

MERLE HAGGARD

Country Rebel

1. The Legend Of Bonnie & Clyde
2. Hungry Eyes
3. Mama Tried
4. Branded Man
5. Sing Me Back Home
6. Okie From Muskogee
7. If We Make It Through December
8. Daddy Frank (The Guitar Man)
9. Everybody's Had The Blues
10. Twinkle Twinkle Lucky Star

Workin' Man Blues

1. The Fightin' Side Of Me
2. Workin' Man Blues
3. Big City
4. Let's Chase Each Other Around The Room
5. Carolyn
6. The Roots Of My Raising
7. Tonight The Bottle Let Me Down
8. I Threw Away The Rose
9. I Think I'll Just Stay Here And Drink
10. Today I Started Loving You Again

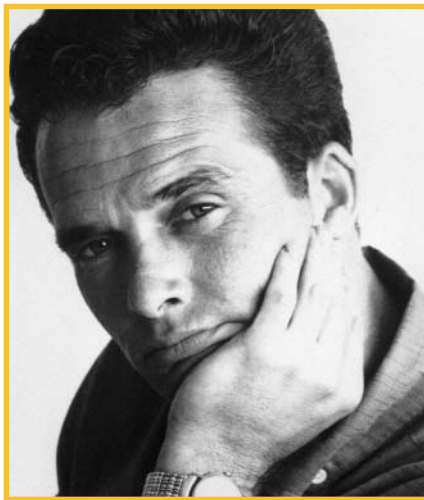
Looking Back

1. It's Not Love (But It's Not Bad)
2. I'm A Lonesome Fugitive
3. Someday When Things Are Good
4. Always Wanting You
5. Things Aren't Funny Anymore
6. My Favorite Memory
7. You Take Me For Granted
8. Natural High
9. Old Man From The Mountain
10. Ramblin' Fever



MERLE HAGGARD

Over the years, Merle Haggard has established himself as one of Country music's most talented entertainers, prolific songwriters, and influential musicians. And oh yeah... the man can sing a song! He has rightfully earned a reputation as a legend in his own time. But parts of Merle Haggard's rough and tumble past read more like the story of outlaws Bonnie and Clyde, (whom he has famously celebrated in song) than that of a bona fide Country music star. He has been incarcerated as a convict, on the run as a fugitive, and then come full circle; he was granted a full pardon by Ronald Reagan, the Governor of California in 1972. Suffice it to say, Haggard is unlike any other Country music legend. He has always been a fierce individualist, staying true to his unique brand of Country music.



Haggard's music was first inspired by the Country legends that preceded him; the records of Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, Lefty Frizzell and Bob Wills all resonated, leaving a lasting impression on him as he grew up. Once he started writing and playing music, elements of Honky Tonk, traditional Country,

Western Swing, and even Jazz and Blues found their way into Haggard's unique Country sound. He embraced the American music tradition as a whole, never letting trends, styles or expectations limit the scope of his music.

The cornerstone of Haggard's music is built on his honest songwriting, deeply felt lyrics, and the passion that they convey. He has written love songs, prison songs, protest and anti-protest songs, drinking songs, train songs, social commentaries, ballads, Blues, Folk and Gospel songs – all chronicling the dreams and heartbreak of the common man. Merle Haggard's career took off in the mid-'60s, and with 38 #1 hits to his credit, his staggering body of work includes countless unforgettable hit songs, most of which are included in this special collection of *Original American Classics*.

Mama Tried

Born in 1937 in Bakersfield, California, Haggard's family had fled the Oklahoma dust bowl to pursue a new life in California during the Great Depression. He developed a true passion for music hearing his father play the fiddle in local Honky Tonks, however his mother soon vowed to keep her husband and his music out of the bar for good. When Haggard was nine years old, his father tragically died of a brain

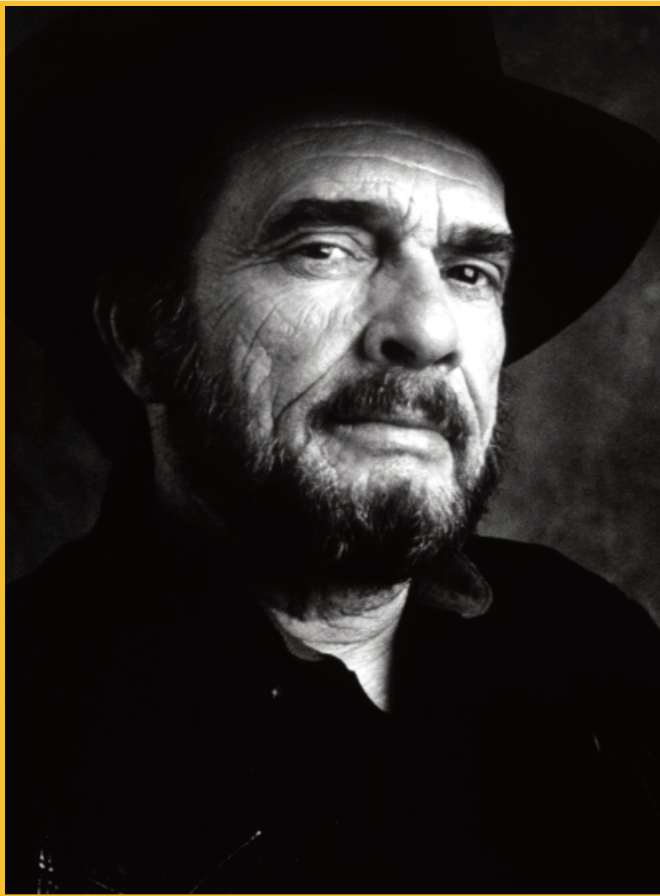


tumor, leaving Merle at a vulnerable age. Though his mother tried to raise him the best she could, Merle developed a rebellious streak. Without the ability to cope with his wild behavior, his mother placed him in several juvenile centers in an attempt to curb his poor judgement, but it had little effect. As Merle Haggard would sing in his #1 hit "Mama Tried": "Mama tried to raise me better, but her pleading I denied. That leaves only me to blame 'cause mama tried."

Haggard continued to rebel right through his teenage years, committing a series of small crimes, culminating in a sentence for robbery and assault which placed him inside the high security Preston School of Industry when he was only 15 years old. But on a positive note, Haggard had taught himself to play the guitar by listening to records by his favorite Country stars including Hank Williams, Bob Wills and Lefty Frizzell.

Upon his release from prison, Haggard went to see Lefty Frizzell play, and after sneaking backstage, he performed a few tunes for his Honky Tonk hero. Frizzell was so impressed with the young boy's singing that he refused to start the show until the young musician was allowed to get up on stage to sing a few songs.

This first performance gave Merle Haggard the confidence he required to kick-start a music career. He worked hard on the oil fields and farms during the day, and at night began performing music in clubs along the Bakersfield circuit. In 1956, Haggard married a young waitress named Leona Hobbs, but the young married couple soon fell upon hard times. Living in an old converted boxcar because of financial difficulties, the pressure soon became too much, and Haggard turned back to the quickest way he knew to get some cash to put food on the table. Music became a faded dream once again, and in 1957, he was promptly arrested for robbery, escaped to visit his wife, and was recaptured then sentenced to serve 15 years in San Quentin prison.



Rock 'n' Roll. This sound suited Merle Haggard fine; it updated elements of the earlier Honky Tonk sound he loved, and it satisfied his rebellious side.

In 1962, Haggard hit the road, traveling to Las Vegas to see a concert by influential Bakersfield pioneer Wynn Stewart. Without a bass player for the gig that night, a simple twist of fate resulted in Haggard joining Stewart's band for the next 6 months as the bass player. In 1963, Merle recorded Wynn Stewart's "Sing A Sad Song," which became his first national hit, reaching #19 on the Country charts in 1964. The following year Haggard's recording of "(My Friends Are Gonna Be) Strangers" won him a Top Ten hit and he was earmarked as an emerging Country music star.

Top Of The Charts

After that, the hits came quickly, and in 1966 Merle Haggard's career took the fast lane to the top of the charts. The smash hit "Swinging Doors" rocketed to #5 in the spring of 1966, "Tonight The Bottle Let Me Down," surpassed it reaching #3, and in 1967, "The Fugitive," (later re-titled "I'm A Lonesome Fugitive") became the new Country superstar's first #1 song.

More #1 hits such as "Sing Me Back Home," "Mama Tried," "Carolyn," "Hungry Eyes," and "Workin' Man Blues" won him a broad and loyal following of fans. In 1969, Haggard showed he was not afraid to throw his beliefs into the political arena. He released the catchy and controversial anti-protest song "Okie From Muskogee" which criticized the liberal hippie ranks' failure to adequately support those patriotic Americans fighting abroad. In 1970, Haggard was voted Entertainer and Top Male Vocalist of the year by the new Country Music Association and released a #1 hit sequel to "Okie" entitled "The Fightin' Side Of Me."

Legacy

For over five decades, Merle Haggard has remained one of Country music's most popular and uncompromising artists. His songs are reflective, poignant, and powerful, while his music consistently pushes the boundaries of the Country sound. His songs have reached the hearts and minds of the American people, as well as millions of other Country music fans around the world. With a place in the Country Music Hall of Fame as one of the most successful artists in Country music's history, Merle Haggard is a testament to hard work, big dreams, and honest Country music.

Life In Prison

Haggard reached a low point in his life when he began serving his sentence behind bars. His unruly behavior and his role in some drunken brawls were rewarded with periods in isolation. The walls really began to close in when he learned that his wife had conceived another man's child while he remained incarcerated. With his future hanging in the balance, a prisoner on death row thankfully helped convince Haggard to turn his life around.

In 1960, after serving nearly three years in prison, Haggard was finally a free man. He began playing music with Johnny Barnett at the Lucky Spot and some of Bakersfield's other popular clubs. Around this time he was approached by Fuzzy Owen and Lewis Tally, who together ran a small record label called Tally Records. Soon enough, Merle Haggard entered the studio to lay down his first recordings including the song "Skid Row."

The Bakersfield Sound

Haggard was instrumental in contributing to the rise of the popular Bakersfield sound, originally pioneered by Wynn Stewart. This new, raw sound emerged in stark contrast to the hyper-produced Nashville sound that added lush string arrangements to any song that might hint at a crossover hit. The Bakersfield sound featured electric guitars and a solid drum beat – in essence, a sound directly influenced by