

BOBBY BARE

In his own quiet way, Bobby Bare has long been regarded as one of Country Music's most innovative and talented writer/performers. "I've never believed in standing still with my music," he says, and the diversity of his recordings are testimony to the success of this approach.

Called "an outspoken advocate for new directions in Country Music," "a shrewd judge of talent who helped bring attention to a number of superstars," "a Country artist who successfully experimented with the Folk genre" and "a storyteller who reinvigorated the storytelling tradition in Country music," Bare has proven to have all of these attributes and more. One of his closest friends, Waylon Jennings, said he's never heard anybody say anything bad about Bobby Bare and never heard anybody say Bobby Bare had done something wrong to them. Bare is also funny, smart, very, very laid back and an individualist who has imprinted his brand of Country music permanently on the world.

Robert Joseph Bare was born and raised around Ironton, in rural Lawrence County, Ohio, at the southernmost tip of the state. He got his start on WKOV radio in Wellston, about 40 miles north of his hometown, then moved out west to the Los Angeles area at the age of eighteen. Accepted immediately into the music scene there, Bare soon had his first hit single with a talking blues type of song called *All American Boy*, on the Fraternity label. He had written and recorded the song only a couple of days before he was to be drafted into the Army, but had no idea it was going to be released. It soared to #2 on the Pop charts, but at first was erroneously credited to Bill Parsons, a friend of Bare's with whom he had recorded the session.

During and after his tenure in the Army, Bare continued to record for Fraternity. His reputation grew with the release of songs such as *Lorena* and *Book of Love*, and during this time he toured with Pop artists such as Roy Orbison, Jay and the Americans and Bobby Darin, and made his first appearances on the TV show "American Bandstand." It was on the strength of his Fraternity recordings that Chet Atkins was persuaded to sign him to RCA.

Bare's first single on RCA, *Shame On Me*, was both a Pop and a Country hit. A year later he recorded one of his best-known songs, *Detroit City* (written by Mel Tillis and Danny Dill) and it too was a huge Country/Pop chart success. Followed by such other top 10 hits as *500 Miles (Away From Home)*, *Miller's Cave*, *Four Strong Winds*, *It's Alright*, *The Streets of Baltimore*, and *(Margie's At) The Lincoln Park Inn*, Bare's RCA recordings solidified his standing as a major artist in both the Country and Pop fields. He won a Grammy for "Best Country Recording" with *Detroit City* and also was nominated over the next several years for "Best Country Single" and "Best Male Country Vocal Performance."

Bobby Bare, Chet Atkins, Jim Reeves and the Anita Kerr Singers made the first ever commercial Country Music tour of Europe, playing to sold-out crowds at some of the biggest venues there. Bare returned to Germany the following year for three months and has toured overseas almost every year since, establishing himself as one of Europe's most popular American Music artists.

Bare married the love of his life, Jeannie Sterling (a fine singer in her own right) and the two relocated to Nashville, Tennessee. He had tried his hand at acting in a movie with Troy Donahue and Suzanne Pleshette titled "A Distant Trumpet" and also in some pilots for a TV series called "No

Time For Sergeants,” but decided that what he really wanted to do was get married, raise some children and be a Country music singer. And that’s exactly what he did.

Bare recorded two duet albums with Skeeter Davis, each of which produced a charted single and also had a top 5 hit with Liz Anderson and Norma Jean, *The Game Of Triangles*, for which he was nominated for another Grammy. He recorded an album with Liverpool’s Hillsiders and later recorded songs with Rosanne Cash and Lacy J. Dalton. But it has been his collaborative efforts with poet/author/cartoonist/songwriter Shel Silverstein that have received worldwide critical acclaim for their artistic and original musical directions.

Bare was the first Country artist to be entrusted with complete artistic control over his recordings. The results were fully justified when he and Shel recoded “Bobby Bare Sings Lullaby’s, Legends and Lies,” often described as Country Music’s first concept album. Shel had written all the songs, including the smash hits *Daddy What If*, a duet featuring Bare and his 5 year old son, Bobby Jr., and *Marie Leveau*, the story of a Cajun queen. The following year Shel assisted the entire Bare family in recording a children’s album called “Singin’ In The Kitchen.”

Bare was signed next to the Columbia label, with whom he recorded a number of albums, including “Bare” (with guests Willie and Waylon, Chet Atkins, Shel and Dr. Hook) and a variety of collaborative projects with Shel, songwriter Rodney Crowell and others.

Among the first to recognize the talents (and record the songs) of Harlan Howard, Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings, Tom T. Hall, Billy Joe Shaver, Mickey Newberry, Bob McDill and Rodney Crowell, Bobby Bare has long been known as a friend of the songwriter/artist. When “The Nashville Network” debuted in 1983, it was fitting that one of its first programs was “Bobby Bare and Friends,” a highly regarded one-hour weekly show spotlighting the importance of the songwriter. Reflecting Bare’s renowned laid-back personality, the show featured him shooting the breeze with his writer friends, followed by a little informal pickin’ and singin’.

Over the years, Bare has built up a huge core of loyal fans in the U.S. and abroad who turn out for his every appearance, creating a party atmosphere by shouting out their requests and singing and clapping along with every song. He continues to write and record as well. A lifelong fisherman, he and Jeannie live on the shores of Old Hickory Lake just outside of Nashville. And today, just like in the past, if Bare’s little traveling bag is sitting on the dining room table, he’s home; otherwise, he’s out on the road.