



- [Shows & Dining »](#)
- [Gaming & Promotions »](#)
- [Around the Area](#)
- [Visitors »](#)

Navigation

Chris Heers

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Trace Adkins is in town and you need say little more to get the attention of fans. They know who he is, are ready to eat up his songs in a concert setting and are glad of it.

Well, there are other singers in town who may need a little more background laid down by this publication to shine a little light on their careers. And in many a case, but for a lucky break or two, they could be the next Trace Adkins.

Case in point is **Chris Heers** playing Friday, Saturdays and Sundays in June in **Splash** within the **Aquarius** (8 p.m.-1 a.m. each night; no cover). Heers has the looks, the voice, and definitely the talent, to be a headline singer. And that is just the performing side of things. What Heers has that probably sets him off from the numerous contemporary country singers is a songwriting talent that is first calibre. Heers doesn't just write songs about bars, cars, country roads and how bad he wants to party. Nope. He writes ballads, tales, stories in the Americana bent with a healthy capacity for clever lyrics.

Heers lists **Guy Clark**, **Townes Van Zandt** and **Steve Earle** as some of his influences. Well, if you know the music of those exemplar songwriters, then it will tell you something about Heers' music. In his own words, he says that music is a blend of "'70s hippie nudie suit country rock and Americana." Not sure that makes sense but the colorfulness of the language is the point. Oh, and another insight into his thought process...his favorite

quote is “What would **Steve McQueen** do?”

It was five years ago, Heers released his debut album, *Western Stars*. It was filled with characters and storylines in its songs that helped Heers win two Top 100 singles on the **US Country Breakout Chart** and several Top 10s in Europe. His song, “Dirt Rich,” won the **Music Row Power Chart Debut** spot and took home the prestigious **Robert K Oerann Discovery Award**. “Dirt Rich” was later featured on the bestselling **Wii and Xbox Kinect “Country Dance II”** and **“Country Dance All-Star”** games.

It took Heers five years to complete and release his next album, *The Road Ahead Shines*, which became available January of this year. This latest release continues the format set down by *Western Stars*, that is, a collection of characters and storylines that are one part poetry, one part narrative and all parts creative.

According to the album’s description, “The Road Ahead Shines is an art gallery featuring individual scenes of hope and hopelessness, faith and triumph, perseverance and freedom. From the boy who can’t walk but saves 1000 lives by racing a Civil War era pony across Northern Nevada to the Sedona rock climber who triumphs over suicide, to the Hemingwayesque matador who also does – in his own way. It is also a literal art gallery.

“I spent as much time painting and photo editing the album art as I did recording it,” says Heers.

The album features 16 panels; rare these days for an indie artist.

So, much like **Tom Russell** who paints vivid pictures with his songs, most in a dark hue, Heers goes the troubadour route himself but in a lighter vein. This doesn’t mean Heers music is undanceable and campus coffeeshouse material. No. He likes honky tonkin’ and his music gets them on the dance floor.

Heers, a native Las Vegas musician who has been to Nashville and back, plays one of the most unique honky tonks in Nevada—the **Pioneer Saloon** out at Goodsprings, Nevada.

I’ll look out at the crowd and see bikers, hippies, stock brokers, the **Pawn Stars**. You really never know what will happen at those shows.”

And that’s the point.

“We read the crowd and make them a part of our shows”, says Heers. It is all about them and it is always a party.”

And that party can be quite big. He recently played for 350,000 people at **NASCAR** and **BIKE FEST** events.

Heers is backed by “The Dirt Rich Band” which includes **Terry Greene** (lead guitar, steel guitar, harp); **Alvin Blaine** (steel guitar, mandolin, banjo, lead); **Dan Davidson** (specialty lead guitar); **Jim Lovgren** (drums and percussion); **Al Guzman** (drums and percussion); **Angel Santilli Mullis** (bass guitar, vocals); **Steve West** (keyboards); **Hunter Sealy** (rhythm guitar, back up vocals)

For a listen to Chris Heers music and more information, see his website at chrisheers.com.

CHRIS HEERS

Aquarius Splash

Friday-Sundays in June. 8 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover, no drink minimum

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