

# Country Strong (2010)

Rated PG-13. Our Ratings: V-1;L -2; S/N -4. Running time: 1 hour 52 min.

*When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death*  
*Romans 6:21-21*

Set in Texas where Country-CW superstar Kelly Canter with Western music is as popular as Beau Hutton, her lead-in it is in Nashville, this music-singer and protector.

filled melo drama suffers from a muddled script by writer and director Shana Feste. Best thing about it are the songs that are delivered in a lively manner by the actor/singers and photographed so beautifully.

2010 Screen Gems

CW star Kelly Canter (Gwyneth Paltrow) has been in an alcohol rehab center after falling off a stage and losing the child she was carrying in her womb. There she has become enamored with orderly Beau (Garrett Hedlund), who also writes and sings. Kelly's husband/manager James (Tim McGraw), sensing a rival in Beau, yanks his wife out of the center too early, though he agrees to Kelly's request that Beau come along as her "protector." Matters are complicated by the inclusion of young singer Chiles Stanton (Leighton Meester), also as an opening act. Beau becomes attracted to her, so at times we are not sure whether his initial attraction to Kelly is going anywhere. Also, Chiles seems to be the ruthlessly ambitious second-stringer waiting to topple the star, as in All About Eve, Despite the plot, which might have been better had it treated Kelly as a survivor rather than a victim, the film is

enjoyable because of the tuneful songs. The script might have also been improved by allowing us to see more of Kelly's inner life, especially the demons that seemed to be driving (and sabotaging) her. The one scene that truly earns our tears or lump in the throat is the one in which Kelly visits a group of terminally ill children with a wish list that included meeting her, and she is so moved that she makes up the words of a song incorporating the name of a little boy, sweeps him up in her arms, and dances while singing. If only there had been more such scenes in the film!

## **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. What seems to drive the principal characters: Kelly; Beau; Chiles? Any ideas as to why Kelly is so self-destructive?
2. Beau seems satisfied with just being able to play his music: how is this different from other singer/songwriters? And also maybe more healthful?
3. Compare this movie to other films about CW performers. (And if you haven't seen the following, perhaps the best part of seeing this so-so film is that it will lead you to watching the earlier ones—Crazy Heart; Tender Mercies; Nashville; Coal Miner's Daughter.)
4. Do you see any evidence of religious faith/commitment in Kelly? How might this have led to a different fate for her?