

# GEORGE JONES

## Country Vocal Great

1. He Stopped Loving Her Today
2. A Good Year For The Roses
3. She Thinks I Still Care
4. Her Name Is...
5. Golden Ring (with Tammy Wynette)
6. Love Bug
7. Sometimes You Just Can't Win
8. Open Pit Mine
9. Blue Side Of Lonesome
10. Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes

## Don't Stop The Music

1. When The Grass Grows Over Me
2. Things Have Gone To Pieces
3. Don't Stop The Music
4. As Long As I Live (with Gene Pitney)
5. Four-O-Thirty-Three
6. She's Mine
7. Radio Lover
8. King Of The Road
9. Saginaw Michigan
10. Swinging Doors

## Country Hits

1. Walk Through This World With Me
2. The Race Is On
3. A Lifetime To Regret
4. Nothing Ever Hurt Me Half As Bad
5. I Turn To You
6. Hello Darlin'
7. Take These Chains From My Heart
8. Almost Persuaded
9. Honky Tonkin'
10. Half Of Me Is Gone



ORIGINAL  
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CLASSICS

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# GEORGE JONES

George Jones is many things to many people. He is the finest, the most nuanced and the most melodic singer ever to sing Country music. He is a Country legend, a Hall of Famer, and an inspiration for all Country singers. But most of all, he is a survivor. He has survived numerous divorces, a severe drinking problem and yet even in the first decade of the twenty-first century (his sixth decade in the recording business) he is still enjoying chart hits. His voice is as legendary as he is. Frank Sinatra, never one to bestow compliments lightly, declared that George Jones was “the second best male singer in America”<sup>1</sup>. Without a doubt he is one of the greatest and most influential American singers of all time.



## *A Honky Tonk Beginning*

George Jones was born on September 12th, 1931, in the East Texas town of Saratoga, later moving with his family to nearby Beaumont in 1942, the same year in which he got his first guitar. His family was always poor, and in his youth he would sing on the street corner for any loose change that passersby

might throw his way. Eventually he gained enough experience to be able to sing on the local radio station in Beaumont, KRIC, where he briefly met his inspiration and primary influence, Hank Williams. He had his first chart hit in 1955 with “Why Baby Why,” a song which became an even bigger hit when Webb Pierce and Red Sovine recorded it together and scored a massive #1 hit with it in the same year. As with most of his early hits, it was a classic Honky Tonk song.

While Jones started off squarely in the Honky Tonk tradition of Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell and Ray Price, (check out his cover of Hank Williams’ “Honky Tonkin”) Jones eventually moved towards a more nuanced and emotional ballad style, which is what brought him his greatest fame. As George Jones once said “I wanted to sound like Hank Williams but I phrased like Lefty. I made five syllables out of one”<sup>2</sup>. Listen to such groundbreaking and influential tearjerkers as “Things Have Gone To Pieces,” “A Lifetime To Regret,” “She Thinks I Still Care” and especially the unbelievably tragic “He Stopped Loving Her Today” and you will understand Jones’ mastery of the form. In fact you can define his songs in one word: heartbreak. From the resigned acceptance of “Sometimes You Just Can’t Win” and “When The Grass Grows Over Me” to the almost comical “Her Name Is...,” Jones expresses the reality and nuances of lost love and pain in such an emotional and melodic fashion, that he exposes the emotional truth of each song that he sings.

## *The Songs*

Some of Jones’ greatest songs of heartbreak deal with a love that is so strong that it lasts to the death. This can be seen in the classic “When The Grass Grows Over Me,” (in which the singer says “Yes I’ll be over you when you’re standing over me. And as you look down at the cold cold ground I’m sleeping in, don’t expect to hear me say that I still love you then. ‘Cause I’ll be over you when the grass grows over me”) and even more famously in his immortal “He Stopped Loving Her Today.” Universally acclaimed as his greatest and most poignant song, it won Jones a Grammy Award for Best Country Male Performance in 1980. It was recently acclaimed as the second greatest Country single of all time by CMT (ironically the first song on the list, “Stand By Your Man” was by ex-wife Tammy Wynette, and both were produced by the same man, Billy Sherrill). It deals with a man who has stopped loving a woman only because he has died. What is incredible about the song is that you only find this out at the very end of the song when Jones sings “They placed a wreath upon his door, and soon they’ll carry him away. He stopped loving her today.”

As with all great Country ballad singers, George Jones has recorded his share of cheating songs. Great examples of this are “Radio Lover” and the mysterious “Her Name Is...”. With “Her Name Is...” he adopts an approach that is even more cryptic and obscure than usual for a cheating song.



He won't and can't reveal her name because "her husband thinks he owns her heart and soul for life. And he'll kill the man who messes with his wife." Which causes him to continue "it really is a scandal and disgrace to have to call your woman what's-her-face!"

But George Jones can still score big hits with uptempo material, proof of this is found in such Top Ten hits as "The Race Is On" and the comical "Love Bug." The latter is one of those clever Honky Tonk songs that Country music seems to provide us with on a regular basis. The song is about "that little bitty teeny weeny thing called the love bug. Nobody's ever seen it but it's got the whole world shook up." The song "The Race Is On" is even more clever, using the metaphor of a race to describe the heartbreak that the singer is going through. And, as is typical for a George Jones song, it is heartache that comes out ahead!

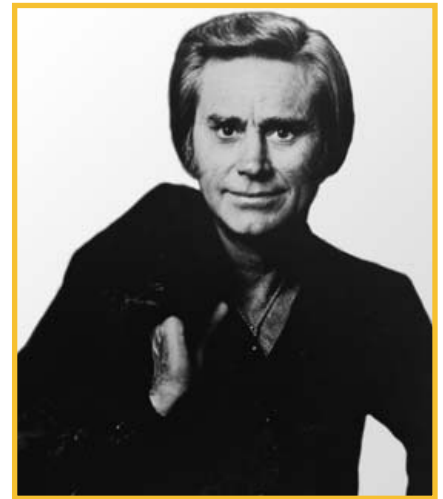
### *Duets Made In Heaven*

George Jones' career entered a new phase when he signed with Epic Records in 1971, allowing him to record with his new wife Tammy Wynette, whom he had married in 1969. Jones' first hit with Tammy was "Take Me" in 1971, and this was the beginning of a long string of Jones/Wynette duets, including such hits as "Golden Ring" and "(We're Not) The Jet Set." But happiness was not to last for Jones, as his marriage with Wynette was rocky from the start (she filed for divorce in 1973, but was soon reconciled with Jones), and he had steadily accumulated a drinking and a drug problem.

Eventually he hit rock bottom. He acquired the nickname "No Show Jones" because he was in such bad shape that he started missing concert dates on a regular basis. Soon things would get even worse; according to Nicholas Dawidoff "Jones put himself through a succession of indignities that included being arrested, filing for bankruptcy, threatening people he loved with pistols, and finding himself committed to a padded cell"<sup>3</sup>. But with the help of his fourth and current wife, Nancy Sepulvado, whom he married in 1983, he has made a slow - but not always steady path to sobriety and normalcy. He still records on a regular basis, and his influence on the new generation of Country stars shows no signs of abating.

### *Don't Stop The Music*

While it may be a cliché, it is safe to say that there will never be another Country star like George Jones, and there definitely will never be as great a singer as George Jones. His songs, like his voice, are already classics and will always remain that way. He is the man who took the Honky Tonk music of Hank Williams and Lefty Frizzell (taking from Hank his songs of heartbreak and from Lefty his elongated phrasing) to a whole other level of greatness and emotional impact. He has had a remarkably consistent career, scoring on the Country charts in each decade since the 1950s. Adding some flavor to his already illustrious career, he has found time to record duets with a diverse list of superstars including Tammy Wynette, Elvis Costello and Ray Charles - and all this from a simple Country boy from Beaumont Texas. In the end we are left with with the words of one of his first hits, "Don't Stop The Music":



*So don't stop the music let it play one more song  
The same one that's played tonight for so long  
My pockets are empty I spent my last dime  
But I've just got to hear that song one more time*

Footnotes:

1 p. 202, N. Dawidoff, In The Country Of Country: A Journey To The Roots Of American Music, 1997: Vintage Books.

2 Ibid. p. 203

3 Ibid. p.206-207

33