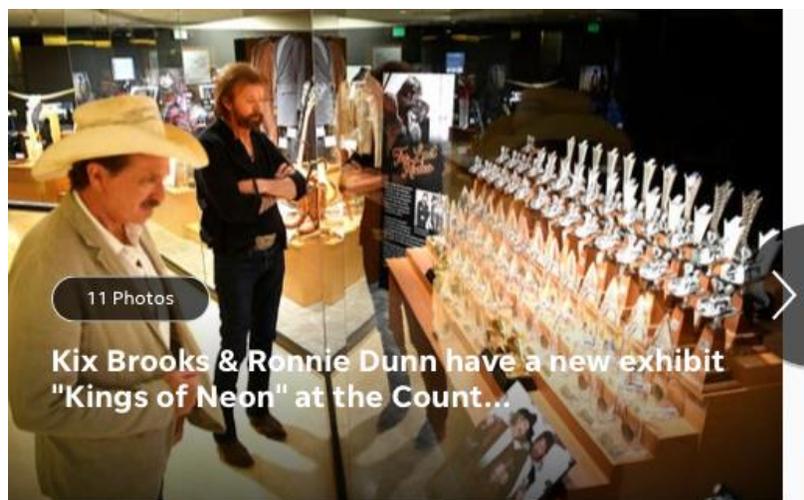


(8.9.19) - <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2019/08/09/brooks-dunn-unveil-country-music-hall-fame-exhibit/1948356001/>

BROOKS & DUNN RECALLS HUNGER, MILESTONES AT NEW COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME EXHIBIT



Ronnie Dunn looked over his shoulder at the larger-than-life photo of himself as a young man that is hanging in [Brooks & Dunn](#)'s new exhibit at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

When the photo was taken, Dunn said he was "running from hunger" and he thought chasing music had ruined his life. But, he had a message for that guy on the wall.

"You keep doing it," Dunn said. "Don't give up. Don't stop. There was no Plan B."

The determination paid off. Years later, Dunn formed Brooks & Dunn with Kix Brooks and the duo went on to become the most successful in country music history. They charted 41 Top 10 hits, sold 26 million records and collected a record-setting number of vocal duo awards. Earlier this year, it was announced Brooks & Dunn will be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame this October.

As they sat in front of their new exhibit ["Brooks & Dunn: Kings of Neon,"](#) they reflected on the milestones that propelled them from poor paying bar obscurity to being the recipients of country music's most distinguished honors.

They were each solo artists for years before country music executive Tim DuBois introduced them and suggested they try and work together. Brooks and Dunn found their collective voice, flipped the "and" to an ampersand and the duo was born. Their first song was their first hit and the moment that meant Dunn never had to worry about being hungry again.



"We threw a band together lightning fast and hit the road," he said. "Our managers are going, 'Don't do that.' We were like, 'No, if we're going to do this, we're going to ride this horse into the ground fast because it isn't going to last long.'"

The ride lasted until the men chose to hit the brakes. Brooks & Dunn went on hiatus in 2010 but reunited in 2014 for a Las Vegas residency with Reba McEntire at Caesars Palace that is still ongoing. Earlier this year, [Brooks & Dunn released "Reboot,"](#) a collection of collaborations with contemporary country stars on new versions of the duo's biggest hits.

"Brooks & Dunn: Kings of Neon" traces their path from beer soaked bar bands to country music icons. The exhibit includes dozens of their trophies from awards shows, an impressive display of stage clothes, multiple custom guitars, Dunn's stars and stripes Harley Davidson, their 5/8th-scale Legends race car from the 1990s and more.

"You go from moment to moment," Brooks said of the exhibit. "The hall is great at doing these displays. Even looking at Ronnie's motorcycle and it's not mine. I think about when we started buying motorcycles. It's rednecks with money it's kind of a cliché in our world. But both of us had been poor for so long and you get to do all the stuff your parents wouldn't let you do and that we couldn't afford to do. We jumped in with both feet having fun, playing music, writing songs ..."



"Driving race cars, buying (motorcycles)," Dunn jumped in. "But we played it real conservative because we were older when we got in the game."

The display of awards give the men pause. Lined up in rows, the trophies are a central focus of the exhibit. But they say their career was never about the hardware, it was about the songs.

"Our lives are these other things and those nights were big celebrations," Brooks said. "The pictures are what make you think."

"This is all fun stuff but it's a by-product of the songs and they represent specific memories for people," Dunn said. "The songs are going to be the things we're remembered by."

"Brooks & Dunn: Kings of Neon" runs through July 19, 2020 at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Located at 222 Fifth Avenue South in Nashville, the museum is open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily but is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.