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## KENNY ROGERS: "I'M A FATHER FIRST AND A SINGER SECOND"

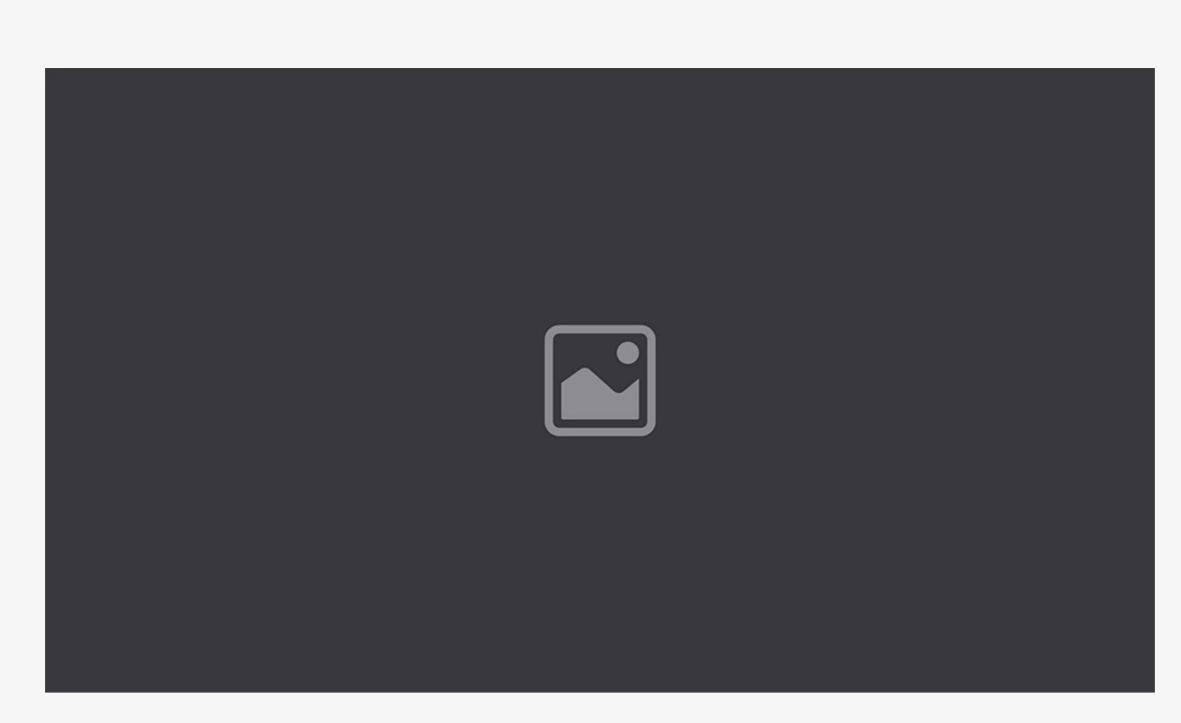
**FINAL TOUR HITS SOUTHEAST ASIA** 

By Lauren Tingle August 13, 2016 1:23 PM











There is a solid reason behind Kenny Rogers' decision to stop touring. Right now, his final tour is world away in Southeast Asia with a concert scheduled for Sunday (Aug. 14) in Taipei, Taiwan. But his heart will always be at home with his wife Wanda Miller and their 11-year-old twin boys.

"I hope my fans understand that I'm a father first and a singer second," he said while sitting in a conference room at his publicist's headquarters in Lebanon, Tennessee. "As it turns out, I'm missing some very great parts of my boys' lives. I know as well as anybody else how that time gets away from you. And I don't want to miss it. I just worry about how much longer I'm going to be here, and I want to have time to spend with them. It's pretty simple."

you," he apologized for the break in our appointment and said, "I can't be mad at her." They celebrated 19 years of marriage in June.

CMT.com: What are your shows like in Southeast Asia? Tell me about the connection you have

Atlanta the day before and was on her way back home. After hanging up with a "thanks, honey" and a "love

Toward the beginning of our CMT.com interview, Miller called his cell just to check in. She had been in

I haven't been in a long time. I'm always shocked that people know who I am over there. And I've gotten several letters from Korea from people who say, "I learned to speak English singing your song." Country music is funny. If it hurts, it hurts. I just think it is nice when you can cross that line, speak to people, and they understand you.

How has the connection with your fans evolved over the years?

They let me get away with so much. I come out onstage and I don't know what I'm going to do half the time. My theory is, if people are laughing, even if they don't like my music, that must mean they're having a good time. So, if people don't laugh, I get very insecure very quickly. So, I try to have humor comedy in my show. I like to make people laugh, and that's I think the connection I have. I don't just go up and sing all my songs. You have a responsibility to break that audience/performer barrier. If you don't do it, you miss something very special.

What will you miss most about the road?

with your fans there.

I guess my band. They've been with me over 40 years most of them. And they're good guys. I feel bad when I told them I was going to quit, they all took a deep breath and said, "Ok. What do we do now?" This is a twoyear tour. We're doing about 55 days this year and 55 next year.

In this line of work, I don't think anyone really retires. I know you're stepping away from the road, but what does the next chapter of your career look like?

In my heart, I've done mine. There's only two ways you can compete in this business, and I'm smart enough to know it. You can only compete by doing what everybody else does and do it better. I don't like my chances of doing something totally different and doing it by comparison. So, I don't think I have the will to look for something totally different. "You Can't Make Old Friends" came in. It was totally different from what was out there. The fact that Dolly was on there, I mean, it was our story, which was what made it so powerful.

I was reading Country Music U.S.A. and it quoted a 1983 Playboy magazine piece that labeled you as "a music superstar in any music genre." What do you think was the key to your success in experimenting with your sound over the years?

A lot of it is timing. I came in a time in this business when people had to buy an album. That means they got 10 songs, and they get to listen to 10 songs by the artist and they get to know which songs I like. And they get to say, "I think I would like him" -- or not like him -- because of that song. Nowadays, they buy an album or they download one song, and they don't really get to know the artist. They get to know that song.

That song can sell a lot. But you don't get the benefit of the album sales. I tell these young kids that talk to me, I say, "Look, it's real simple. The longer it takes you to reach your pinnacle, the longer your glide ratio down." If you go straight up, you're going to come straight down. I mean, that's kind of the rule of thumb. I want youngsters who are interested to know that there is a business formula to this business. If you don't, it will devour you.

If we're lucky to be alive in 30 years, who do you think making music now we'll be listening to

I think Blake Shelton.

then?

You're touring with Charlie Worsham in the U.K.

Charlie Worsham is good. But you just don't know. It's not just whether they can do good music that fits or not, it's how they adjust their music when it doesn't fit. I came into country music not trying to change country music but trying to survive. And so I did songs that were not country but were more pop. Nowadays they're not doing country songs at all. What they're doing is creating their own genre of country music. But I told somebody the other day, country music is what country people will buy. If the country audience doesn't buy it, they'll kick it out. And if they do, then it becomes country music. It's just era of country music we're in.

Houston is scheduled for Oct. 28. Shows in the U.K., Ireland and the Netherlands start Oct. 31 in Glasgow.

The Gambler's Last Deal tour returns stateside on Aug. 20 in Grand Prairie, Texas. A hometown show in

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