

# Crystal Gayle

MultiMillion-selling singer Crystal Gayle has performed songs from a wide variety of genres during her award-studded career, but she has never devoted an album to classic country music. Until now.

*You Don't Know Me* is a collection that finds the acclaimed stylist exploring the songs of such country legends as George Jones, Patsy Cline, Buck Owens and Eddy Arnold.

The album might come as a surprise to those who associate Crystal with an uptown sound that made her a star on both country and adult-contemporary pop charts. But she has known this repertoire of hardcore country standards all her life.

"This wasn't a stretch at all," says Crystal. "These are songs I grew up singing. I've been wanting to do this for a long time.

"The songs on this album aren't songs I sing in my concerts until recently. But they are very much a part of my history."

Each of the selections was chosen because it played a role in her musical development. Two of them point to the importance that her family had in bringing her to fame.

*You Don't Know Me* contains the first recorded trio vocal performance by Crystal with her singing sisters Loretta Lynn and Peggy Sue. It is their version of Dolly Parton's "Put It Off Until Tomorrow."

"You Never Were Mine" comes from the pen of her older brother, Jay Lee Webb (1937-1996). The two were always close. Jay Lee was the oldest brother still living with the family when their father passed away. And when Crystal first moved to Nashville she lived with Jay Lee.

Born Brenda Gail Webb in Paintsville, Kentucky, Crystal was raised in Wabash, Indiana. She is the baby of eight children. Loretta is 19 years her senior.

The sisters' coal-miner father died from complications of black-lung disease when Crystal was 8 years old. The traumatized child retreated inward, becoming painfully timid and withdrawn. Her shyness vanished when she sang, however, and this is another reason why the music of *You Don't Know Me* is so special to her.

When she was a teenager, brothers Junior, Herman and Don began featuring Crystal singing classic country songs in their honky-tonk bands. This was a big help in bringing her out of her shell.

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By then, Loretta's star was on the rise in Nashville. She arranged a Decca Records contract for Jay Lee Webb and co-wrote his breakthrough single, "I Come Home A-Drinkin'" of 1967. She did the same for younger sister Peggy Sue with 1969's "I'm Dynamite." (Peggy Sue married country singer Sonny Wright and has sung backup for Crystal in concerts for many years.)

Trying again with Crystal, Loretta engineered a third Decca contract and wrote "I've Cried the Blue Right Out of My Eyes." In 1970, it became Crystal's first charted country single. Loretta also gave her baby sister a stage name, to avoid confusion with Decca's Brenda Lee. And Loretta urged Crystal to step away from her shadow and find her own style. With no chart success following her hit debut single Crystal left Decca three years later.

Just when she was about to leave Nashville as a country-music failure, Crystal was signed by United Artists Records. Beginning in 1974, she began working with producer Allen Reynolds and issued a string of hugely successful records in a smoother style. She traded country vocal belting for languid, liquid phrasing that was far more individualistic. In so doing, Crystal became one of the defining artists of that era's "countrypolitan" movement that brought country records onto pop-music charts.

Of Crystal Gayle's 35 top-10 country hits to date, 13 have become sizable pop and/or adult-contemporary hits as well. So while she is one of the 10 biggest hit-making country female artists of all time, she is also familiar to millions of non-country listeners.

"Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue," "Ready For the Times to Get Better," "Half the Way," her Eddie Rabbitt duet "You and I" and the rest of her hit repertoire have brought Crystal Gayle a trophy case full of honors. They include a Grammy, two CMA awards, four American Music Awards and five ACM accolades.

She became the first female country artist to earn a Platinum Record (1978), entered the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame (2008), received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame (2009) and won induction into the cast of the Grand Ole Opry (2017).

Crystal Gayle has also been fortunate to attain overseas stardom. Her music has found favor with audiences in Japan, Sweden, England, Holland, Spain, Korea (where "When I Dream" was a huge hit), Australia, Germany, Ireland, Finland and The Philippines. She was the first country star to perform in China.

This is no doubt the result of her impressive musical diversity. Crystal has one of the most wide-ranging repertoires of any country star.

Her albums for United Artists, Columbia, Elektra/Warner, Capitol/Liberty, Branson, Intersound, Madacy and her own Southpaw labels contain songs from wildly eclectic sources. Crystal has sung the works of Billie Holiday, Elton John, Kurt Weill, Carole King, Ray Charles, Jim Croce, Delanie & Bonnie, Jimmy Buffett, Bread, Neil Sedaka, Ian & Sylvia, Bill Withers, Delbert McClinton, Duke Ellington, Billy Vera and Irving Berlin, among others.

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She devoted an entire CD to the music of fellow Hoosier Hoagy Carmichael. She has also recorded albums comprised of Christmas, gospel and children's music, as well as pop standards.

Crystal collaborated with Tom Waits on the soundtrack of the 1982 film *One From the Heart*. She recorded theme songs for the TV series *Masquerade* (1983, with Paul Williams), *Dallas* (1985, with Gary Morris) and the soap opera *Another World* (1987, with Gary Morris).

She has also recorded country classics. Sprinkled throughout her 25-album catalog are interpretations of Johnny Cash's "I Still Miss Someone," Patsy Cline's "Crazy," Don Gibson's "Oh Lonesome Me," Ray Price's "For the Good Times" and Jimmie Rodgers' "Miss the Mississippi and You" plus tunes by such country greats as Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, Marty Robbins and Rodney Crowell.

For her first album in 15 years, she has created an entire collection of these. *You Don't Know Me* includes such iconic songs as "Walkin' After Midnight," "You Win Again," "Please Help Me I'm Falling," "Crying Time" and "That's the Way Love Goes." Crystal shines a new spotlight on the compositions of Willie Nelson, Cindy Walker, Gordon Lightfoot, Harlan Howard, Dallas Frazier and their peers.

"My son, Chris, produced the record with me," Crystal comments. "And Chris did great engineering and mixing. He is so good technically and he is also very musical. The songs were definitely new to him, but he loved them."

"They don't write songs like they used to. Nashville is a treasure trove of writers with great songs. And then there are these, which are classic. I wish young artists and producers would listen to this kind of music. I think people should record more of these."



### **SONG-BY-SONG**

#### 1. "Ribbon of Darkness" (Gordon Lightfoot)

<i>Marty Robbins</i>	1965
<i>Gordon Lightfoot</i>	1966
<i>Connie Smith</i>	1969

This was the first song I ever sang on the Grand Ole Opry. I was 16. Loretta was sick. Mooney [Lynn] did something, I don't know what. But they let me sing in her place. In my early years in Nashville, when I was on Decca, I opened for Marty Robbins. So I've heard him sing this many times. Connie Smith also had a hit with it. So the night I was inducted into the Opry cast in 2017, I asked Connie if it was okay with her that I sing "Ribbon of Darkness." It was such an honor she was there that night.

#### 2. "You Win Again" (Hank Williams)

<i>Hank Williams</i>	1952
<i>Jerry Lee Lewis</i>	1958
<i>Fats Domino</i>	1962

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I have always sung this. We all did. In fact, whenever Loretta and I and Peggy would get together, that's one of the songs we would sing as a trio.

3. "Please Help Me I'm Falling" (Don Robertson/Hal Blair)

<i>Hank Locklin</i>	1960
<i>Rusty Draper</i>	1960
<i>Janie Fricke</i>	1978

I'd sing that at the top of my lungs in the back yard when I was in grade school. Then later, this was a song I would sing with my older brother's band.

4. "Am I That Easy to Forget" (Carl Belew/W.S. Stevenson)

<i>Carl Belew</i>	1959
<i>Skeeter Davis</i>	1960
<i>Debbie Reynolds</i>	1960
<i>Englebert Humperdinck</i>	1968
<i>Jim Reeves</i>	1973

Jim Reeves was so incredible. He's the one I associate with this song. I have great memories being backstage at the Ryman and hearing Jim Reeves Sing. I wouldn't trade those memories for anything.

5. "Hello Walls" (Willie Nelson)

<i>Faron Young</i>	1963
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When I was young, I didn't realize Willie Nelson had written this. I opened shows on a tour with Faron Young, and he always looked out for me. He was so kind. Faron had so many great hits, including this classic. I worked with him right before we moved to Nashville. My big brother, Jay Lee, put us up while we looked for a place to live.

6. "You Never Were Mine" (Jay Lee Webb)

<i>Jay Lee Webb</i>	1967
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My brother was such a good writer. I was around when he wrote this, and his version of it is so good. I should've recorded it years ago. He was also a great entertainer, very funny and great at jokes.

7. "Just One More" (George Jones)

<i>George Jones</i>	1956
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I've known this forever. This is a song that [Loretta's husband] Mooney [Lynn] always had me sing, wherever we were. So many times, I've had to sing it *a cappella*. I realize that the last thing people expect me to sing is a George Jones drinking song, but it is so much a part of my real history.

8. "There Goes My Everything" (Dallas Frazier)

<i>Jack Greene</i>	1967
<i>Englebert Humperdinck</i>	1967
<i>Elvis Presley</i>	1971

I worked with Jack Greene, opened for him when I was starting out and he was a big star. I knew the song, but of course I couldn't sing it when he was on the same show. Even though this was when I was singing everybody else's hits, I wouldn't sing this one. I feel so honored to have worked with some of these older artists –Grandpa Jones, Tex Ritter, Stringbean, Johnny Cash, Billy "Crash" Craddock, Marty Robbins, Conway Twitty, Jack Greene and all of them.

9. "That's the Way Love Goes" (Lefty Frizzell/Sanger D. Shafer)

<i>Lefty Frizzell</i>	1973
<i>Johnny Rodriguez</i>	1974
<i>Merle Haggard</i>	1984

This has been sung by many people, but the version I knew was by Johnny Rodriguez. I worked with him, and he was so cute. It was his hit single during the time I worked with him. Even now, I can still hear him singing this. It is such a wonderful song -- I love the melody.

10. "Crying Time" (Buck Owens)

<i>Buck Owens</i>	1965
<i>Ray Charles</i>	1966
<i>Lorrie Morgan</i>	1993

I do a medley of Buck Owens songs in my shows. When I was a kid, he worked Buck Lake Ranch in Indiana. I would go whenever he was playing there, and he'd let me sing on his show. When I was 16, he wanted me to become a regular on his TV show. He asked me, but it didn't work out.

11. "I've Seen That Look on Me a Thousand Times" (Harlan Howard/Shirl Melete)

<i>Jim Ed Brown</i>	1968
<i>Willie Nelson</i>	1970
<i>George Strait</i>	1985

George Strait had it on an album, and I'd heard Harlan Howard's version. The lyric is not something that a girl would necessarily sing. But I loved what it was saying. And nowadays, why not?

12. "Walkin' After Midnight" (Alan Block/Don Hecht)

<i>Patsy Cline</i>	1957
<i>Loretta Lynn</i>	1977

This is a song I have loved singing all my life. Early in my career, I recorded it, but never put it out.

13. "You Don't Know Me" (Eddy Arnold/Cindy Walker)

<i>Eddy Arnold</i>	1956
<i>Jerry Vale</i>	1956
<i>Lenny Welch</i>	1960
<i>Ray Charles</i>	1962
<i>Cindy Walker</i>	1964
<i>Elvis Presley</i>	1967
<i>Mickey Gilley</i>	1981

Eddy Arnold had the first big record on it. Again, it's usually been men singing the song. But I listened to Cindy Walker's version of it, and she had the female lyric. I always loved Eddy. He was a gentleman. He was "old school." He was such a classy guy. Now his grandson, Shannon Pollard, is in the Nashville record business.

14. "Put It Off Until Tomorrow" (Bill Owens/Dolly Parton)

<i>Bill Phillips</i>	1966
<i>Dolly Parton</i>	1967
<i>The Kendalls</i>	1980

This is the one and only trio performance on record, with Loretta and Peggy Sue and me. We've done the Boston Pops together. We performed together in Lake Tahoe and Reno and a few things like that. But we've never actually made a record together. Peggy Sue still comes out on

the road with me, singing backup harmonies. I recorded the track. Then Patsy, Loretta's daughter, asked her to sing on my album. Loretta is such an incredible singer. She got through the song right away and then said, "What's next?" We should have recorded the whole album together. Loretta had her stroke not long after we recorded this.

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