

A man with a pompadour hairstyle, wearing a brown corduroy jacket over an orange shirt, is seated and playing a yellow acoustic guitar. He is positioned in front of a wooden structure with vertical posts. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the wooden structure and some greenery.

TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

CONTEMPORARY
COUNTRY

CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY

- 1. (Ghost) Riders in the Sky**
Johnny Cash
- 2. It's Been a Great Afternoon**
Merle Haggard
- 3. If I Could Only Win Your Love**
Emmylou Harris
- 4. All of Me** Willie Nelson
- 5. Room Full of Roses** Mickey Gilley
- 6. Among My Souvenirs**
Marty Robbins
- 7. You're the One** The Oak Ridge Boys
- 8. Rated "X"** Loretta Lynn
- 9. Don't Be Angry** Donna Fargo
- 10. I May Never Get to Heaven**
Conway Twitty
- 11. A Picture of Me (Without You)**
George Jones
- 12. Ruby (Are You Mad)** Buck Owens
- 13. Baby Boy**
Mary Kay Place as Loretta Haggard
- 14. Rednecks, White Socks and Blue Ribbon Beer** Johnny Russell
- 15. Sometimes**
Bill Anderson and Mary Lou Turner
- 16. Feelins'**
Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty
- 17. Before My Time** John Conlee
- 18. I'll Go to My Grave Loving You**
The Statler Brothers
- 19. Me and Bobby McGee**
Jerry Lee Lewis
- 20. Say It Again** Don Williams
- 21. Broken Down in Tiny Pieces**
Billy "Crash" Craddock
- 22. Secret Love** Freddy Fender

SEE PROGRAM NOTES INSIDE

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MSD-35436

CONTEMPORARY
COUNTRY
THE '70s • PURE GOLD

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

CCD-20
MSD-35436

TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

1. (Ghost) Riders in the Sky 2. It's Been a Great Afternoon 3. If I Could Only Win Your Love
4. All of Me 5. Room Full of Roses 6. Among My Souvenirs 7. You're the One
8. Rated "X" 9. Don't Be Angry 10. I May Never Get to Heaven
11. A Picture of Me (Without You) 12. Ruby (Are You Mad) 13. Baby Boy
14. Rednecks, White Socks and Blue Ribbon Beer 15. Sometimes
16. Feelins' 17. Before My Time 18. I'll Go to My Grave
Loving You 19. Me and Bobby McGee 20. Say It Again
21. Broken Down in Tiny Pieces
22. Secret Love

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CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY

THE '70s • PURE GOLD

Bob McDill, more than any other songwriter, reflected country lyrics' increasingly self-conscious literary qualities in the 1970s. His best foil turned out to be soft balladeer Don Williams. But McDill crossed over to country music slowly, and Williams was not the first to cut his songs.

McDill was a Texan who joined the Army after graduating from Lamar University, later reaching Memphis just in time to watch that once-fertile scene begin withering. He wrote for everyone from Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs to Perry Como, but struggled enough so that by 1969 he was ready to try Nashville. He soon discovered the music of the Band, whose meaningful lyrics were pegged to distinctly rural imagery. It still took McDill a while to learn to like country, and his first hit composition did not come until the end of 1972, when Johnny Russell took *Caifish John* to No. 12. The following year, Russell scored

his only top-10 hit with McDill's **Rednecks, White Socks and Blue Ribbon Beer**, which cleverly encapsulated the ongoing renewal in Southern pride and the national fascination with good ol' boys.

Following the success of *Rednecks*, McDill hooked up with fellow ex-folkie Don Williams in a match made in country heaven. Williams had written his own late-'72 debut hit, *The Shelter of Your Eyes*, but his follow-up, *Come Early Morning* back with *Amanda*, came from McDill's pen. By 1989, McDill had charted 39 singles, an even dozen of them by Williams, and his tone is best conveyed by the reference in *Song of the South* to "those Williams boys, Hank and Tennessee." McDill's **Say It Again** was Don Williams' fifth No. 1 single.

Onetime Rhodes Scholar Kris Kristofferson had first opened up lyric possibilities for McDill in the '60s with his own

gems, of which **Me and Bobby McGee** arguably had the broadest appeal. His publisher Fred Foster had suggested he write a song called *Me and Bobby McKee*. Kristofferson had been thinking about Federico Fellini's *La Strada*, in which small-time traveling circus character Anthony Quinn abuses his companion Giulietta Masina until she deserts him. The loss haunts Quinn for the rest of his life, and inspired Kristofferson's storyline. He was also preoccupied at the time with the contradictory notion of "freedom"—the way someone could be freest when most alone, possessing nothing. Country star Roger Miller was the first to cut *Me and Bobby McGee*, but it exploded two years later as a posthumous No. 1 pop hit for Janis Joplin in 1971. Jerry Lee Lewis figured the song had been played out and did not want to cut it at all. His then-manager Judd Phillips—brother of Sun Records founder Sam Phillips, and Jerry Lee's longtime running buddy—convinced the Killer that a rocking country arrangement would still fly. He was proved right when Lewis rode it to No. 1.

Despite the mid-decade ascendance of the Outlaws, more traditional artists,

songs and styles dominated. Bill Anderson wrote **Sometimes** in 1975 after reading a review of the movie *Shampoo* while his tour bus rolled through the English countryside. "Sometimes" is what a couple in the movie answered to a question about whether they were married. Anderson had the song finished by that afternoon's soundcheck and taught it to his new duet partner, Mary Lou Turner. That same year, Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn enjoyed their fifth No. 1 duet single with **Feelins'**.

Lynn became the Country Music Association's first female Entertainer of the Year in 1972, and responded with **Rated "X"**, an original song about divorce that came out amid controversy over the then-new film ratings system. Lynn had been stirring up controversies of her own with increasingly frank material, and, as she noted, "Every time I had a song banned it went to No. 1." **Rated "X"** was no exception. Newcomer Emmylou Harris, working out of Los Angeles, carried the banner for older sounds with her revival of the Louvin Brothers' **If I Could Only Win Your Love**. Mary Kay Place, who played the guileless, would-be country singer Loretta

Haggers on Norman Lear's television soap-opera spoof *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, managed to turn fantasy into reality for one album, which yielded Haggers' religious tune, **Baby Boy**, as its first single.

Bill Anderson co-wrote Conway Twitty's **I May Never Get to Heaven** two decades before Twitty took it to No. 1. Anderson penned the lyric in 1959 after breaking up with a girlfriend, and writer-producer Buddy Killen contributed the melody. Don Gibson cut it first, and over the next 20 years there were a dozen failed versions, including one by Aretha Franklin. Then Twitty, who had known the song since his own late-'50s rocking days, made it click. Marty Robbins topped the charts with the even older **Among My Souvenirs**, which dated all the way back to 1928, when it was cut by four different people. Robbins recorded it as an album track, but producer Billy Sherrill accurately predicted that it had legs as a single.

Three more great veterans—George Jones, Buck Owens and Johnny Cash—continued to ride high. George had married Tammy Wynette in 1969 and they began recording duets for Billy Sherrill,

Tammy's Epic producer, in April of 1971, when George was still with Musicor. In October, Sherrill signed Jones, and five days later an album of his duets was on the market. George Richey's **A Picture of Me (Without You)**, like nearly all Jones's material for the next couple years, played on the fairytale marriage of the two country titans, and was George's first solo single utilizing Sherrill's grandiose production techniques. **Ruby (Are You Mad)**, an oldie written by mountain novelty singer Cousin Emmy, grew out of the fondness Buck Owens felt for bluegrass music ever since he had first heard it as a kid on the pirate radio stations along the Texas-Mexico border. The song had flopped as the Osborne Brothers' first single in 1956, but they remade it for a minor 1970 hit. Owens' version was the title tune of his all-bluegrass album. Similarly, Johnny Cash got additional mileage out of the oldie **(Ghost) Riders in the Sky**, which had been a country favorite at least since pop singer-bandleader Vaughn Monroe's stirring 1949 version.

After years on the fringes of the music world, Billy "Crash" Craddock finally cracked the country charts in the

early '70s with a series of rockabilly-derived singles. When he decided to try a departure with a ballad, his favorite writer John Adrian's **Broken Down in Tiny Pieces**, with sessions singer Janie Frickie whispering the title phrase, turned the trick.

A pair of Texans made their marks near the decade's midpoint. Mickey Gilley had kicked around with numerous labels for 20 years with little luck, but had established himself as a potent local star in Houston with his own television show and nightclub. In 1973, he cut four sides for a local jukebox operator, who was specifically interested in a new version of *She Called Me Baby*. **Room Full of Roses** was meant for the B-side, but Houston DJs made it a regional hit despite an overly echoed (to disguise the fact that it was out of tune) steel guitar intro, a piano break in which Gilley wanders out of sync with the studio musicians and bungled lyrics in the first verse. When no label in Nashville would touch such a crude recording, the newly-formed Playboy Records, out of L.A., picked it up, and Gilley went No. 1 nationwide.

Freddy Fender was another two-

decades-in-the-making "overnight sensation" from the Lone Star State. A legendary Chicano R&B singer, he went country for producer Huey Meaux in 1975 and his first two singles reached No. 1. After seeing a third stall at No. 10, Fender came back in late '75 with **Secret Love**, Doris Day's 1953 Oscar-winner from *Calamity Jane* and a 1954 Slim Whitman country hit.

But it was Texan Willie Nelson, the figurehead for the Outlaw movement, who brought it all back home in the biggest way. Having established himself as the hottest country singer around, Willie stunned the music world in 1978 with *Stardust*, a mellow, bittersweet collection of pop chestnuts, mostly from the '30s and '40s, produced by former soul bandleader Booker T. Jones. Nelson's version of **All of Me**, No. 1 in 1932 for both Louis Armstrong and Paul Whiteman, proved that there was more than one way for country music to expand and grow more sophisticated.

—John Morthland

DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard country chart position

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- 12. Ruby (Are You Mad)** Buck Owens • Music and lyrics by Cousin Emmy. Acuff-Rose Publications, Inc./Duchess Music Corp. BMI. Capitol 3096 (1971). Courtesy of Buck Owens Enterprises. No. 3*
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The Author: John Morthland is the author of *The Best of Country Music* and is a contributing editor to *Country Music* magazine.

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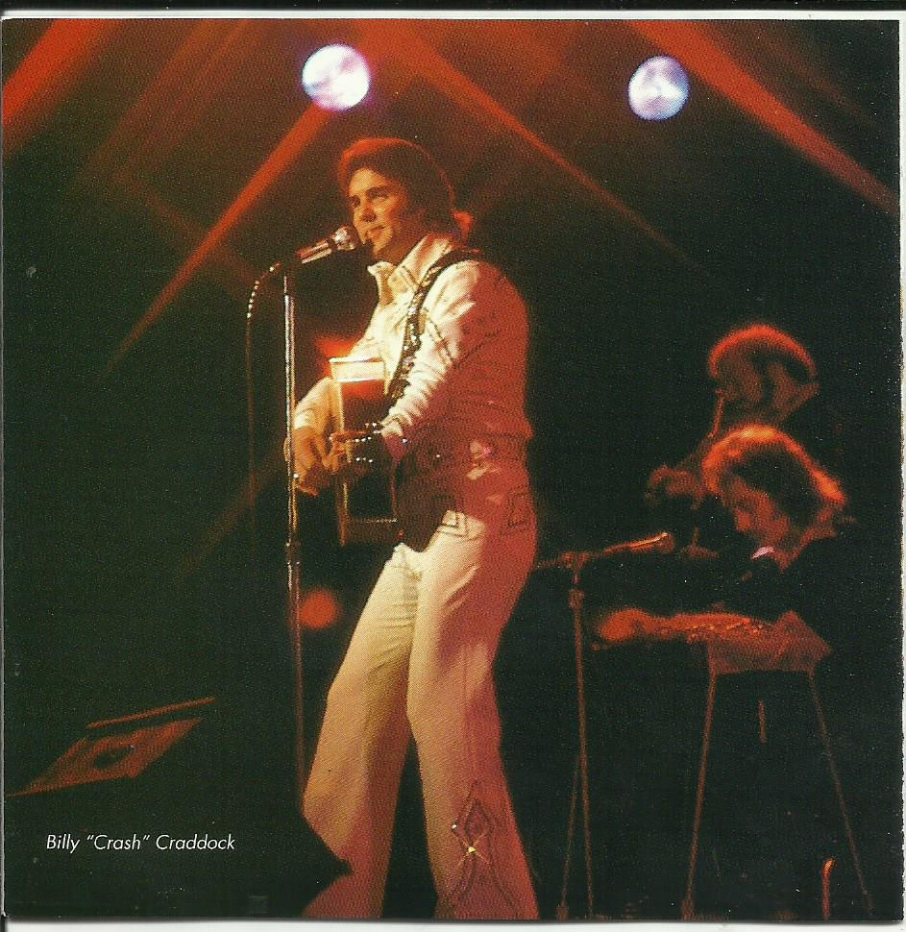
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Billy "Crash" Craddock