**Song and Soul – *Scott Shelby LIVE***

Scott Shelby owns the room at The Lobby in Creston.

He sits on a stool in the corner, the young Texan, his baseball cap pulled low over his brow, the shy smile peaking out from below the brim. In a button-down and jeans and the simple boots of a cattleman, he perches with his guitar – at ease with himself and his music.

He starts slow and easy. The fingers glide expertly over the strings. The picking is smooth, accurate, playful, and emotional. The voice has just the right twang. The notes roll and turn like gulf waves spreading over the dry, dusty plain.

The crowd is a hodge-podge. Locals out for a Friday night on the town. Golfers finishing their day. The Lobby regulars. Live music faithfuls. With an active arts scene, and a country music radio station, Creston is ripe territory for Shelby. He released his album “*Young and Invincible*” on Creston’s KSIB Radio in December, hooking country music fans from around southwest Iowa.

He makes his way through several country standards, then breaks in to a rolling cover of Bob Dylan’s “*Wagon Wheel*,” one of his recent recordings. Shelby hits his groove with the tune - rocking, swaying on the wooden stool. The crowd responds in kind.

He trots out his own material starting with “*Ain’t Goin’ Home*.”

*I’d drive a hundred thousand miles ♫ Just to see your smiling face*

His ode to far away love haunts the connection between fingertips and strings

*When I’m with you, It’s like there’s no one else around*

*♫I look into your deep green eyes ♫ And my feet they don’t touch the ground*

The smile in his voice matches the gleam in his blue doe eyes. The crowd is entranced.

By the time he launches into “*Folsom Prison Blues*,” couples of every age are taking the dance floor and the good times are in full swing.

Shelby is country to his core – the way 20-something 21st Century farmers and cowboys and semen salesmen are. He’s straight off the farm and straight from the bullpen, by way of Texas A&M and the bars and dancehalls of East Texas.

And he wears it all like a favorite pair of jeans – faded just right in all the right places.

He hails from Bells, *The Crossroads of Friendliness*, a cluster of about 1,200 people just a county removed from that state to the north. His musical roots go back to the upright piano at the Antioch Baptist Church. The East Texas Plains are cattle country, where Livestock Judging and strumming a guitar at an impromptu pasture party are common teen activities.

A Master’s degree in Animal Science later he took to the scrub stages of the College Station, Lubbock and Ft. Worth bars, while hitting the books at vet school. He’s brought his talent to the Midwest while working for Matt Lautner Cattle near Adel, Iowa, a premier source of Champion club calf genetics.

Shelby’s years on the Texas honky tonk circuit serve him well. He’s unflappable. Equipment adjustments, a string that gave its all - he barely misses a beat.

He has stamina, holding the stage from eight to close with only a few short breaks.

And his repertoire is that of the hard-working jukebox musician, used to adjusting to the venue and the mood of the crowd. He knows the current country scene, but isn’t afraid to venture out of the genre’s bounds. Old school country, pop, southern rock, blues – the edges of the labels fade as Shelby spontaneously shifts from one vein to another. He cites his influences as John Mayer, Will Hoge, George Strait, Martin Sexton, Doug Stone and good friend Josh Abbott. His inspiration is life – in all its down-home every day glory.

His songwriting is fresh and real, like Shelby himself. His newest release “*Burn*,” is an emotional ballad that expresses the realities and struggles of lost love. “*Young & Invincible*” is a mainstream country tune, with insightful lyrics from the depths of an old soul. “*Rule #1*” belies his younger years.

The gritty candidness instilled on the Texas plains. The quick smile and connection with people honed in the cattle business. The expression of life and love learned on small town streets and saloon backrooms and solitary country summer nights.

When Scott Shelby brings them all together on the stage - he owns the room.