

# Waylon Jennings

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**Waylon Arnold Jennings** (pronounced [/ˈweɪlən ɑːrnɪdʒɪnz/](#); June 15, 1937 – February 13, 2002) was an American singer, songwriter, and musician. Jennings began playing guitar at eight and began performing at 14 on [KVOW](#) radio. His first band was The Texas Longhorns. Jennings worked as a DJ on [KVOW](#), [KDAV](#), [KYTI](#), and [KLLL](#). In 1958, [Buddy Holly](#) arranged Jennings's first recording session, of "[Jole Blon](#)" and "[When Sin Stops \(Love Begins\)](#)". Holly hired him to play [bass](#). In [Clear Lake, Iowa](#), the story is told that Jennings gave up his seat on the ill-fated flight that [crashed and killed](#) [Holly](#), [J. P. Richardson](#),

## Waylon Jennings



Jennings c. 1974

<b>Born</b>	Waylon Arnold Jennings June 15, 1937 <a href="#">Littlefield, Texas</a> , U.S.
<b>Died</b>	February 13, 2002 (aged 64)

Ritchie Valens, and pilot Roger Peterson.

Jennings then worked as a DJ in Coolidge, Arizona, and Phoenix. He formed a rockabilly club band, The Waylors. He recorded for independent label Trend Records and A&M Records before succeeding with RCA Victor after achieving creative control.

During the 1970s, Jennings joined the Outlaw Country movement. He released critically acclaimed albums *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean* and *Honky Tonk Heroes* followed by hit albums *Dreaming My Dreams* as well as *Are You Ready for the Country*. In 1976, he released the album *Wanted! The Outlaws* with Willie Nelson, Tompall Glaser, and Jessi Colter, the first platinum country music album. That success was followed by *Ol' Waylon* and the hit song "Luckenbach, Texas".

Jennings was featured in the 1978 album *White Mansions* performed by various artists documenting the lives of people in the Confederacy during the Civil War. The songs on the album were written by Paul Kennerley. By the early 1980s, Jennings was struggling with a cocaine addiction, which he quit in 1984. Later, he joined the country supergroup The Highwaymen with Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, and Johnny Cash, which released three albums between 1985 and 1995. During that period, Jennings released the successful album *Will the Wolf Survive*. He toured less after 1997 to spend more time with his family. Between 1999 and 2001, his appearances were limited by health problems. On February 13, 2002, Jennings died from complications of diabetes.

Jennings also appeared in films and television series. He was the balladeer for *The*

<b>Cause of death</b>	Chandler, Arizona, U.S. Diabetes
<b>Occupation</b>	Singer-songwriter, musician
<b>Years active</b>	1958–2000
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Maxine Lawrence (m. 1955; div. 1962) Lynne Jones (m. 1962; div. 1967) Barbara Elizabeth Rood (m. 1967; div. 1968) Jessi Colter (m. 1969)
<b>Children</b>	6
	<b>Musical career</b>
<b>Genres</b>	Country · outlaw country · rockabilly (early) · country rock
<b>Instruments</b>	Vocals · guitar · bass guitar · piano · mandolin
<b>Labels</b>	RCA Victor · MCA · Epic
<b>Associated acts</b>	Jessi Colter · Willie Nelson · The Highwaymen · Bobby Bare · Old Dogs · The Strangers · Buddy Holly · Andy Griggs · Johnny Cash · Hank Williams Jr.
<b>Website</b>	waylonjennings.com

*Dukes of Hazzard*, composing and singing [the show's theme song](#) and providing narration for the show. In 2001, he was inducted into the [Country Music Hall of Fame](#), which he chose not to attend. In 2007, he was posthumously awarded the Cliffie Stone Pioneer Award by the [Academy of Country Music](#).

## Early life

Waylon Jennings was born on June 15, 1937, on the G.W. Bitner farm, near [Littlefield, Texas](#). The Jennings family line descended from [Irish](#) and [Black-Dutch](#). Meanwhile, the Shipley family moved from Tennessee and settled in Texas. The Shipley line descended from [Cherokee](#) and [Comanche](#) families.<sup>[1]</sup>

The name on his birth certificate was Wayland, meaning land by the highway. His name was changed after a Baptist preacher visited Jennings's parents and congratulated his mother for naming him after the [Wayland Baptist University](#) in [Plainview, Texas](#). Lorene Jennings, who had been unaware of the college, changed the spelling to Waylon. Jennings later expressed in his autobiography, "I didn't like Waylon. It sounded corny and hillbilly, but it's been good to me, and I'm pretty well at peace with it right now."<sup>[2]</sup>

After working as a laborer on the Bitner farm, Jennings's father moved the family to Littlefield and established a [retail creamery](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

## Music career

### Beginnings in music

When Jennings was eight, his mother taught him to play guitar with the tune "Thirty Pieces of Silver". Jennings used to practice with his relatives' guitars, until his mother bought him a used [Stella](#), and later ordered a [Harmony Patrician](#).<sup>[4]</sup> Early influences were [Bob Wills](#), [Floyd Tillman](#), [Ernest Tubb](#), [Hank Williams](#), [Carl Smith](#), and [Elvis Presley](#).<sup>[5][6][7][8]</sup>

Beginning at family gatherings, Jennings advanced to perform at the Youth Center with Anthony Bonanno, followed by appearances at the local [Jaycees](#) and [Lions Clubs](#). He won a talent show at [Channel 13](#), in Lubbock, singing "[Hey Joe](#)". He later made frequent performances at the Palace Theater in Littlefield, during local talent night.<sup>[9]</sup>

At 12 years,<sup>[10]</sup> Jennings auditioned for a spot on KVOW in Littlefield, Texas. Owner J.B. McShan, along with Emil Macha, recorded Jennings's performance. McShan liked his style and hired him for a weekly 30-minute program. Following this successful introduction, Jennings formed his own band. He asked Macha to play bass for him, and gathered other friends and acquaintances to form The Texas Longhorns. The style of the band, a mixture of [Country and Western](#) and [Bluegrass music](#), was often not well received.<sup>[11]</sup>

At age 16, after several disciplinary infractions, tenth-grader Jennings was convinced to drop out of high school by the superintendent. Upon leaving school, he worked for his father in the produce store, also taking temporary jobs. Jennings felt that music, his favorite activity, would turn into his career.<sup>[12]</sup> The next year, Jennings and The Texas Longhorns recorded a demo of the songs "Stranger in My Home" and "There'll Be a New Day" at [KFYO](#) radio in Lubbock.<sup>[11]</sup> Meanwhile, he drove a truck for the Thomas Land Lumber Company, and a [concrete truck](#) for the Roberts Lumber Company. Tired of the owner, and after a minor driving accident, Jennings quit.<sup>[13]</sup> Jennings, and other local musicians, often performed at country radio station [KDAV](#), and it is during this time he met [Buddy Holly](#) at a Lubbock restaurant.<sup>[14]</sup> The two often met during local shows, and Jennings began to attend Holly's performances on KDAV's *Sunday Party*.<sup>[15]</sup>

In addition to performing on air for KVOW, Jennings started to work as a DJ in 1956,<sup>[16]</sup> and moved to Lubbock.<sup>[16]</sup> His program ran for six hours, from 4:00 in the afternoon to 10:00 in the evening. Jennings played two hours of country classics, two of current country, and two of mixed recordings.<sup>[17]</sup> During those final two hours, Jennings played artists such as [Chuck Berry](#) and [Little Richard](#). The owner reprimanded him each time he aired the recordings, and when he then played two Richard records in a row, the owner fired him.<sup>[18]</sup>

During his time at KVOW, Jennings was visited by DJ Sky Corbin, who worked at [KLVT](#)

in Levelland. Corbin was impressed with his voice, and decided to visit Jennings at the station after hearing him sing a jingle to the tune of Hank Snow's "[I'm Moving On](#)". Jennings expressed his economic struggle to live on a US\$50-a-week salary. Corbin invited Jennings to visit KLVT, where he eventually took Corbin's then-vacated



Jennings during a broadcast of his show on KLLL in 1958

position.<sup>[19]</sup> The Corbin family later purchased [KLLL](#), in Lubbock. They changed the format of the station to country, becoming the main competition of KDAV. The Corbins hired Jennings as the station's first DJ.<sup>[20]</sup>

Jennings produced commercials and created jingles with the rest of the DJs. As their popularity increased, the DJs made public appearances. Jennings's events included live performances. During one performance, Buddy's father, L.O. Holley, approached them with his son's latest record, and requested them to play it at the station. L.O. mentioned his son's intention to start producing artists himself, and Corbin recommended Jennings. After returning from his England tour, Buddy Holly visited KLLL.<sup>[21]</sup>

### [Jole Blon](#)



During his first recording session in September 1958, Jennings was accompanied by Buddy Holly on the guitar and King Curtis on the saxophone.

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Holly took Jennings as his first artist. He outfitted him with new clothes, and worked with him to improve his image.<sup>[22]</sup> He arranged a session for Jennings at Norman Petty's recording studios in [Clovis, New Mexico](#). On September 10, Jennings recorded the songs "[Jole Blon](#)" and "When Sin Stops (Love Begins)" with Holly and [Tommy Allsup](#) on guitars with saxophonist [King Curtis](#). Holly then hired Jennings to play electric bass for him during his "Winter Dance Party Tour".<sup>[16]</sup>

## Winter Dance Party Tour

Before the tour, Holly vacationed with his wife in Lubbock, and visited Jennings's radio station in December 1958. Jennings and Sky Corbin performed the hand claps to Holly's tune "You're the One".<sup>[20]</sup> Jennings and Holly soon left for New York City,<sup>[23]</sup> arriving on January 15, 1959. Jennings stayed at Holly's apartment by [Washington Square Park](#), on the days prior to a meeting scheduled on the headquarters of the [General Artists Corporation](#), that organized the tour.<sup>[24]</sup> They later took a train to Chicago to join the band.<sup>[25]</sup>

The [Winter Dance Party](#) tour began in [Milwaukee, Wisconsin](#), on January 23, 1959. The amount of travel created logistical problems, as the distance between venues had not been considered when scheduling each performance. Adding to the problem, the unheated tour buses twice broke down in freezing weather, with dire consequences. Holly's drummer Carl Bunch suffered frostbite to his toes (while aboard the bus) and was hospitalized, so Buddy Holly made the decision to find another means of transportation.<sup>[26]</sup> Before their performance at the [Surf Ballroom](#) in [Clear Lake, Iowa](#), Holly chartered a four-seat Beechcraft Bonanza airplane at Dwyer Flying Service in [Mason City, Iowa](#), for himself, Jennings, and Tommy Allsup, to avoid the long bus trip to their next venue in [Moorhead, Minnesota](#). Following the Clear Lake show (which ended around midnight), Allsup lost a coin toss and gave up his seat on the charter plane to [Ritchie Valens](#), while Waylon Jennings voluntarily gave up his seat to [J. P. Richardson](#), who was suffering from the flu and complaining about how cold and uncomfortable the tour bus was for a man of his size.<sup>[27][28]</sup> When Holly learned that his bandmates had given up their seats on the plane and had chosen to take the bus rather than fly, a friendly banter between Holly and Jennings ensued, and it would come back to haunt Jennings for decades to follow: Holly jokingly told Jennings, "Well, I hope your ol' bus freezes up!" Jennings jokingly replied, "Well, I hope your ol' plane crashes!"<sup>[29]</sup> Less than an hour and a half later, shortly after 1:00 am on February 3, 1959 (later known as [The Day the Music Died](#)), Holly's charter plane crashed at full throttle into a cornfield outside Mason City, Iowa, instantly killing all on board.<sup>[30]</sup>

Later that morning, Jennings's family heard on the radio that "Buddy Holly and his band had been killed." After calling his family, Jennings called Sky Corbin at KLLL from Fargo to say that he himself was alive.<sup>[31]</sup> The General Artists Corporation promised to pay a first-class ticket for Jennings and the band to assist Holly's funeral in

Lubbock, in exchange for them playing that night in Moorhead.<sup>[32]</sup> After the first show, they were initially denied their payment by the venue, but after Jennings's persistence, they were paid.<sup>[33]</sup> The flights were never paid,<sup>[34]</sup> and Jennings and Allsup continued the tour for two more weeks, featuring Jennings as the lead singer.<sup>[16]</sup> They were paid less than half of the original agreed salary, and upon returning to New York, Jennings put Holly's guitar and amplifier in a locker in [Grand Central Terminal](#) and mailed the keys to [Maria Elena Holly](#). Then, he returned to Lubbock.<sup>[35]</sup>

For decades afterward, Jennings repeatedly admitted that he felt responsible for the crash that killed Buddy Holly. This sense of guilt precipitated bouts of substance abuse through much of Jennings's career.<sup>[36]</sup> The day of the flight was later known as [the Day the Music Died](#). Jennings sang *The Stage*, a tribute to the Day the Music Died. He recreated the concert performers on February 2, 1959, in order at the Surf Ballroom, starting with Eddie Cochran, then Ritchie Valens, the Big Bopper and, finally, Buddy Holly. This was the concert that preceded the infamous plane crash. *The Stage* can be found on the Surf Ballroom Winter Dance Party CD.

"Jole Blon" was released on Brunswick in March 1959 with limited success.<sup>[5]</sup> Now unemployed, Jennings returned to KLLL. Deeply affected by the death of Buddy Holly, Jennings's performance at the station worsened. He left the station after he was denied a raise, and later worked briefly for the competition, KDAV.<sup>[37]</sup>

## Phoenix and the Nashville Sound

Due to Maxine's father's illness, Jennings had to shuttle between Arizona and Texas. While his family lived back in Littlefield, Jennings found a job briefly at [KOYL](#) in [Odessa, Texas](#).<sup>[38]</sup> He moved with his family to [Coolidge, Arizona](#), where his wife's sister lived. He found a job performing at the Galloping Goose bar, where he was heard by Earl Perrin, who offered him a spot on [KCKY](#). Jennings also played during the intermission at [drive-in theaters](#) and in bars.<sup>[39]</sup> After a successful performance at the Cross Keys Club in [Phoenix](#), he was approached by contractors who were building a club for Jimmy D. Musiel, called JD's. Musiel employed Jennings as his main artist and designed the club around his act.<sup>[40]</sup>

He formed his backing band, [The Waylors](#), with bassist Paul Foster, guitarist Jerry Gropp, and drummer Richie Albright.<sup>[41]</sup> Jennings and his band performed at the newly opened nightspot in [Scottsdale](#), where they soon earned a strong local fanbase.<sup>[42]</sup> At JD's, Jennings developed his "rock tempered" style of country music that defined him on his later career.<sup>[43]</sup>

In 1961, Jennings signed a recording contract with [Trend Records](#),<sup>[42]</sup> and experienced moderate success with his single, "Another Blue Day".<sup>[44]</sup> His friend, [Don Bowman](#), took demos of Jennings to [Jerry Moss](#), who at the time was starting [A&M Records](#) with associate [Herb Alpert](#). On July 9, 1963, Jennings signed a contract with A&M that granted him 5% of record sales. At A&M, he recorded "Love Denied" backed with "Rave On", and "Four Strong Winds" backed with "Just to Satisfy You". He followed up by recording demos of "The Twelfth of Never", "Kisses Sweeter than Wine", and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right", and also produced the single "Sing the Girls a Song, Bill", backed with "The Race Is On". The singles were released between April and October 1964.<sup>[45]</sup>

His records had little success, because A&M's main releases were [folk music](#) rather than Country.<sup>[46]</sup> He had a few hits on local radio in Phoenix, with "Four Strong Winds" and "Just To Satisfy You" (co-written with Bowman). Meanwhile, he recorded an album on BAT records, called [JD's](#). After 500 copies were sold at the club, another 500 copies were pressed by the Sounds label.<sup>[47]</sup> He also played lead guitar for [Patsy Montana](#) on a 1964 album.<sup>[48]</sup>

Singer [Bobby Bare](#) heard Jennings's "Just to Satisfy You" on his car radio while passing through Phoenix, eventually recording it and "Four Strong Winds".<sup>[49]</sup> After stopping in Phoenix to attend to a Jennings performance at JD's, while driving to [Las Vegas](#), Bare stopped and called [Chet Atkins](#) in Nashville, suggesting that he needed to sign Jennings.<sup>[50]</sup>

When he was made aware of the new deal, Waylon was not sure if he should quit his gig at JD's. He then went to get the advice of his friend, RCA artist [Willie](#)



Jennings featured on a publicity portrait for RCA Victor in 1965



[Nelson](#), who had gone to see one of Waylon's shows.

When Willie and Waylon met, after talking about the possibilities and considering Waylon's profits at the club, Nelson suggested that Waylon should stay in Phoenix and not to move to Nashville.<sup>[51]</sup>

Nonetheless, Jennings decided to accept the offer, and asked Herb Alpert to release him from his contract with A&M. Alpert agreed,<sup>[52]</sup> though later A&M would compile all of Jennings's singles and unreleased material the label had and release it as *Don't Think Twice*.<sup>[53]</sup> Atkins formally signed Jennings to [RCA Victor](#) in 1965.<sup>[54]</sup> On August 21, Jennings made his first appearance on the *Billboard's Hot Country Songs* chart with "That's the Chance I'll Have to Take".<sup>[55]</sup>



### "Just to Satisfy You"

From the album of the [same name](#), the song was a local radio hit for Jennings in Nashville.

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In 1966, Jennings released his debut album for RCA *Folk-Country*, followed by *Leavin' Town* and *Nashville Rebel*.<sup>[56]</sup><sup>[57]</sup> *Leavin' Town* resulted in significant chart success as the first two singles "Anita, You're Dreaming" and "Time to Burn Again" both peaked at no. 17 on the *Billboard Hot Country Songs* chart. The album's third single, a cover of [Gordon Lightfoot's "\(That's What You Get\) For Lovin' Me"](#), became Jennings's first top 10 single, peaking at no. 9. *Nashville Rebel* was the soundtrack to an independent film of the [same name](#), starring Jennings.<sup>[58]</sup> The single "Green River" charted on *Billboard* country singles at #11.<sup>[55]</sup> In 1967, Jennings released a hit single, "[Just to Satisfy You](#)". During an interview, Jennings remarked that the song was a "pretty good example" of the influence of his work with Buddy Holly and rockabilly music.<sup>[59]</sup> Jennings produced midchart albums that sold well, including *Just to Satisfy You*, that included the same-named hit single of 1967.<sup>[56]</sup> Jennings's singles enjoyed success. "[The Chokin' Kind](#)" peaked at number eight on *Billboard's Hot Country Singles* in 1967, while "[Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line](#)" hit number two the following year. In 1969, his collaboration with The Kimberlys on the single "[MacArthur Park](#)" earned a [Grammy Award for Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group](#). His single "[Brown Eyed Handsome Man](#)" reached number three at the Hot Country Singles chart by the end of the year.<sup>[60]</sup>

During this time, Jennings rented an apartment in Nashville with singer [Johnny Cash](#).<sup>[61]</sup> Jennings and Cash were both managed by "Lucky" Moeller's booking agency Moeller Talent, Inc.<sup>[62]</sup> The tours organized by the agency were unproductive, with the artists being booked to venues located far from each other in close dates. After paying for the accommodation and travel expenditures, Jennings's profits were reduced, with him frequently requesting advances from the agency or RCA Records to play the next venue. While playing 300 days on the road, Jennings's debt increased along with his consumption of [amphetamines](#), as he believed himself to be trapped on the circuit.<sup>[63]</sup>

In 1972, Jennings released *Ladies Love Outlaws*. The single that headlined the album became a hit for Jennings, and was his first approach to [Outlaw Country](#).<sup>[64]</sup> Jennings was accustomed to performing and recording with his own band, The Waylors, a practice that was not encouraged by powerful Nashville producers. Over time, however, Jennings felt limited by the [Nashville sound](#)'s lack of artistic freedom.<sup>[65]</sup> The music style publicized as "[Countrypolitan](#)" was characterized by orchestral arrangements, and the absence of traditional Country music instruments. The producers did not let Jennings play his own guitar or select material to record.<sup>[44]</sup>

## Outlaw Country

In an interview, Jennings recalled the restrictions of the Nashville establishment: "They wouldn't let you do anything. You had to dress a certain way: you had to do everything a certain way.... They kept trying to destroy me.... I just went about my business and did things my way.... You start messing with my music, I get mean."<sup>[66]</sup> By 1972, after the release of *Ladies Love Outlaws*, his recording contract was nearing an end. Sick with [hepatitis](#), Jennings was hospitalized. Afflicted by disease, and the music industry, he was considering retirement. Albright visited him and convinced him to continue. Albright talked to him about making Neil Reshen his new manager. Meanwhile, Jennings requested a US\$25,000 royalty advance from RCA Records to cover his living expenses during his recovery. The same day he met Reshen, RCA sent Jerry Bradley to offer Jennings US\$5,000 as a bonus for signing a new 5% royalty deal with RCA, the same terms he had accepted in 1965. After

reviewing with Reshen, he rejected the offer and hired Reshen.<sup>[67]</sup>

Reshen started to renegotiate Jennings's recording and touring contracts. At a meeting in a Nashville airport, Jennings introduced Reshen to Willie Nelson. By the end of the meeting, Reshen had become Nelson's manager, as well. Jennings's new deal gained him a \$75,000 advance and artistic control.<sup>[68][69]</sup> Reshen advised Jennings to keep the beard that he had grown in the hospital, to match the image of Outlaw Country.<sup>[70][71][72]</sup>



L-R: Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, and Waylon Jennings at the Dripping Springs Reunion, in 1972

By 1973, Nelson had returned to music, finding success with [Atlantic Records](#). Now based in [Austin, Texas](#), he had made inroads into the rock and roll press by attracting rock audiences.<sup>[73][74]</sup> Atlantic Records was now attempting to sign Jennings, but Nelson's rise to popularity persuaded RCA to renegotiate with Jennings before losing another potential star.<sup>[75]</sup>

<sup>[76]</sup> In 1973, Jennings released [Lonesome, On'ry and Mean](#) and [Honky Tonk Heroes](#), the first albums recorded and released under his creative control. The release of these albums heralded a major turning point for Jennings, kicking off his most critically and commercially successful years. More hit albums followed with [This Time](#) and [The Ramblin' Man](#), both released in 1974. The title tracks of both albums topped the *Billboard* Country singles chart, with the self-penned "This Time" becoming Jennings's first no. 1 single. [Dreaming My Dreams](#), released in 1975, included the no. 1 single "[Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way](#)" and was his first album to be certified gold by the [RIAA](#); it was also the first of his next six consecutive, solo studio albums to be certified gold or higher.<sup>[77][78]</sup> In 1976, Jennings released [Are You Ready for the Country](#), Jennings wanted the record to be produced by Los Angeles producer [Ken Mansfield](#). Although RCA denied the request, Jennings and The Waylors went to Los Angeles and recorded with Mansfield at his expense. After a month, Jennings presented the master tape to [Chet Atkins](#), who decided to release it. The album hit number one on *Billboard's* country albums three times the same year, topping the charts for 10 weeks. It was

named Country album of the year in 1976 by *Record World* magazine and it was certified gold by the RIAA.<sup>[79]</sup>



"Luckenbach, Texas (Back to the Basics of Love)"

A hit for Jennings, the song was released in the album *Ol' Waylon*

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In 1976, Jennings released the album *Wanted! The Outlaws*, recorded with Willie Nelson, Tompall Glaser, and Jessi Colter for RCA. The album was the first Country music album certified **platinum**.<sup>[44]</sup> The following year, RCA issued *Ol' Waylon*, an album that produced a hit duet with Nelson, "Luckenbach, Texas".<sup>[80]</sup> The album *Waylon and Willie* followed in 1978, producing the hit single "Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys".<sup>[81]</sup> Jennings released *I've Always Been Crazy*, also in 1978.<sup>[82]</sup> The same year, at the peak of his success, Jennings began to feel limited by the outlaw movement.<sup>[83]</sup> Jennings referred to the overexploitation of the image in the song "Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit Has Done Got Out of Hand?", claiming that the movement had become a "self-fulfilling prophecy".<sup>[83][84]</sup> In 1979, he released *Greatest Hits*,<sup>[85]</sup> which was certified gold the same year, and quintuple platinum in 2002.<sup>[86]</sup>

Also in 1979, Jennings joined the cast of the CBS series *The Dukes of Hazzard* as the Balladeer, the narrator. The only episode to feature him in person was "Welcome, Waylon Jennings", during the seventh season. Jennings played himself, presented as an old friend of the Duke family. For the show, he also wrote and sang the theme song "Good Ol' Boys", which became the biggest hit of his career. Released as a single in promotion with the show, it became Jennings's 12th single to reach number one on the *Billboard* Country Singles chart. It was also a crossover hit, peaking at no. 21 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.<sup>[87]</sup>

## Later years

In the mid-1980s, Johnny Cash, Kris Kristofferson, Nelson, and Jennings formed a successful group called **The Highwaymen**.<sup>[88]</sup> Aside from his work with The Highwaymen, Jennings released a gold album *WWIII* (1982) with Willie Nelson.<sup>[81]</sup>

In 1985, Jennings joined with [USA for Africa](#) to record "[We Are the World](#)", but he left



Waylon Jennings in concert, playing his custom 1953 Fender Telecaster

the studio because of a dispute over the song's lyrics that were to be sung in [Swahili](#). Ironically, after Jennings left the session, the idea was dropped at the prompting of [Stevie Wonder](#), who pointed out that Ethiopians did not speak Swahili.<sup>[89][90]</sup> By this time, his sales had decreased. After the release of [Sweet Mother Texas](#), Jennings signed with [Music Corporation of America](#).<sup>[91]</sup> The debut release with the label [Will the Wolf Survive](#) (1985) peaked at number one in *Billboard's* Country albums in 1986.<sup>[92]</sup> Jennings's initial success tailed off, and in 1990, he signed with [Epic Records](#). His first release, [The Eagle](#), became his final top 10 album.<sup>[91][93]</sup>

Also in 1985, he made a cameo appearance in the live-action children's film [Sesame Street Presents: Follow That Bird](#). In the movie, he plays a turkey farm truck driver who gives [Big Bird](#) a lift. He also sings one of the film's songs, entitled "Ain't No Road Too Long".

In 1993, in collaboration with Rincom Children's Entertainment, Jennings recorded an album of children's songs, [Cowboys, Sisters, Rascals & Dirt](#), which included "Shooter's Theme", a tribute to his 14-year-old with the theme of "a friend of mine".<sup>[94]</sup>

Although his record sales and radio play dwindled during the '90s, Jennings continued to draw large crowds at his live performances.<sup>[91]</sup> In 1996, Jennings released his album, [Right for the Time](#), including some of his newer songs, including "The Most Sensible Thing", which was covered by [Angry Grandpa](#) in 2015. In 1997, after the [Lollapalooza](#) tour, he decreased his tour schedule and became centered on his family.<sup>[95]</sup>

In 1998, Jennings teamed up with Bare, [Jerry Reed](#), and [Mel Tillis](#) to form the [Old Dogs](#). The group recorded a double album of songs by [Shel Silverstein](#).<sup>[96]</sup> In mid-

1999, Jennings assembled what he referred to as his "hand-picked dream team" and formed Waylon & The Waymore Blues Band. Consisting primarily of former Waylors, the 13-member group performed concerts from 1999 to 2001.<sup>[97]</sup> In January 2000, Jennings recorded what became his final album at Nashville's historic Ryman Auditorium, *Never Say Die: Live*.<sup>[98]</sup>

## Music style and image

Jennings's music was characterized by his "powerful" singing voice, noted by his "rough-edged quality", as well as his phrasing and texture.<sup>[99][100]</sup> He was also recognized for his "spanky-twang" guitar style. To create his sound, he used a pronounced 'phaser' effect (see 'Modulation Effects': below) plus a mixture of thumb and fingers during the rhythmic parts, while using picks for the lead runs. He combined [hammer-on](#) and [pull-off](#) riffs, with eventual upper-fret [double stops](#) and [modulation effects](#).<sup>[101]</sup> Jennings played a 1953 [Fender Telecaster](#), a used guitar that was a gift from The Waylors. Jennings's bandmates adorned his guitar with a distinctive leather cover that featured a black background with a white floral work.<sup>[102][103]</sup> Jennings further customized it by filing down the [frets](#) to lower the strings on the neck to obtain the slapping sound.<sup>[104][105]</sup> Among his other guitars, Jennings used a 1950 Fender Broadcaster from the mid-1970s, until he gave it to guitarist [Reggie Young](#) in 1993.<sup>[106]</sup> The leather covers of his guitars were carved by leather artist Terry Lankford.<sup>[107]</sup>

His signature image was characterized by his long hair and beard, as well as his black hat and the black leather vest he wore during his appearances.<sup>[108][109]</sup>

## Personal life

Jennings was married four times, and had six children. He was first married to Maxine Carroll Lawrence in 1956 at age 18, with whom he had four children: Terry Vance Jennings (born January 21, 1957), Julie Rae Jennings (born August 12, 1958), Buddy Dean Jennings (born March 21, 1960), and Deana Jennings. Jennings married again on December 10, 1962, to Lynne Jones, adopting a child, Tomi Lynne. They

divorced in 1967. He next married Barbara Elizabeth Rood in 1967. He composed the song "This Time" about the trials and tribulations of his marriages and divorces. He married for the fourth and final time in Phoenix, Arizona, on October 26, 1969, to [Jessi Colter](#). Colter and Jennings had one son, Waylon Albright Jennings (aka [Shooter Jennings](#), born May 19, 1979). Colter had one daughter, Jennifer, from her previous marriage to [Duane Eddy](#). In the early 1980s, Colter and Jennings nearly divorced due to his addiction to drugs and other forms of substance abuse. However, they remained together until Jennings's death in 2002.

In 1997, he gave up touring to be closer to his family. To set an example about the importance of education to his son [Waylon Albright](#), Jennings earned a [GED](#) at age 52.<sup>[110][111]</sup>

Waylon Jennings's grandson Will Harness, better known as Struggle Jennings, is an American [hip hop](#) recording artist from [Nashville, Tennessee](#), West Side, a neighborhood called "The Nations".

## Addiction and recovery

Jennings started to consume [amphetamines](#) while he lived with [Johnny Cash](#) during the mid-1960s. Jennings later stated, "Pills were the artificial energy on which Nashville ran around the clock."<sup>[5]</sup> In 1977, Jennings was arrested by federal agents for conspiracy and possession of [cocaine](#) with intent to distribute. A private courier warned the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) about the package sent to Jennings by a New York colleague that contained 27 grams of cocaine. The DEA and the police searched Jennings's recording studio. They found no evidence, because while they were waiting for a [search warrant](#), Jennings disposed of the cocaine. The charges were later dropped and Jennings was released.<sup>[112]</sup> The episode was recounted in Jennings's song "Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got Outta Hand?"<sup>[113]</sup>

During the early 1980s, his [cocaine addiction](#) intensified. Jennings claimed to have spent \$1,500 a day on his habit, draining his personal finances and leaving him bankrupt with debt up to \$2.5 million.<sup>[114][115]</sup> Though he insisted on repaying the debt and did additional tours to earn the funds, his work became less focused and

his tours deteriorated.<sup>[113]</sup> Jennings decided to quit his addictions, leased a home in the [Phoenix area](#), and spent a month [detoxing](#) himself, intending to start using cocaine again in a more controlled fashion afterward. In 1984, he quit cocaine. June Carter Cash held his recovery anniversary party at her Old Hickory Lake residence near Nashville.<sup>[116]</sup> Jennings claimed that his son Shooter was his main inspiration to quit permanently.<sup>[114]</sup>

## Illness and death

Jennings's health had been deteriorating for years before his death. After quitting cocaine, he ended his habit of [smoking](#) six packs of cigarettes daily in 1988.<sup>[117]</sup> The same year, he underwent [heart bypass surgery](#) <sup>[118][119]</sup> By 2000, his [diabetes](#) worsened, and the pain reduced his mobility, forcing Jennings to end most touring.<sup>[110]</sup> Later the same year, he underwent surgery to improve his leg circulation.<sup>[5]</sup> In December 2001, his left foot was amputated at a hospital in Phoenix. On February 13, 2002, Jennings died in his sleep of diabetic complications at the age of 64, in [Chandler, Arizona](#). He was buried in the [City of Mesa Cemetery](#), in [Mesa, Arizona](#). At the funeral ceremony, on February 15, Jessi Colter sang "Storms Never Last" for the attendees, who included Jennings's close friends and fellow musicians.<sup>[110]</sup>



Grave of Waylon Jennings

## Recognition

Between 1966 and 1995, 54 Jennings albums charted, with 11 reaching number one. Meanwhile, between 1965 and 1991, 96 singles charted, with 16 number ones.<sup>[120]</sup> In October 2001, Jennings was inducted into the [Country Music Hall of Fame](#). In one final act of defiance, he did not attend the ceremony and opted



Waylon Jennings



instead to send son Buddy Dean Jennings.<sup>[110]</sup>

Boulevard sign in Littlefield,  
Texas

On July 6, 2006, Jennings was inducted to Hollywood's Rock Wall in Hollywood, California.<sup>[121]</sup> On June 20, 2007, Jennings was posthumously awarded the Cliffie Stone Pioneer Award by the [Academy of Country Music](#).<sup>[122]</sup>

## Legacy

Jennings's music had a major influence on several neotraditionalist and [alternative country](#) artists,<sup>[91]</sup> including [Hank Williams Jr.](#),<sup>[123]</sup> [The Marshall Tucker Band](#),<sup>[124]</sup> [Travis Tritt](#), [Steve Earle](#), [Jamey Johnson](#), [John Anderson](#),<sup>[125]</sup> his son, Shooter Jennings, [Sturgill Simpson](#), and [Hank Williams III](#).<sup>[126]</sup>

In 2008, his first posthumous album, *Waylon Forever*, was released. The album consisted of songs recorded with his son Shooter when he was 16. In 2012, *Waylon: The Music Inside* a three-volume project, consisting of covers of Jennings's songs by different artists, was released. The same year, it was announced for September the release of *Goin' Down Rockin': The Last Recordings*, a set of 12 songs recorded by Jennings and bassist [Robby Turner](#) before his death in 2002. Jennings's family was reluctant to release any new material because they did not feel comfortable at the time. The songs only featured Jennings and Turner on the bass, while further accompaniment would be added later. Ten years after, Turner completed the recordings with the help of former Waylors. The Jennings family approved the release despite the launch of a new business focused on his estate. Shooter Jennings arranged deals for a clothing line, while also launching a renewed website, and started talks with different producers about the making of a biographical film.<sup>[127]</sup>

## Discography

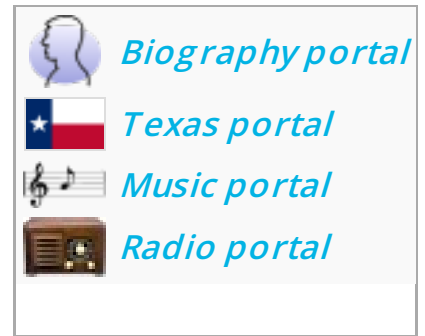
Further information: [Waylon Jennings albums discography](#) and [Waylon Jennings singles discography](#)

# Awards

Year	Award	Organization
1970	<a href="#">Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal</a> w/ The Kimberlys for " <a href="#">MacArthur Park</a> "	<a href="#">Grammy Awards</a>
1975	<a href="#">Male Vocalist of the Year</a>	<a href="#">Country Music Association</a>
1976	<a href="#">Album of the Year</a> with <a href="#">Jessi Colter</a> , <a href="#">Willie Nelson</a> and <a href="#">Tompall Glaser</a> for " <a href="#">Wanted! The Outlaws</a> "	<a href="#">Country Music Association</a>
1976	<a href="#">Vocal Duo of the Year</a> with <a href="#">Willie Nelson</a>	<a href="#">Country Music Association</a>
1976	<a href="#">Single of the Year</a> with <a href="#">Willie Nelson</a> for " <a href="#">Good-Hearted Woman</a> "	<a href="#">Country Music Association</a>
1979	<a href="#">Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal</a> with <a href="#">Willie Nelson</a> for " <a href="#">Mammas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys</a> "	<a href="#">Grammy Awards</a>
1985	<a href="#">Single of the Year</a> with the other members of <a href="#">The Highwaymen</a> for " <a href="#">Highwayman</a> "	<a href="#">Academy of Country Music</a>
2001	<a href="#">Country Music Hall of Fame</a> induction	<a href="#">Country Music Association</a>
2003	<a href="#">Country Music Television</a> Greatest Men of Country Music, Rank No. 5	<a href="#">CMT's 40 Greatest Men of Country Music</a>
2006	Hollywood's <a href="#">RockWall</a> induction	<a href="#">Hollywood's RockWall</a>
2007	<a href="#">Cliffie Stone Pioneer Award</a>	<a href="#">Academy of Country Music</a>
2007	Lifetime Achievement Award	<a href="#">Nashville Songwriters' Festival</a>

# See also

- [Jerry "Bo" Coleman](#)
- [Outlaw Country](#)
- [List of country musicians](#)
- [List of best-selling music artists](#)
- [Inductees of the Country Music Hall of Fame](#)



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## Waylon Jennings

[Albums](#) · [Singles](#)

*Waylon at JD's* · *Folk-Country* · *Leavin' Town* · *Nashville Rebel* · *Waylon Sings Ol' Harlan* · *Love of the Common People* · *The One and Only* · *Hangin' On* · *Only the Greatest* · *Jewels* · *Just to Satisfy You* · *Waylon* · *Singer of Sad Songs* · *The Taker/Tulsa* · *Cedartown, Georgia* · *Good Hearted Woman* · *Ladies Love Outlaws* · *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean* · *Honky Tonk Heroes* · *This Time* · *The Ramblin' Man* · *Dreaming My Dreams* · *Are You Ready for the Country* · *Ol' Waylon* · *I've Always Been*

## Studio albums

*Crazy* · *What Goes Around Comes Around* · *Music Man* · *Black on Black* · *It's Only Rock + Roll* · *Waylon and Company* · *Never Could Toe the Mark* · *Turn the Page* · *Sweet Mother Texas* · *Will the Wolf Survive* · *Hangin' Tough* · *A Man Called Hoss* · *Full Circle* · *The Eagle* · *Too Dumb for New York City, Too Ugly for L.A.* · *Ol' Waylon Sings Ol' Hank* · *Cowboys, Sisters, Rascals & Dirt* · *Waymore's Blues (Part II)* · *Right for the Time* · *Closing In on the Fire* · *Waylon Forever* · *Goin' Down Rockin': The Last Recordings*

## Live albums

*Waylon Live* · *Never Say Die: Live* · *Live from Austin, TX* · *Never Say Die: The Final Concert*

### 1960s

"That's the Chance I'll Have to Take" · "Stop the World (And Let Me Off)" · "Anita, You're Dreaming" · "Time to Bum Again" · "(That's What You Get) For Lovin' Me" · "Green River" · "Mental Revenge" · "[The Chokin' Kind](#)" · "Walk On Out of My Mind" · "I Got You" with [Anita Carter](#) · "[Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line](#)" · "Yours Love" · "Something's Wrong in California" · "[The Days of Sand and Shovels](#)" · "[Brown Eyed Handsome Man](#)"

### 1970s

"Singer of Sad Songs" · "The Taker" · "(Don't Let the Sun Set on You) Tulsa" · "Mississippi Woman" · "[Under Your Spell Again](#)" with [Jessi Colter](#) · "Cedartown, Georgia" · "[Good Hearted Woman](#)" · "[Sweet Dream Woman](#)" · "Pretend I Never Happened" · "You Can Have Her" · "[We Had It All](#)" · "You Ask Me To" · "[This Time](#)" · "I'm a Ramblin' Man" · "Rainy Day Woman" · "Dreaming My Dreams with You" · "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way" · "Bob Wills Is Still the King" · "Can't You See" · "Are You Ready for the Country" · "Luckenbach, Texas (Back to the Basics of Love)" · "I've Always Been Crazy" · "Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got Out of Hand" · "Amanda" · "Come With Me" · "I Ain't Living Long Like This"

## Notable singles

### 1980s – 1990s

"Clyde" · "[Good Ol' Boys](#)" · "Storms Never Last" with [Jessi Colter](#) · "[Shine](#)" · "Just to Satisfy You" with [Willie Nelson](#) · "Women Do Know How to Carry On" · "Lucille (You Won't Do Your Daddy's Will)" · "Breakin' Down" · "Hold On, I'm Comin'" with [Jerry Reed](#) · "The Conversation" with [Hank Williams Jr.](#) · "I May Be Used (But Baby I Ain't Used Up)" · "Never Could Toe the Mark" · "America" · "Waltz Me to Heaven" · "Drinkin' and Dreamin'" · "The Devil's on the Loose" · "Working Without a Net" · "Will the Wolf Survive" · "What You'll Do When I'm Gone" · "Rose in Paradise" · "Fallin' Out" · "My Rough and Rowdy Days" · "If Ole Hank Could Only See Us Now" · "How Much Is It Worth to Live in L.A." · "Which Way Do I Go (Now That I'm Gone)" · "Trouble Man" · "You Put the Soul in the Song" · "Wrong" · "[Where Corn Don't Grow](#)" · "What Bothers Me Most" · "[The Eagle](#)" · "Just Talkin'" · "Too Dumb for New York City" · "Wild Ones" · "I Know About Me Don't Know About You" · "Outlaw Shit"

### Waylon & Willie

Albums: *Waylon & Willie* · *WWII* · *Take It to the Limit* · *Clean Shirt* · *Super Hits*

Singles: "The Wurlitzer Prize (I Don't Want to Get Over You)" · "Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys" · "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" · "Take It to the Limit" · "If I Can Find a Clean Shirt"

#### Other collaborations

*Country-Folk* with The Kimberlys · *Leather and Lace* with Jessi Colter · *Heroes* with Johnny Cash · *Old 97's & Waylon Jennings* with Old 97's

#### Collaborations

#### Collaboration singles

"MacArthur Park" with The Kimberlys · "Suspicious Minds" with Jessi Colter · "Good Hearted Woman" with Willie Nelson (Re-recording) · "Suspicious Minds" with Jessi Colter (Re-release from *Wanted! The Outlaws*) · "There Ain't No Good Chain Gang" with Johnny Cash · "Wish I Was Crazy Again" with Johnny Cash · "The Wild Side of Life/It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" with Jessi Colter · "Leave Them Boys Alone" with Hank Williams Jr. and Ernest Tubb · "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues" with Johnny Cash · "Ballad of Forty Dollars" with Johnny Cash · "Somewhere Between Ragged and Right" with John Anderson · "High Ridin' Heroes" with David Lynn Jones · "One Good Love" with Neil Diamond

*The Best of Waylon Jennings* · *Don't Think Twice* · *Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town* · *Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line* · *Heartaches by the Number* · *Greatest Hits* · *Waylon's Greatest Hits, Vol. 2* · *The Best of Waylon* · *New Classic Waylon* · *Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line: The RCA Years* · *The Journey: Six Strings Away* · *The Journey: Destiny's Child* · *The Restless Kid: Live at JD's* · *20th Century Masters – The Millennium Collection: The Best of Waylon Jennings* · *RCA Country Legends* · *Ultimate Waylon Jennings* · *16 Biggest Hits* · *Nashville Rebel* · *The Essential Waylon Jennings*

#### Compilations

#### Related

The Wailors · Outlaw country · *Wanted! The Outlaws* · "We Are the World" · The Highwaymen · Old Dogs · Jessi Colter · Waylon Albright "Shooter" Jennings

 v·t·e

## The Highwaymen

Johnny Cash · Waylon Jennings · Kris Kristofferson · Willie Nelson

#### Studio albums

*Highwayman* · *Highwayman 2* · *The Road Goes On Forever*

#### Singles

"Highwayman" · "Desperados Waiting for a Train" · "Silver Stallion" · "It Is What It Is"

 v·t·e

## Country Music Hall of Fame 2000s

Charley Pride (2000) · Faron Young (2000) · Bill Anderson (2001) · The Delmore Brothers (2001) · The Everly Brothers (2001) · Don Gibson (2001) · Homer and Jethro (2001) · Waylon Jennings (2001) · The Jordanaires (2001) · Don Law (2001) · The Louvin Brothers (2001) · Ken Nelson (2001) · Sam Phillips (2001) · Webb Pierce (2001) · Bill Carlisle (2002) · Porter Wagoner (2002) · Floyd Cramer (2003) · Carl Smith (2003) · Jim Foglesong (2004) · Kris Kristofferson (2004) · Alabama (2005) · DeFord Bailey (2005) · Glen Campbell (2005) · Harold Bradley (2006) · Sonny James (2006) · George Strait (2006) · Ralph Emery (2007) · Vince Gill (2007) · Mel Tillis (2007) ·

[Tom T. Hall \(2008\)](#) · [Emmylou Harris \(2008\)](#) · [The Statler Brothers \(2008\)](#) · [Ernest Stoneman \(2008\)](#) · [Roy Clark \(2009\)](#) · [Barbara Mandrell \(2009\)](#) · [Charlie McCoy \(2009\)](#)

## Authority control

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