

THE Voice.

Sandi Patty shares the heart behind her art.

WHEN HER DEBUT ALBUM, *Sandi's Songs*, released in 1979, Sandi Patty's name was misspelled on the cover. Her last name was spelled with an "i" instead of a "y." And because she didn't point out the typo, the mistake followed her through the first half of her career.

"I never said anything. I don't know why. I thought, *Oh, it's going to be more trouble for everybody else to go back and redo it. I'll just keep that mistake.* I didn't have the courage, and I didn't know that it was OK for me to do that," she reflects. "I never really felt like I had a voice. I didn't know how to speak up. I didn't know how to share my thoughts."

Ironically, the sheer force of her pristine vocals led her to simply be dubbed "The Voice." Sandi went on to become the most-awarded female vocalist in Christian music history. With 40 Dove Awards, five GRAMMY® awards, four *Billboard* Music Awards, three Platinum records, five Gold

Sandi's Voice

Although Sandi Patty has authored numerous books throughout the course of her career, she's never released a memoir detailing her own story ... until now. *The Voice: Listening for God's Voice and Finding Your Own* tells of Sandi's real-life struggles with childhood abuse, divorce after marital infidelity, and self-worth. She hopes that by sharing her own challenges, she'll be able to encourage others to find and use their God-given voices despite poor choices, shame, or past mistakes.

She also wants to help people discern the voice of God — something she's struggled with herself. "I've learned to trust that God does speak," the singer says, "sometimes with nudges, sometimes with an impression we might feel on our hearts, sometimes with something from His Word."

And for the first time, she's at ease expressing herself. "I'm finally feeling comfortable using my speaking voice to speak up and speak out. I've found that I'm comfortable with words," she admits. "I ask God for wisdom a lot, so maybe I should trust that He's going to give me some."

For more, visit sandipatty.com.

records and 11 million units sold, her accolades testify to her broad reach, even beyond Gospel music.

In 1986, Sandi captured the ear of the world at large when she performed a flawless rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" to commemorate the rededication of the Statue of Liberty, and ever since, the patriotic juggernaut has become her calling card. She's performed with countless symphonies, dueted with music's finest singers, and sung before world leaders.

"My mom thinks it's pretty fun to say that I've gotten to sing for five presidents, but she also really loved that my record was in Cracker Barrel," she quips. "I've been to Carnegie Hall; I've been to Radio City Music Hall, Sydney Opera House, but when my project goes to Cracker Barrel, that's when my mom is most proud."

Despite her brilliant professional accomplishments, Sandi's personal life has seen its share of ups and downs. At the peak of her career, the singer endured a very public divorce. A second marriage resulted in a blended family with husband Don; and together, the couple raised eight children.

"Blending families is a unique dynamic. Every blended family is born out of loss. That's not good; that's not bad, but it definitely is reality," the award-winner admits. "The adults are the only ones who choose it. The kids didn't choose it, so we had to give them grace and latitude to come alongside. We learned you have to keep that foundational relationship of a blended family strong. If you're the only ones who choose it, if you go sour, it's all going south. You still have to work. You still have to earn each other's love and respect, and invest."

Invest she did. Her personal life opened the second chapter of her career, giving the singer the confidence boost she needed to use the one thing she'd been afraid to use — her voice. Her first order of business? Changing 'Patti' to 'Patty.'

"God was beginning to clean up a lot of mistakes in my life, and I thought, *It's time.* I was feeling like God had renamed me. He renamed me *forgiven* and *loved* and *beautiful* and *redeemed*," she admits. "Changing the 'Patti' was really significant for that reason."

"All throughout God's Word, names were a big deal," she continues, "and whenever anybody had a really significant encounter with God, He often renamed them. It was an outward sign of what He had done in their heart."

ACT TWO

In 2015, Sandi announced her retirement and embarked on a 90-city farewell tour the following year. She wanted to come

off the road and spend more time with her growing family at home in Oklahoma City, where she now has three grandchildren. "I often say music is one of God's most amazing creations. And it's one of the reasons I felt like it was time to retire from touring all the time, because I do want to be mindful of the art form," she offers.

"I think music is so beautiful and intricate and simple at the same time," she says. "I love seeing how music goes together, that one line doesn't make sense until you hear it. It's just a great picture, to me, of the body of Christ."

Her love of melodies and her artistic integrity have also enabled her to stand toe-to-toe with some of the greatest arrangers, orchestral leaders, and vocalists of our time — in any genre. It's a balance few artists can achieve. "It's the art and the heart," she contends. "I think the heart has to weigh in first, but the art can't be neglected."

It's her keen sense of artistry that's enabled her to also collaborate with adept musicians who might not share her faith or worldview. "I've been able to step into some places because I share the art with those people, even though I may not share the heart," she explains. "And because we share the art, and they see that I respect it, it gives me a chance to speak to more specific things."

While she's no longer touring and recording regularly, Sandi is finding new ways to put her artistic talents to good use. She recently released an autobiography, appropriately titled *The Voice*, and she takes delight in speaking to a wide range of audiences across the country at churches, special events, and conferences.

"I'm finding a great deal of comfort in just encouraging people — young, old, seasoned, retirees. We all just need to know we're not alone in this journey," she adds.

For Sandi, music has been a constant companion along life's journey, reminding her she isn't alone. And even though she's primarily speaking and writing these days, she still has a song to sing.

"Music has always been my voice. I would hear a song, and I would think, *That's how I feel.* So I would sing it to speak my heart," she says. "I think I will always be the most comfortable telling a story in a song." □

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~ Sandi Patty