

## **Dolly in fine form**

By Graham Rockingham

There's a point on Dolly Parton's new DVD where she's telling a sold-out crowd at London's O2 arena about this red-headed bank teller who tried to steal away her husband, Carl.

Dolly is spinning out this tale as an intro to her song Jolene, one of her earliest, most-loved hits. We're assuming, of course, that the name of the bank teller is Jolene.

One day, we're told, Dolly got so fed up with Jolene's wandering green eyes that she marched right into that bank and told the hussy to keep 'em off Carl.

It's a great story. The crowd eats it up. Parton has let each and every one of them in on a personal secret. For sure, Parton's a great singer and songwriter, a pretty good actress, too. But she's also a master of corn. She can husk it with the best of them.

"It's a little bit made up," Parton admits when asked if the Jolene story is true.

Parton is on the phone from "the little house" she keeps next to her Nashville office. She's in the midst of a series of interviews to promote her new CD/DVD, *Live from London*, which is being released in November in Canada by the Sonic Unyon label.

"Actually the true story is not nearly as entertaining," she continues, drawing you in like an expert.

This story – the "true" one – dates back to the early seventies when Parton was a regular with the Porter Wagoner show. Every night, there'd be an autograph session. Parton would stay to the end, signing everything put in front of her.

"There was a beautiful little red-headed, green-eyed girl there," Parton recalls. "This little girl looked up and I said, 'Well, you're the prettiest thing I've ever seen.'

“She was probably about seven or eight. I said ‘What’s your name?’ “She said

‘My name’s Jolene,’ and I said ‘I bet you’re named after your daddy. I bet his name is Joe.’ She said ‘No, it’s just Jolene.’

“I said ‘I love that name and I’m going to write a song about it. If you ever hear it, you’ll know it’s about you.’

“So that’s really how it came about. I went back to the bus and I was singing ‘Jolene, Jolene, Jolene.’”

That doesn’t mean the story of the bank teller was a lie, though.

“It’s true about the girl at the bank, but her name wasn’t really Jolene,” Parton adds. “I always rib my husband about only wanting to go to the bank because there was this knockout girl there ...”

It’s that cornball charm that makes this DVD work. It was filmed during a twonight stint at the 02. Her voice is in perfect pitch. Her band is as good as it gets, and she looks great for a woman of 63.

It’s interesting that she chose the concert to get a few digs in at Carl, her husband of more than 40 years. Few fans have ever seen Carl. He’s spent his wife’s entire career avoiding the limelight. In one interview, many years ago, Parton even suggested that Carl had only seen her perform in concert once. She admits now she may have exaggerated. Still, Carl isn’t the type to go to many shows.

Now that the DVD has been put to bed, Parton plans on taking a long vacation.

“My husband and I are going to go take some time together and probably go out to the coast. Maybe get in our RV and travel all around in that general area ... “We don’t actually go into campgrounds. We travel around and then we’ll stop along the riverbanks in places. We’ll get food and have picnics and then we’ll check in to a little drive-up motel at night.

“As long as the bed is clean and there’s a little bathtub or a shower, and then we’ll spend the night and head out again in the morning.”

– *previously published in the Hamilton Spectator*