

CLASSIC COUNTRY

QUEENS of Country



Disc One

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2. DON'T IT MAKE MY BROWN EYES BLUE CRYSTAL GAYLE
3. BREAK IT TO ME GENTLY BRENDA LEE
4. (IF LOVING YOU IS WRONG) I DON'T WANT TO BE RIGHT
BARBARA MANDRELL
5. COUNTRY SUNSHINE DOTTIE WEST
6. SATIN SHEETS JEANNE PRUETT
7. HARPER VALLEY P.T.A. JEANNIE C. RILEY
8. ODE TO BILLIE JOE BOBBIE GENTRY
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THE DAVIS SISTERS
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8. HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT SAMMI SMITH
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15. TUNNEL OF LOVE MINNIE PEARL

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1 SWEET DREAMS (OF YOU) PATSY CLINE

Music and lyrics by Don Gibson.
 Decca 31483 (1963) No. 5 (Country), No. 44 (Pop)
 Courtesy of MCA Nashville.

PATSY CLINE wasn't bashful about commenting on material she planned to record. She thought that *I Fall to Pieces* was second rate, since Roy Drusky (among others) had passed on it. She wasn't thrilled with *Crazy*, either, because of Willie Nelson's odd phrasing on the demo. *Sweet Dreams (Of You)*, however, showed Cline's confidence in taking on an established hit—for Faron Young and Don Gibson, respectively, in 1956, and again for Gibson in 1961—knowing that she would make the song her own.



CRYSTAL
 GAYLE

2 DON'T IT MAKE MY BROWN EYES BLUE CRYSTAL GAYLE

Music and lyrics by Richard Leigh.
 United Artists 1016 (1977) No. 1 (Country), No. 2 (Pop)
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With her ankle-length hair and breathy crooning style, CRYSTAL GAYLE had strong crossover potential. *Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue* cinched the deal and helped secure Loretta Lynn's little sister the first platinum album (*We Must Believe in Magic*) ever awarded to a female country singer. Richard Leigh composed the song for big-voiced British songstress Shirley Bassey. As for the inspirational brown eyes—they belonged to Leigh's dog, Amanda.

3 BREAK IT TO ME GENTLY BRENDA LEE

Music and lyrics by Joe Seneca and Diane Lampert.
 Decca 31348 (1962) No. 4 (Pop)
 Courtesy of MCA Nashville.

BRENDA LEE could rock, but she could also put across mature ballads such as *Break It to Me Gently*, even when she was only 16. Lee said that until she established her own style, manager Dub Allbritten wouldn't let her listen to other singers for fear of her copying them. Lee's phrasing here recalls that of Patsy Cline (Owen Bradley produced both artists), while the catch in her voice owes a debt to Platters lead singer Tony Williams.

4 (IF LOVING YOU IS WRONG) I DON'T WANT TO BE RIGHT BARBARA MANDRELL

Music and lyrics by Homer Banks, Carl Hampton and Raymond Jackson.
 ABC 12451 (1979) No. 1 (Country), No. 31 (Pop)
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She was country when country wasn't cool, but BARBARA MANDRELL also mined the R&B catalog for suitable material. Mandrell covered songs by Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Joe Tex and Denise LaSalle, among other artists, before achieving her greatest R&B-derived success with (*If Loving You Is Wrong*) *I Don't Want to Be Right*. Her country version did better in its chart category than the original 1972 pop-hit version by Luther Ingram.

5 COUNTRY SUNSHINE DOTTIE WEST

Music and lyrics by Dottie West and Billy Davis.
RCA 0072 (1973) No. 2 (Country), No. 49 (Pop)

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Thanks to her songwriting talent, **DOTTIE WEST** had the opportunity to compose 12 jingles for Coca-Cola. The most successful of these was *Country Sunshine*, which won a Clio Award (the Oscar® of the advertising world). West later expanded the jingle into a real song, and it did well on the charts, giving her career a needed boost. It also left her with the nickname "the Country Sunshine Girl."

6 SATIN SHEETS JEANNE PRUETT

Music and lyrics by John Volinkaty
MCA 40815 (1973) No. 1 (Country), No. 28 (Pop)

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It took **JEANNE PRUETT** ten years and three record labels before she bagged her breakthrough hit, *Satin Sheets*, in 1973. Producer Walter Haynes chose the song from the album *Bill & Jan (Or Jan & Bill)*, recorded by Bill Anderson and Jan Howard. To promote the single, Pruett mailed 1,600 pieces of pink satin sheets to everyone on the CMA membership list. The gambit worked: *Satin Sheets* soared to No. 1, and Pruett soon joined the Grand Ole Opry cast.

7 HARPER VALLEY P.T.A. JEANNIE C. RILEY

Music and lyrics by Tom T. Hall.
Plantation 3 (1968) No. 1 (Country), No. 1 (Pop)
Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation.

A Hollywood scriptwriter couldn't improve upon the real-life story of **JEANNIE C. RILEY**. She and her auto-mechanic husband moved from Texas to Nashville, where Riley worked as a Music Row secretary and demo singer. *Harper Valley P.T.A.* made her an overnight sensation (and put songwriter Tom T. Hall on the map as well). The song inspired a movie and an early-'80s TV series, both starring Barbara Eden. By this time Riley, a born-again Christian, had moved on to gospel music.

8 ODE TO BILLIE JO BOBBIE GENTRY

Music and lyrics by Bobbie Gentry.
Capitol 5950 (1967) No. 17 (Country), No. 1 (Pop)
Courtesy of Capitol Nashville, Under license from EMI Music Special Markets.

In late summer of 1967, a mysterious, sultry voice haunted the AM airwaves with *Ode to Billie Joe*. The voice belonged to **BOBBIE GENTRY**, who, like the characters in the song, grew up in the Mississippi Delta. Her original version of the tune ran longer than seven minutes. Capitol edited the track and released it as the B side to *Mississippi Delta*. *Ode to Billie Joe* topped the pop charts and inspired a 1976 TV movie of the same title.



BOBBIE
GENTRY

9 PAPER ROSES MARIE OSMOND

Music and lyrics by Janice Torre and Fred Spielman
MGM 14699 (1973) No. 1 (Country), No. 5 (Pop)
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Show business was in her blood. In 1963, at the age of three, **MARIE OSMOND** appeared with her brothers on *The Andy Williams Show*. Ten years later she became the first member of the Osmond family to make the country charts—with *Paper Roses*, a crossover hit produced by Sonny James. The song had been around for some time; former Miss Oklahoma Anita Bryant scored the biggest pop record of her career with the tune in 1960.

10 THE END OF THE WORLD SKEETER DAVIS

Music and lyrics by Sylvia Dee and Arthur Kent
RCA 8091 (1963) No. 2 (Country), No. 2 (Pop)
Courtesy of The RCA Records Label Nashville. Under license from BMG Special Products.

Most people assume that *The End of the World* is a simple love song. But for **SKEETER DAVIS**, who had a hit with it in 1963, the lyrics served as a catharsis for the grief she had been feeling since the tragic death of duet partner and close friend Betty Jack Davis 10 years earlier. Skeeter was so shaken by the event that she didn't record again until 1959. She intuitively got the real message behind this song: Sylvia Dee had written it about her deceased father.

11 RIGHT OR WRONG WANDA JACKSON

Music and lyrics by Wanda Jackson.
Capitol 4553 (1961) No. 9 (Country), No. 29 (Pop)
Courtesy of Capital Nashville, Under license from EMI Music Special Markets.

Early in her career, **WANDA JACKSON** was torn between her love of country music and the pressure to be a commercial artist. Elvis Presley urged her to sing rockabilly, and Jackson became *the* female rocker of the '50s, cutting rock 'n' roll sides for Capitol that dripped with attitude. In the early '60s she toned down her vocal growl to more of a purr for such mainstream country fare as the self-penned *Right or Wrong*.

12 I FORGOT MORE THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW THE DAVIS SISTERS

Music and lyrics by Cecil Null.
RCA 5345 (1953) No. 1 (Country), No. 18 (Pop)
Courtesy of The RCA Records Label Nashville. Under license from BMG Special Products.

They weren't sisters, but best friends Betty Jack Davis and Mary Frances Penick (aka Skeeter Davis) harmonized like siblings. **THE DAVIS SISTERS** formed while they were in high school and hit big with *I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know* in 1953. The duo was involved in a car accident before the single reached No. 1. Betty Jack died. Skeeter was devastated, but moved on, working briefly with Betty Jack's sister Georgia before resuming her recording career years later as a solo act.

13 I'M NOT LISA JESSI COLTER

Music and lyrics by Jessi Colter.

Capital 4019 (1975) No. 1 (Country), No. 4 (Pop)

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One evening Waylon Jennings inadvertently called his wife, **JESSI COLTER**, by the name of an ex-lover. From that slip-up Colter composed the million-selling crossover hit *I'm Not Lisa*. She got the rhythmic pattern of the title line from a music theory class exercise and unintentionally borrowed the first few notes of the melody to *Tiny Bubbles* by Don Ho. Colter, born Miriam Johnson, got her stage name from Jesse Colter, a counterfeiter and a member of the James Gang who also happened to be a distant uncle of hers.



KITTY
WELLS

14 MAKIN' BELIEVE KITTY WELLS

Music and lyrics by Jimmy Work.

Decca 29419 (1955) No. 2 (Country)

Courtesy of MCA Nashville.

Queen of country music **KITTY WELLS** had magical powers indeed. In 1955 she cut *Makin' Believe*, a song that no one else cared about, and gave it a six-months-plus spin on the charts. Her husband, Johnny Wright, found the song, and Wells's recording was one of the first to benefit from the electronic echo chamber at producer Owen Bradley's new Quonset Hut studio in Nashville. Emmylou Harris turned *Makin' Believe* into a hit once again in 1977.

15 I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU DOLLY PARTON

Music and lyrics by Dolly Parton.

RCA 0234 (1974) No. 1 (Country)

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Parting is such sweet sorrow, yet for **DOLLY PARTON**, it yielded a hit record. Parton, who had begun writing more pop-oriented material, left Porter Wagoner's TV show in 1974 to pursue her crossover dreams; she wrote *I Will Always Love You* as her farewell to him. Parton re-recorded the song two more times, first in 1982, then in a duet with Vince Gill in 1995. Pop diva Whitney Houston also kept those royalty checks coming with her stellar 1992 version.

DISC TWO

1 COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER LORETTA LYNN

Music and lyrics by Loretta Lynn.

Decca 32749 (1970) No. 1 (Country), No. 83 (Pop)

Courtesy of MCA Nashville.

The original version of *Coal Miner's Daughter* was a bluegrass song containing nine verses. Though her songs were growing increasingly more personal, **LORETTA LYNN** put this particular project aside, figuring that nobody would care about her past. Producer Owen Bradley did some editing and updated the sound, and the resulting record gave Lynn her signature song.

The title was revived for her 1976 published autobiography and a hit movie adaptation starring Sissy Spacek.

2 **ONCE A DAY** CONNIE SMITH

Music and lyrics by Bill Anderson.

RCA 8416 (1964) No. 1 (Country), No. 101 (Pop)

Courtesy of The RCA Records Label Nashville. Under License from BMG Special Products.

Dolly Parton summed it up best when she called Barbra Streisand, Linda Ronstadt and **CONNIE SMITH** the "only three *real* female singers in the world." Bill Anderson, who discovered Smith at a talent show in Ohio, persuaded Chet Atkins at RCA to sign her. ***Once a Day***, which Anderson wrote especially for Smith, made her the first female country artist to top the charts with her debut single.

3 **ROSE GARDEN** LYNN ANDERSON

Music and lyrics by Joe South.

Columbia 45252 (1970) No. 1 (Country), No. 3 (Pop)

Originally Released 1970 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. Under License From The Sony Music Custom Marketing Group, A Division Of Sony Music, A Group Of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

The daughter of accomplished songwriter Liz Anderson, **LYNN ANDERSON** secured a record deal at 19 and was a bona fide star within four years, thanks to ***Rose Garden***. Composer Joe South took the title of his song from *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, a popular novel about a schizophrenic and her psychologist. ***Rose Garden*** earned Anderson a 1970 Grammy® and a 1971 CMA award for Best Female Artist.

4 **STAND BY YOUR MAN** TAMMY WYNETTE

Music and lyrics by Tammy Wynette and Billy Sherrill.

Epic 10398 (1968) No. 1 (Country), No. 19 (Pop)

Originally Released 1968 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. Under License From The Sony Music Custom Marketing Group, A Division Of Sony Music, A Group Of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

The melody came from a Strauss waltz. The original title was *I'll Stand by You*, which producer Billy Sherrill had scribbled on a piece of paper and carried in his pocket for a year. After he renamed it ***Stand by Your Man***, Sherrill and **TAMMY WYNETTE** finished the song during a 20-minute studio break. Despite some feminist backlash over the years (notably, from former first lady Hillary Clinton), Wynette insisted that the song told women to be supportive, not subservient.



EMMYLOU
HARRIS

5. **IF I COULD ONLY WIN YOUR LOVE** EMMYLOU HARRIS

Music and lyrics by Ira Louvin and Charlie Louvin.

Reprise 1332 (1975) No. 4 (Country), No. 58 (Pop)

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EMMYLOU HARRIS emerged as a fresh new voice in country music in the mid-'70s, but she had paid her dues on the folkie circuit and worked with the godfather of alt country, Gram Parsons, before making her major-label album debut with *Pieces of the Sky*. This boundary-stretching LP ranged from Merle Haggard honky-tonk to *Revolver*-era Beatles and yielded Harris's first top-10 hit, a remake of the Louvin Brothers classic *If I Could Only Win Your Love*.

6. **FUNNY FACE** DONNA FARGO

Music and lyrics by Donna Fargo.

Dot 17429 (1972) No. 1 (Country), No. 5 (Pop)

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Funny Face was producer Stan Silver's pet name for his wife, DONNA FARGO. (She called him Fuzzy Face because he had a beard.) Fargo wrote and published the bulk of her hits, and *Funny Face* was no exception. The record became a huge seller and followed on the heels of *The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A.* to win Fargo bragging rights as the first female country singer to release back-to-back gold singles.

7. **TEDDY BEAR SONG** BARBARA FAIRCHILD

Music and lyrics by Don Earl and Nick Nixon.

Columbia 45743 (1973) No. 1 (Country), No. 32 (Pop)

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An Atlanta DJ gave *Teddy Bear Song* (from the BARBARA FAIRCHILD album *Love's Old Song*) so much airplay that the tune became a regional hit, a Columbia single and a runaway country chart topper. In concerts Fairchild often dedicated the song, which broke during the Watergate hearings, to President Nixon. Coincidentally, *Teddy Bear* was co-authored by Nick Nixon, a minor singer-songwriter.

8. **HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT** SAMMI SMITH

Music and lyrics by Kris Kristofferson.

Mega 8015 (1971) No. 1 (Country), No. 8 (Pop)

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In Nashville, singers and songwriters need each other. When SAMMI SMITH moved to Music City, she became friends with aspiring songwriter Kris Kristofferson. *Help Me Make It through the Night* earned Smith a No. 1 hit and a Grammy,[®] and gained Kristofferson recognition as the leading writer of his generation. He based his song on a Frank Sinatra comment about "a bottle of wine or a woman or whatever I need to help me make it through the night."



TANYA
TUCKER

9 DELTA DAWN TANYA TUCKER

Music and lyrics by Alex Harvey and Lary Collins.
Columbia 45588 (1972) No. 6 (Country), No. 72 (Pop)

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Even though she was only 13 when she recorded *Delta Dawn*, the raspy, knowing voice of TANYA TUCKER announced the arrival of a country maverick ready and willing to provoke controversy. Co-writer Lary Collins was a guitar prodigy who shook things up in the '50s with the Collins Kids, purveyors of red-hot California rockabilly. Helen Reddy had a 1973 pop-hit version of *Delta Dawn* that pales by comparison to the original.

10 KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE THE CARTER FAMILY

Music and lyrics by A. P. Carter.
Victor 21434 (1928) No. 9 (Pop)

Courtesy of The RCA Records Label Nashville. Under License from BMG Special Products.

Maybelle, Sara and A. P. Carter, aka THE CARTER FAMILY, set country music in motion in 1927 when they drove to Bristol, Tennessee, to audition for Victor Records A&R man Ralph Peer. Along with Peer's other discovery, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carters became the first country stars. A popular gospel tune first copyrighted in 1899, *Keep on the Sunny Side* served as the Carter Family's theme song. When A. P. died in 1960, a bronze disc bearing this song title was embedded in his gravestone.

11 I WANT TO BE A COWBOY'S SWEETHEART PATSY MONTANA

Music and lyrics by Patsy Montana.
Vocalion 3010 (1936) No. 10 (Pop)

Courtesy of MCA Nashville.

Ruby Blevins, better known to the world as PATSY MONTANA, became the first solo female country artist to score a hit record—with *I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart*, in 1936. Her timing was perfect: Western swing was just taking off, as were Gene Autry's cowboy movies. Montana's lyrics, decades in advance of the Women's Liberation movement, portrayed the cowgirl as a strong, freedom-loving equal. With her keen yodeling ability and fancy cowgirl duds, Montana fit the role perfectly.

12 PHILADELPHIA LAWYER ROSE MADDOX

Music and lyrics by Woody Guthrie.
Capitol LP 1312 (1960) Did not chart.

Courtesy of Capitol Records. Under license from EMI Music Special Markets.

The Maddox Brothers and Rose held the distinction of being the Most Colorful Hillbilly Band in America until the act broke up in 1956. ROSE MADDOX signed with Capitol and redid *Philadelphia Lawyer*, an old family favorite. The song was derived from a popular murder ballad, *The Jealous Lover*. Woody Guthrie wrote the lyrics in 1937 while working at radio station KFVD in Los Angeles. He originally called his creation *Reno Blues*.

13 **A SATISFIED MIND** JEAN SHEPARD

Music and lyrics by Joe Hayes and Jack Rhodes.

Capitol 3118 (1955) No. 4 (Country)

Courtesy of Capitol Nashville, Under license from EMI Music Special Markets.

At the recommendation of Hank Thompson, Capitol Records signed **JEAN SHEPARD**.

Thompson's producer, Ken Nelson, quickly paired her with another West Coast transplant, Ferlin Husky. After two duet hits, Shepard scored her first big solo record in 1955 with ***A Satisfied Mind***. The song, an effective blend of social commentary and inspirational message, had real staying power: Porter Wagoner and Red Foley each had even better luck with it that same year.

14 **NO CHARGE** MELBA MONTGOMERY

Music and lyrics by Harlan Howard.

Elektra 45883 (1974) No. 1 (Country), No. 39 (Pop)

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The soulful, note-bending voice of **MELBA MONTGOMERY** drew favorable comparisons to that of George Jones, and she was the best duet partner he ever had. As a solo artist she found only modest success until she recorded the Harlan Howard recitation ***No Charge***. This story of a doting mother might have come across as unbearably sappy, yet Montgomery's performance supposedly had the studio musicians in tears at the session. ***No Charge*** reached No. 1 on Mother's Day, 1974.

15 **TUNNEL OF LOVE** MINNIE PEARL

Music and lyrics by Minnie Pearl.

Nashville LP 2043 (1968) Did not chart.

Original Starday Records Recording Courtesy of Global Licensing Inc.

The pride of the fictional town of Grinder's Switch, **MINNIE PEARL** left a scant six albums and about a dozen singles as her recorded legacy. Yet her exuberance, absurd fashion sense and half-century tenure at the Opry helped her become an icon as the queen of country comedy. ***Tunnel of Love*** was cut live at the Starday studios before an audience that included celebrities Roger Miller, Roy Acuff and Eddy Arnold, among others.

—Charles McCardell



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