



Outlaws and Armadillos: Country's Roaring '70s

Capsule Bios of Pivotal Artists

Kris Kristofferson—Along with Tom T. Hall, John Hartford, and Mickey Newbury, Kristofferson elevated the language of country music in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Equally inspired by two key Williams — William Blake and Hank Williams — he was integral in merging the street-level counter-culture with the mainstream. He wrote country classics including “For the Good Times” and “Sunday Morning Coming Down” as well as Janis Joplin’s rib-rattling rock statement, “Me and Bobby McGee.” He also sang progressive anthems including “Jesus Was a Capricorn.”

Willie Nelson — Nelson struggled in the 1960s as he sought to match his songwriting success (“Hello, Walls,” “Crazy”) with progress as an entertainer. Depressed by his inability to do this, he lit out for his native Texas in 1971 and emerged as a uniter of rednecks, hippies, and freaks. In Texas, he found a flowering culture that embraced artistry and eschewed cultural labels. He became, and remains, a Buddha-like figure who is loved and revered by people of varying political and musical perspectives.

Waylon Jennings — “It’s the same old tune: fiddle and guitar/ Where do we take it from here?” Waylon sang, in a song that answered those very same questions. Jennings, a Texas native, came to Nashville in the 1960s and was dissatisfied by a glossy “Nashville Sound” that he said fit him “like syrup on sugar.” He fought and won creative freedom and recorded some of the greatest and most distinctive songs in country music history.

Jerry Jeff Walker — Born Ronald Lee Crosby in New York State, this idiosyncratic singer-songwriter reinvented himself as native Texan Jerry Jeff Walker. He found a soulful brother-in-arms in Hondo Crouch, who purchased the town of Luckenbach, Texas and turned it into a creative enclave. Walker recorded Outlaw highlight *Viva Terlingua* in Luckenbach. Walker also wrote the classic “Mr. Bojangles,” recorded by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

Jessi Colter — Colter was important as the beguiling guidepost to her husband, Waylon Jennings, but mostly so as a sweet-singing songwriter who penned classics including “I’m Not Lisa” and “Storms Never Last.” She was an important part of the *Wanted! The Outlaws* album that featured Jennings, Willie Nelson, and Tompall Glaser.

Bobby Bare — Bobby Bare was the first Nashville artist to take control of his own recordings. His *Lullabys, Legends, and Lies* album was a grand success and a showcase for songs written by his best friend, Shel Silverstein. He scored 1960s hits including “Detroit City” and “500 Miles Away From Home,” and was a champion of superior songsmiths including Silverstein, Tom T. Hall, Kris Kristofferson, and Billy Joe Shaver.

David Allan Coe — Coe's outlandish persona sometimes masked a serious-minded and intelligent artistic impulse. He wrote songs recorded by Johnny Cash, Tanya Tucker, and many others, and his singles, including "The Ride" and "You Never Even Called Me By My Name," made waves on country charts.

Cowboy Jack Clement — Whimsical maverick "Cowboy" Jack Clement is among the greatest-ever forces in American popular music. He discovered Jerry Lee Lewis, Charley Pride, and Don Williams, and his home studio gave birth to the music now called "Americana." He wrote songs recorded by Johnny Cash, George Jones, and many others. He lived his life by the motto, "We're in the fun business: If we're not having fun, we're not doing our jobs."

Tom T. Hall — Country music's most prominent storyteller, Tom T. Hall gave us riveting tales and engaging character studies. He is revered as a chronicler of the American character. He and the Reverend Will D. Campbell shared a whiskey still and a notion that all people are created equal, and that, in Will's words, "If you're gonna love one, you've gotta love 'em all."

Billy Joe Shaver — He moved to Nashville on the back of a cantaloupe truck. He came to exemplify everything exemplary (and some things tawdry) about the Outlaw Movement. He wrote the sweetest and truest of songs, and he shot a man in the face. He was, and is, a poet and a scoundrel. He was, and is, an American treasure.

Steve Young — Alabama-reared Steve Young was a full-voiced song-poet. He gained his greatest notoriety by writing "Seven Bridges Road," a song the Eagles brought to popular culture. But he was most artistically potent on small stages, with his voice and Martin guitar. Young was a New South prophet, beloved by Waylon Jennings, Townes Van Zandt, and other oracles.

Shel Silverstein — Shel was, somehow, a hit country songwriter, a *Playboy* magazine cartoonist, and the writer of children's classics including *The Giving Tree* and *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. He wrote the entirety of Bobby Bare's groundbreaking *Lullabys, Legends, and Lies* album, which became the Outlaw Movement's clarion call.

Tompall Glaser — The ringleader at Glaser Sound Studio (which became known as "Hillbilly Central"), Tompall Glaser was an emphatic agitator for creative autonomy. "Damn it, the fight isn't in Austin and it isn't in Los Angeles," he said. "It's right here in Nashville, right here two blocks from Music Row, and if we win – and if our winning is ever going to amount to anything in the long run – we've got to beat them on their own turf." Glaser was also a magnificent singer, as evidenced by his solo recordings and by his work with brothers Chuck and Jim.

Mickey Newbury — A guiding light for Kris Kristofferson, Guy Clark, and others, Mickey Newbury was the poet laureate of beauty and melancholy. He lived on a houseboat and wrote songs at a level that was at once inspiring and maddening. Kristofferson said, "I learned more about songwriting from Mickey Newbury than from I did any single other human being." His words and melodies were recorded by Jerry Lee Lewis, Tom Jones, Kenny Rogers, Eddy Arnold, and many more.

Guy Clark — "I'd play the 'Red River Valley,'" Clark sang, in one of American music' most memorable opening stanzas. "And he'd sit in the kitchen and cry/ Run his fingers through seventy years of living, and wonder, 'Lord, has every well I've drilled run dry.'"

Clark was not so much admired as revered by other songwriters, and his debut album, *Old No. 1*, stands as a high-water mark for the Outlaw era. He and wife Susanna Clark were ringleaders in Nashville's songwriting scene, which included native Texans Rodney Crowell, Mickey Newbury, and Townes Van Zandt.

Townes Van Zandt — Emmylou Harris, Nanci Griffith, Robert Plant & Alison Krauss, Guy Clark, Lyle Lovett, Norah Jones, and many others have recorded songs penned by this Texas-reared legend. Van Zandt spent time in Houston as an opening act for blues man Lightnin' Hopkins, as his fingerpicking and musical outlook had a lot to do with Lightnin's: "There are only two kinds of music," he said. "Blues and Zippidy Doo Da." Van Zandt preferred blues.

Doug Sahm — A child prodigy who performed onstage with Hank Williams at age 11, Sahm came to embody the freewheeling Austin ethic. He shifted effortlessly between rock, R&B, and country music, and he often performed Lone Star-centric music: "You just can't live in Texas if you don't have a lot of soul," he sang.

Jim Franklin — Austin's vibrant scene of the 1960s and '70s was a flowering of music and art, and Jim Franklin's freaky armadillo paintings became symbols of that flowering. Franklin was the primary poster artist for bands including Shiva's Headband and the 13th Floor Elevators, and he was a central force in the counterculture.

Armadillo World Headquarters — Founded by Eddie Wilson, Mike Tolleson, Bobby Hedderman, and Hank Alrich, Austin's Armadillo World Headquarters was a rollicking live music venue that featured performances by Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Freddie King, Bruce Springsteen, and hundreds of others. It opened in 1970, and soon became a counterculture gathering spot. "Armadillos and hippies are somewhat alike, 'cause they're maligned and they're picked on," Wilson said. "Armadillos like to sleep all day and roam all night. They share their homes with others. People think they're smelly and ugly, and they keep their noses in the grass. They're paranoid. But they've got one characteristic that nobody can knock: They survive like a sonuvabitch."

Exit/In — Located along Elliston Place in Nashville, the Exit/In opened in 1971. It was a 200-seat listening room favored by Nashville song-poets and by touring musicians such as Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, and Neil Young.

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