

Randy Sharp connects with latest release

By Drew Walen

dwalen@nashvillecitypaper.com

The Sharp family has much to herald these days. Maia Sharp recently released her first album in five years to critical acclaim. Now along comes her songwriter father Randy with his first solo product in 15 years, *The Connection*, to be released Sept. 10 on 33rd Street Records.

Recorded over the last 18 months by both Sharps, this album features both new and old material from Randy Sharp's catalog. And he had plenty to work with from his first major hit "Could it Be Love," which launched Jennifer Warnes' career in 1973, to the more recent Clay Walker smash "Then What." Along the way he's made a name for himself with cuts by Blood, Sweat & Tears, Linda Ronstadt, Glen Campbell and Patty Loveless.

"This is a project that I've put off for years," he said. "Somewhere along the way my focus moved to the songwriter/producer aspect of what I do,

and the singer/songwriter performing his own songs in his own fashion got elbowed to the back of the line. The most difficult part of starting this project was deciding what songs to include. The project finally got started when I realized that I didn't have to decide; Maia did. [She] was producing it with me, so I made her do it."

Tracks like "I Won't Stand In Line," previously recorded by Reba McEntire, has the same Texas shuffle qualities that are the hallmark of Lyle Lovett and is a fabulously catchy way to launch the disc. "Some Walls," previously recorded by Maura O'Connell, is a 12-string guitar ballad Sharp's delicate tenor caresses like a wind blown silk scarf across your face. The ebb and flow of music is sweeping and evocative, with production and arrangements leaning on '70s country and pop styles. If it were anyone else it might be schmaltzy, but somehow it works for Sharp. The most updated sound belongs to "Burn Day," perhaps the most radio-

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT



ready cut on the album. However, "Some Walls" is due to be the first single released.

This is a wonderful CD from a heartfelt writer with a gifted voice. Fifteen years

was a long time to wait to reconnect with his audience. Also listen for his song "A Home," co-written with daughter Maia, which appears on the new Dixie Chicks recording released this week. **CP**