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CONTEMPORARY  
COUNTRY

# CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY

## The Early '70s • Pure Gold

- 1. You're Lookin' at Country**  
Loretta Lynn
- 2. I Ain't Never** Mel Tillis
- 3. How I Got to Memphis** Bobby Bare
- 4. It's Not Love (But It's Not Bad)**  
Merle Haggard
- 5. How Much More Can She Stand**  
Conway Twitty
- 6. Lovin' on Back Streets** Mel Street
- 7. She's All I Got** Johnny Paycheck
- 8. After the Fire Is Gone**  
Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn
- 9. The Lord Knows I'm Drinking**  
Cal Smith
- 10. A Good Year for the Roses**  
George Jones
- 11. My Hang-Up Is You** Freddie Hart
- 12. Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms**  
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- 13. Coat of Many Colors** Dolly Parton
- 14. Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone**  
Charley Pride
- 15. Soul Song** Joe Stampley
- 16. Flesh and Blood** Johnny Cash
- 17. Think About It Darlin'**  
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- 18. What's Your Mama's Name**  
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- 19. Ridin' My Thumb to Mexico**  
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Faron Young
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CONTEMPORARY  
**COUNTRY**  
THE EARLY '70s • PURE GOLD

COMPACT  
**disc**  
DIGITAL AUDIO

CCD-12  
MSD-35335



1. You're Lookin' at Country
2. I Ain't Never
3. How I Got to Memphis
4. It's Not Love
5. How Much More Can She Stand
6. Lovin' on Back Streets
7. She's All I Got
8. After the Fire Is Gone
9. The Lord Knows I'm Drinking
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13. Coat of Many Colors
14. Is Anybody Goin' to San Antonio
15. Soul Song
16. Flesh and Blood
17. Think About It Darlin'
18. What's Your Mama's Name
19. Ridin' My Thumb to Mexico
20. Till I Get It Right
21. It's Four in the Morning
22. I Won't Mention It Again

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# CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY

THE EARLY '70s • PURE GOLD

Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn were two of the most consistent and soulful country artists of the early '70s, and since they recorded on the same label, duets seemed natural for them. Their first one, **After the Fire Is Gone**, was written by L.E. White (who labored at Conway's publishing company) after he and a friend looked into a fireless fireplace in a home outside Nashville. "Boy, it looks cold in there, don't it?" the friend asked, and White knew a resonant piece of imagery when he heard one. Twitty stalled on the tune for a year, but changed his mind after he and Lynn, who had become friendly while playing the annual Wembley Festival in London, England, decided to try singing together. *After the Fire Is Gone* went straight to No. 1, and their partnership remained a winner for the next decade.

Conway and Loretta continued to flourish as individual country stars. She wrote **You're Lookin' at Country** as another way of expressing the pride of *Coal Miner's Daughter*, which had become her

theme song. Twitty did some of his own writing, but relied more on his sharp ear, choosing his singles material at a time when most country stars left that task to their producers. Harry Compton was a member of the St. Louis duo the Compton Brothers, whose biggest single (*Haunted House* in 1969) had gone no higher than No. 11. Though **How Much More Can She Stand** was turned down all over Nashville, Twitty was sure it would be a hit as soon as Compton sang it to him backstage before a gig in Wisconsin. Compton provided the high tenor harmonies on Twitty's No. 1 version.

Unlike Conway and Loretta, country's other hot new duet partners—George Jones and Tammy Wynette—were husband and wife. As popular as they were together, both remained stronger as solo artists. Jones's **A Good Year for the Roses** reflected his inimitable way with a ballad, while the oft-married Wynette's **'Til I Get It Right** became something of a theme song. The tune originated with Larry Hen-

ley, lead singer of the Nashville rock group the Newbeats, who got the idea while contemplating switching from pop to country as he flew home over the Atlantic from a British tour.

Dolly Parton was, with Porter Wagoner, the reigning champion of Nashville duets at the time Conway and Loretta emerged, but she was equally well known for her ballads about growing up in the Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee. Featuring a melody and meter as old as traditional Elizabethan balladry, **Coat of Many Colors** was an autobiographical song that connected a childhood memory with an Old Testament story about Joseph.

Out on the West Coast, the Bakersfield Sound was peaking with Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, while transplanted Nashville star Freddie Hart was reviving his career. Buck was so hot he could coast with an old string band tune like **Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms**. Written by Charlie Monroe, Bill Monroe's brother, the song was cut first by Preston Young in 1931, then by the Monroe Brothers in 1936 before Flatt and Scruggs brought it back in 1950. Though Haggard usually wrote his own material, he got **It's Not Love (But It's Not Bad)** from Glenn Martin and Hank

Cochran; Martin had started it to tease his friend about his romantic predicament, then Cochran helped him finish it at Haggard's request. Hart's **My Hang-Up Is You** was the follow-up to his surprise '71 comeback *Easy Loving*, reprising the lead and steel guitar lines just to be safe. At the time, people talked about their hang-ups, but only Hart thought to make the notion a positive one.

Back in Music City, the Nashville Sound still held sway for new artists as well as old—but that nondescriptive term had always disguised just how broad the true range of styles was. Among veterans, Bobby Bare remained a songwriter who wrote little himself but interpreted others' songs brilliantly, and his reading of Tom T. Hall's **How I Got to Memphis** upheld his reputation. Faron Young's **It's Four in the Morning** was a real challenge for writer Jerry Chestnut. Young had recently injured his tongue so badly in a car wreck that while four operations enabled him to sing again, he could not pronounce an "s" without lisping. Chestnut limited himself to lyrics that avoided "s," outside of the title phrase. Dave Kirby was a session guitarist when he and Glenn Martin penned **Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone** after another sideman

asked that question on his way out of the studio. Charley Pride, who normally had a song down cold before cutting it, tucked this one away 15 or 20 minutes after it was brought to him.

Johnny Cash wrote **Flesh and Blood** (used in the movie *I Walk the Line*, named after one of his biggest early hits) for his wife, June Carter, while relaxing in the country on a family picnic. Jerry Lee Lewis, Cash's old Sun Records crony, had been saying **Think About It Darlin'** as a running catchphrase through several of his singles, so it was only a matter of time before Jerry Foster and Bill Rice (two of the Killer's favorite writers) would come up with a song using that title. Country legend Ray Price, once known for his gutbucket Texas honky-tonk shuffles, had recently started experimenting with strings and huge orchestras. When his version of Kris Kristoferson's *For the Good Times*, with strings arranged by Cam Mullins, took Price to No. 1 in 1970 (for the first time since 1959), Mullins co-wrote **I Won't Mention It Again** as the follow-up.

Mel Tillis and Bill Anderson had both come to Nashville in the late '50s as writers, with Anderson the first to get his career as an artist into high gear. **I Ain't**

**Never** was one of several Tillis songs first made into hits by Webb Pierce (this one in 1959). In 1972, when Mel went back to cut the song himself, *I Ain't Never* became his first No. 1 as an artist. Anderson wrote **The Lord Knows I'm Drinking** after some members of his church walked into a restaurant where he and his wife were enjoying wine before a meal. He tried to hide his glass behind the menu, and when she realized what was going on, she reproached him by uttering the title phrase. Anderson never did get around to recording it as a single, but got by quite nicely with royalties from the No. 1 version by Cal Smith.

**Lovin' on Back Streets** was the second single (and second top-10 record) of what seemed to be a promising modern honky-tonk career for Mel Street; however, after several years of hits, the West Virginian committed suicide in 1978. Johnny Paycheck, whose career had been on hold for several years due to both business and drinking problems, made his comeback under producer Billy Sherrill with **She's All I Got**. Joe Stampley, a veteran of the Louisiana frat-rock band the Uniques, went country in 1971. His **Soul Song**, written by session pianist George Richey with help from Sherrill and Stamp-



ley's producer, Norro Wilson, was cut first by Tanya Tucker, but her version didn't chart.

But the two biggest new stars of the era were probably Johnny Rodriguez and Tanya Tucker. Rodriguez had come to the attention of Rio Grande Valley entrepreneur Happy Shahan after a Texas Ranger heard the 17-year-old singing in jail (where he was being held for rustling and cooking a goat). Shahan, in turn, fixed Rodriguez up with Tom T. Hall, who took Johnny into his road band and then sponsored his solo career. Rodriguez was the first of the bilingual country singers, and **Ridin' My Thumb to Mexico**, his third single and second No. 1, was inspired by memories of the days when he hitchhiked around the border area.

Tanya was 13 when she made her startling debut in 1972, and quickly became known for hard-hitting songs of experience that clashed sharply with her age. Producer Sherrill was unimpressed with **What's Your Mama's Name** until the last line, about "Wilson green" eyes, and he had George Jones cut it. But it took Tanya's tantalizing combination of innocence and experience to put the song on the charts, her first No. 1 in a career that continues to grow.

—John Morthland

## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard country chart position

- 1. You're Lookin' at Country** Loretta Lynn • Music and lyrics by Loretta Lynn. Sure-Fire Music Co., Inc. BMI. Decca 32851 (1971). No. 5\*
- 2. I Ain't Never** Mel Tillis • Music and lyrics by Mel Tillis and Webb Pierce. Cedarwood Publishing Company, Inc. BMI. MGM 14418 (1972). © 1972 PolyGram Records, Inc. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. No. 1\*
- 3. How I Got to Memphis** Bobby Bare • Music and lyrics by Tom T. Hall. Newkeys Music Inc. BMI. Mercury 73097 (1970). Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. No. 3\*
- 4. It's Not Love (But It's Not Bad)** Merle Haggard • Music and lyrics by Glenn Martin and Hank Cochran. Sony Tree Publishing Co., Inc. BMI. Capitol 3419 (1972). © 1972 Capitol Records, Inc. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 1\*
- 5. How Much More Can She Stand** Conway Twitty • Music and lyrics by Harry Compton. Brothers Two Music. ASCAP. Decca 32801 (1971). No. 1\*
- 6. Lovin' on Back Streets** Mel Street • Music and lyrics by Hugh King. Contention Music. SESAC. Metromedia Country 901 (1972). Courtesy of Sugarhill Records, Inc. No. 5\*

**7. She's All I Got** Johnny Paycheck • Music and lyrics by Jerry Williams and Gary Bonds. *Chrysalis Songs./Jerry Williams Music*. BMI. Epic 10783 (1971). Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. No. 2\*

**8. After the Fire Is Gone** Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn • Music and lyrics by L.E. White. *Twitty Bird Music Publishing Co.* BMI. Decca 32776 (1971). No. 1\*

**9. The Lord Knows I'm Drinking** Cal Smith • Music and lyrics by Bill Anderson. *Stallion Music, Inc.* BMI. Decca 33040 (1972). No. 1\*

**10. A Good Year for the Roses** George Jones • Music and lyrics by Jerry Chestnut. *Sony Tree Publishing Co., Inc.* BMI. *Musicoar* 1425 (1971). Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. No. 2\*

**11. My Hang-Up Is You** Freddie Hart • Music and lyrics by Freddie Hart. *Sony Tree Publishing Co., Inc.* BMI. Capitol 3261 (1972). © 1973 Richard Davis Management. Courtesy of Richard Davis Management. No. 1\*

**12. Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms** Buck Owens • Music and lyrics by Charlie Monroe; arranged by Buck Owens. *Sony Tree Publishing Co., Inc.* BMI. Capitol 3164 (1971). Courtesy of Buck Owens Enterprises. No. 2\*

**13. Coat of Many Colors** Dolly Parton • Music and lyrics by Dolly Parton. *Oweparc Pub., Inc.* BMI. RCA 0538 (1971). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. No. 4\*

**14. Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone** Charley Pride • Music and lyrics by Dave Kirby and Glenn Martin. *Sony Tree Publishing Co., Inc.* BMI. RCA 9806 (1970). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. No. 1\*

**15. Soul Song** Joe Stampley • Music and lyrics by George Richey, Norris Wilson and Billy Sherrill. *Al Gallico Music./Algee Music*. BMI. Dot 17442 (1972). © 1972 MCA Records, Inc. No. 1\*

**16. Flesh and Blood** Johnny Cash • Music and lyrics by Johnny Cash. *Songs of Cash Music*. BMI. Columbia 45269 (1971). Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. No. 1\*

**17. Think About It Darlin'** Jerry Lee Lewis • Music and lyrics by Jerry Foster and Bill Rice. *Jack and Bill Music Company*. ASCAP. Mercury 73273 (1972). © 1972 PolyGram Records, Inc. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. Did not chart.



**18. What's Your Mama's Name** Tanya Tucker • Music and lyrics by Dallas Frazier and Earl Montgomery. MCA Music Publishing (A Division of MCA Inc.). ASCAP. Columbia 45799 (1973).

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**19. Ridin' My Thumb to Mexico** Johnny Rodriguez • Music and lyrics by Johnny Rodriguez. Hallnote Music. BMI. Mercury 73416 (1973). © 1973 PolyGram Records, Inc. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. No. 1\*

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**22. I Won't Mention It Again** Ray Price • Music and lyrics by Cameron Mullins and Carolyn Jean Yates. Seaview Music Inc. BMI. Columbia 45329 (1971). Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. No. 1\*



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Buck Owens

