the neighborhood before the lawyers come and erase everything I've ever done, like Tibetan sand art."

I first met Nevers in 2006, when this paper asked me to profile him. Interviewing him at Beech House, I found Nevers funny, caustic and knowledgeable — a punk acolyte who viewed country music as a combination of high art and lowbrow folly.

Born in 1964 at Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix, Nevers enjoyed a peripatetic childhood before his family settled in Myrtle Beach, S.C. He weathered experiences as an engineer on country sessions at Franklin recording studio The Castle that would color his perceptions of Nashville's greatest export, and he quit the music business once in 1995 to work as a chef.

Nevers left mainstream country for good during the Castle sessions for Australian singer Jamie O'Neal's 2000 single "There Is No Arizona," which topped the country charts that year.

Drawing upon his time working on mainstream country hits, Nevers would create a post-country-politan sound at Beech House on later recordings by Bobby Bare Sr., alt-country singer Will Oldham and, perhaps most famously, pop-country avant-gardists Lambchop.

You can hear gospel influences in Nevers' production of Lambchop's 2000 track "Up With People." While recording had gone on in the space since Nevers moved in during the '80s, he cites that song as the first true Beech House production.

"We've still got a whole record that's not been released," says Nevers. "It's called Preachy, and it was done over the last 10 years before he died, just little chunks at a time. It was kind of his atheist record."

In addition to recording Chesnutt, Nevers cut records at Beech House by idiosyncratic rock band Silver Jews, Alabama punk rockers Dexateens and country singer-songwriter Laura Cantrell.

Nevers says he plans to concentrate on mixing and the occasional recording project at his new location in South Carolina. For now, he'll retain the Beech House name, but that could change sometime down the road.

"What was it I said the other day about my Nashville experience? 'It's been good: I recorded George Jones sing and I smoked Neil Diamond's weed.' It's been all right."

Check out a playlist of 15 tracks chronicling Nevers' work at Beech House.

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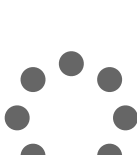
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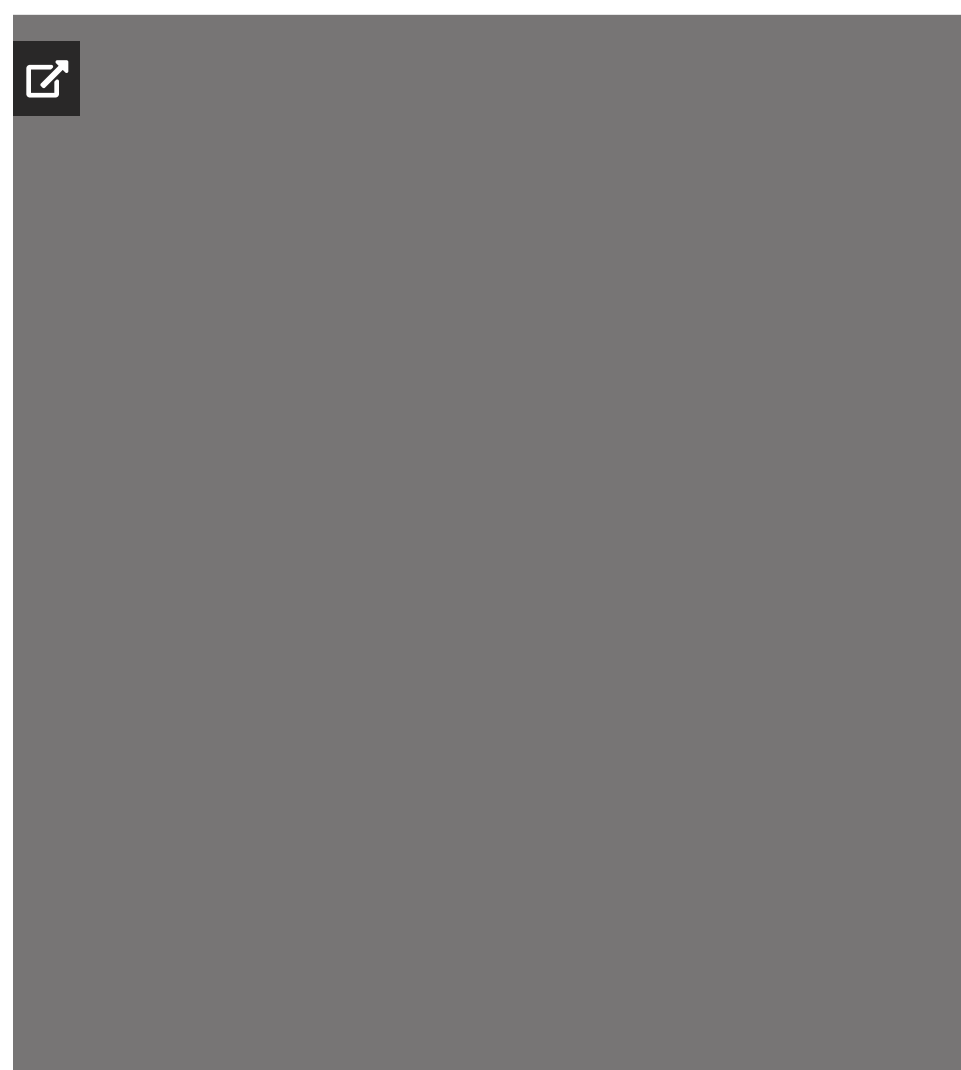
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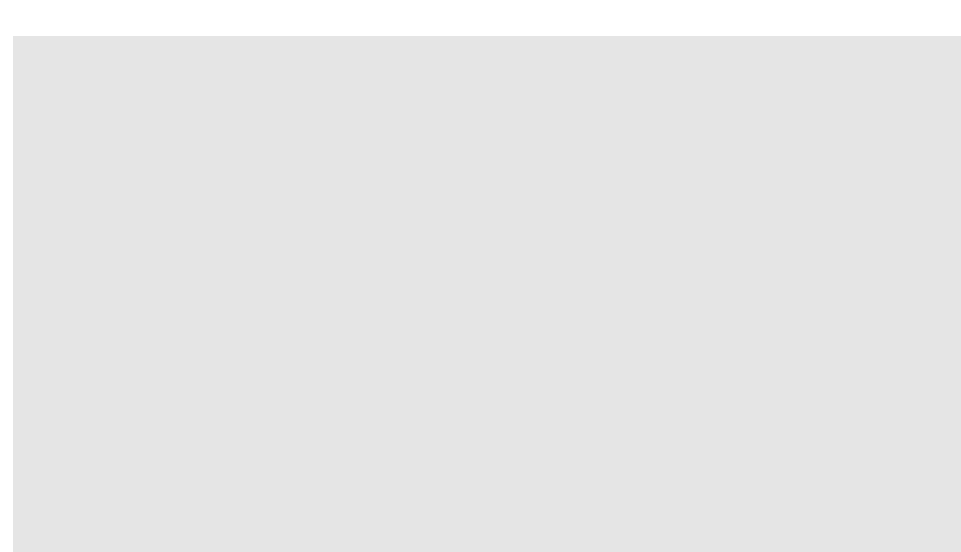
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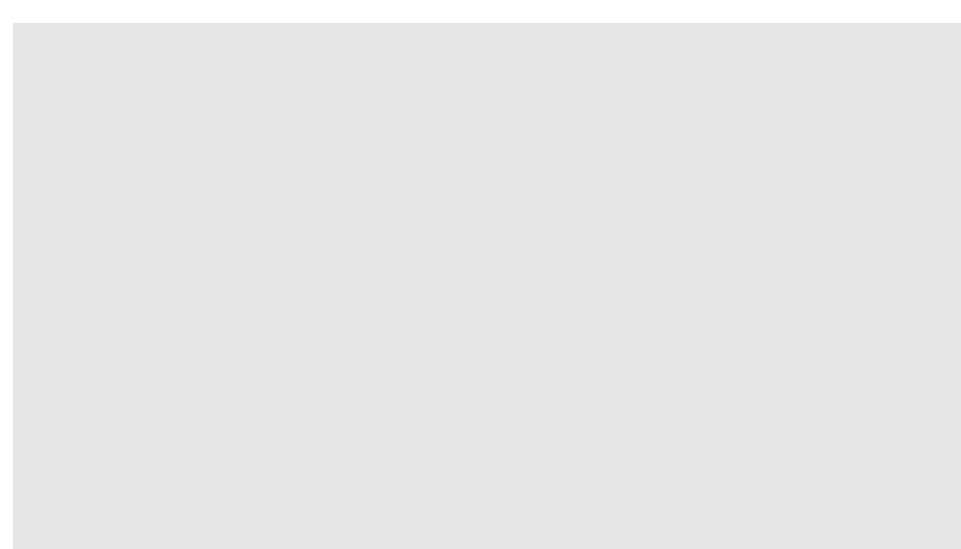
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