

George Jones: The Man Behind the Music

George Jones, the man known as "The Possum," was an American country music singer and songwriter. With a career spanning over five decades, Jones produced some of the most iconic songs in country music history. His soulful voice, haunting melodies, and relatable lyrics have made him one of the most beloved artists in the genre.

Early Life and Career

George Glenn Jones was born on September 12, 1931, in Saratoga, Texas. His father was a sharecropper, and the family struggled to make ends meet during the Great Depression. Jones developed a passion for music as a child and began performing in local talent shows.



The Grand Tour: The Life and Music of George Jones

by Rich Kienzle

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 4334 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 257 pages
Screen Reader : Supported
X-Ray for textbooks : Enabled



In 1950, Jones moved to Beaumont, Texas, and began working as a disc jockey. He soon caught the attention of a local record label, and released his debut single in 1953. His commercial breakthrough came with the release of "Why Baby Why" in 1955, which became a Top 10 hit on the Billboard Country charts.

Rise to Stardom

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Jones released a string of hit singles, including "White Lightning," "He Stopped Loving Her Today," and "The Grand Tour." His music was characterized by its raw emotional intensity and his unique vocal style, which was often described as a "crying voice."

Jones gained widespread recognition for his songwriting abilities. He penned or co-wrote many of his own hits, including the classic "Walk Through This World with Me" with his wife, Tammy Wynette. Jones and Wynette's marriage, which began in 1969, was a tumultuous one, but it produced several memorable duets, including "We're Gonna Hold On" and "Golden Ring."

Personal Struggles

Despite his success, Jones faced numerous personal struggles throughout his life. He battled alcohol addiction, which led to several arrests and marital problems. Jones also struggled with financial issues, declaring bankruptcy in 1999.

Music and Legacy

Despite his personal demons, Jones' musical genius never wavered. He continued to release critically acclaimed albums and tour extensively until his death in 2013. Jones was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1992 and received the Kennedy Center Honor in 2008.

Jones' music has had a profound influence on many artists, including Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, and Garth Brooks. His songs have been recorded by numerous artists, including Waylon Jennings, Emmylou Harris, and Adele. Jones' legacy as one of the greatest country music singers and songwriters of all time is undisputed.

The Possum's Pleasures and Pains

Jones' nickname, "The Possum," was said to have come from his mischievous personality and quick wit. He was known for his love of hunting, fishing, and hanging out with his friends at his favorite hangout, the Possum Holler.

His life was also marked by tragedy and pain. In 1961, his wife Shirley Corley died in a car accident. His marriage to Tammy Wynette was a roller coaster of love and chaos, ending in divorce in 1975. And in 1982, his son George Jones Jr. died in a construction accident.

Songs of Heartache and Healing

Jones' songs often reflected his own experiences of love, loss, and redemption. His ability to convey heartbreak and despair through his music was unmatched. In "He Stopped Loving Her Today," he sang of a man who refuses to forget a long-lost love, even after she moves on.

But Jones' music also offered hope and healing. In "Walk Through This World with Me," he sang of the power of love to overcome adversity. And in "The Grand Tour," he urged listeners to make the most of life's journey, no matter how difficult it may seem.

George Jones' music has left an indelible mark on country music and American culture as a whole. His soulful voice, haunting melodies, and relatable lyrics have made him one of the most beloved and respected artists in the genre. Despite his personal struggles, Jones' musical legacy continues to inspire and resonate with audiences worldwide. He remains a true American icon, the Possum who sang with his heart and soul.



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