

ROY ORBISON: 1960-1965



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

The
ROCK'N'ROLL
ERA

Digital Remaster

ROY ORBISON: 1960-1965

- 1 Uptown (1960)
- 2 Only the Lonely (1960)
- 3 Blue Angel (1960)
- 4 I'm Hurtin' (1960)
- 5 Candy Man (1961)
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- 21 Goodnight (1965)
- 22 (Say) You're My Girl (1965)

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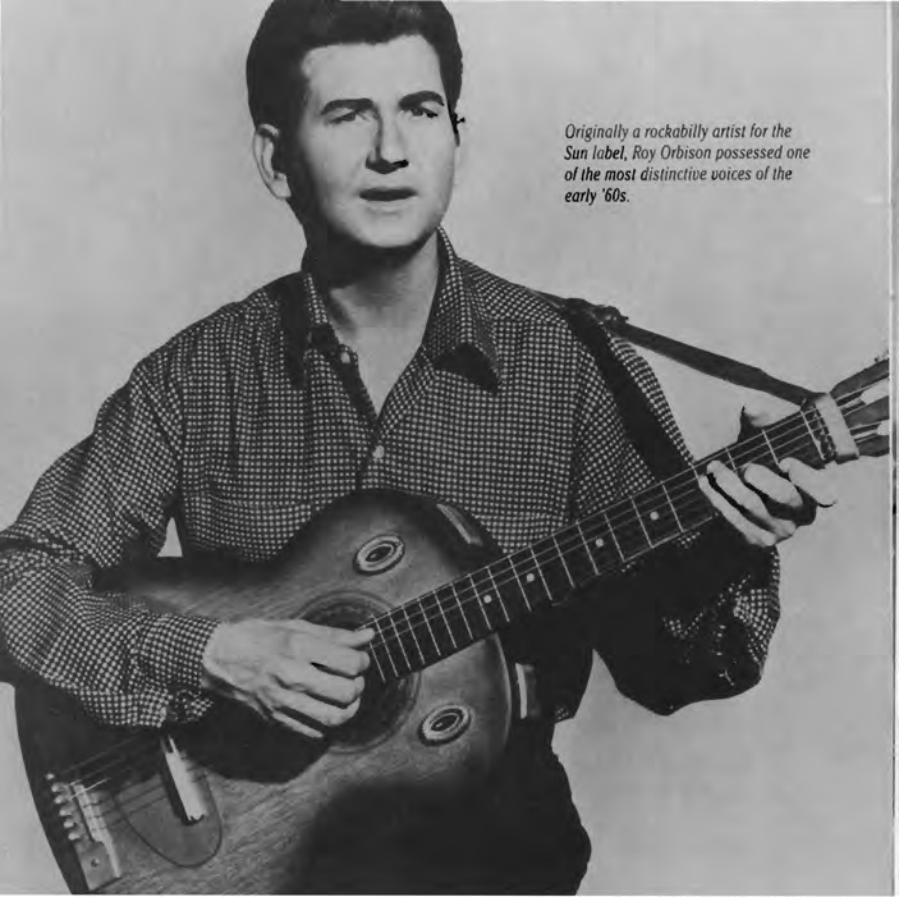
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TIME
MUSIC

- 1 Uptown 2 Only the Lonely 3 Blue Angel 4 I'm Hurtin' 5 Candy Man
6 Love Hurts 7 Crying 8 Workin' for the Man 9 Dream Baby
10 The Actress 11 In Dreams 12 The Crowd 13 Leah 14 Running
Scared 15 Falling 16 Mean Woman Blues 17 Blue Bayou
18 Pretty Paper 19 It's Over 20 Oh, Pretty Woman
21 Goodnight 22 (Say) You're My Girl

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Originally a rockabilly artist for the Sun label, Roy Orbison possessed one of the most distinctive voices of the early '60s.

ROY ORBISON: 1960–1965

For Roy Orbison, rock 'n' roll was all netherworld. In his best songs, the singer is usually fantasizing and thinking out loud; often he is literally paranoid and imagining the worst. Or else he has escaped into sleep and dreams, free at last. The fervor of Orbison's swelling tenor, with its three-octave range, and his dramatic song structures and arrangements bring to life his characters and their daily dread. But, in the end, he invariably leaves them with hope.

His image—the dark clothes and the sunglasses he always wore after 1963—as well as his tragic life and death suggested he was singing about himself. He lost his first wife, Claudette (the subject of an Orbison-penned hit for the Everly Brothers), in a motorcycle accident in 1966. Two of their three sons were killed in a house fire in 1968, while Orbison was touring in England. His own death by a heart attack, at age 53, came in the midst of one of the most stirring comebacks in rock 'n' roll history.

Orbison was born in 1936 in Vernon, Texas, but raised mainly in Wink, around the oil fields of the barren Permian Basin, near Midland/Odessa, in West Texas. Like most of his peers, he grew up a country music fan. His first band, the Wink Westerners, played country music until Orbison experienced an epiphany one New Year's Eve while jamming on a 10-minute version of *Rock Around the Clock*, which a dancer had requested. In 1955 he cut his first record with the Rhythm Kings, and then signed the next year with the fabled Sun Records of Memphis, cutting a string of rockabilly records that mostly failed to chart. In 1957, he moved to Nashville to concentrate on song writing, but also recorded some songs for RCA that went nowhere. His fortunes began changing late in 1959, when his manager, Wesley Rose, signed him to the new Monument label.

Two men helped make the difference during the period

of 1960 through 1965 when Orbison dominated pop music. Joe Melson was a songwriter from Midland, Texas, who collaborated with Orbison on many of his biggest hits. Monument's owner, Fred Foster, was Orbison's producer.

Melson and Orbison were hosting competing rock 'n' roll TV shows back in Midland/Odessa when they met through a mutual friend and began writing together. "I didn't like the construction of rock 'n' roll," Melson recalls. "I thought it should be more beautiful and complex." During a writing session in an Odessa motel room, he came up with a guitar line that prompted Orbison to comment, "An uptown melody like that should have an uptown title." The two men quickly wrote **Uptown**, the first song they wrote together from scratch. Melson, however, feels that his *Raindrops* and their **Only the Lonely** provided the basis for the Orbison Sound; the melodic structures, the shifting tempos and Orbison's push into a higher vocal range were all Melson's ideas, he claims.

Only the Lonely proved the first hit. It derived originally from a song Melson had written 18 months earlier called *Cry*, but the title was changed when Fred Foster noted that Johnny Ray had already scored with a song called *Cry*. The finished version of *Only the Lonely* actually combined Melson's song with a teen-death song by Orbison called *Come Back to Me, My Love*, which Foster had rejected because it sounded too much like Mark Dinning's *Teen Angel*. And according to the producer, the Orbison Sound created at that session came partly by accident. "Charlie McCoy was playing vibes, and his mike slipped halfway between the vibes and drums," Foster explains. "When the song got to the rhythm build, the engineer said something was wrong. I said, 'No, something's right. I'm not sure what it is, but we'll find it.'"

Melson moved to Nashville to continue writing with Orbison. (The soft voice singing backup on the records is

also Melson's.) He had gotten the idea for **Blue Angel** near the hospital in Midland where his wife had delivered their first child. While thinking about his newborn "angel," he got so excited he was pulled over for speeding, which left him feeling "blue." **The Crowd, I'm Hurtin'** and **Running Scared** originated with Orbison. **Crying** was conceived when Wesley Rose asked the pair to write a song for country artist Don Gibson. "As soon as Roy hit that high note, I knew it was a hit, but not for Don Gibson," Melson laughs. Melson was inspired to write **Blue Bayou** while driving through Arkansas on his way from Texas to Nashville; the rivers and lagoons reminded him of south Louisiana.

By 1964, Orbison had picked up another Nashville writing partner, Bill Dees, formerly of the Texas group the Five Bops. Dees had written a song called **It's Over** years earlier, and Orbison liked the hook but nothing else. He came back from a tour and told Dees he'd worked out a new version on the plane, singing him the desolate opening line, "Your baby doesn't love you anymore." The story line and melody had been changed so completely that, Dees admits, "When you get down to it, I didn't contribute nothing to that song but the title and the hook phrase, the way he kept repeating it." Their **Oh, Pretty Woman** was written at Orbison's house one afternoon when Claudette asked for shopping money. "A pretty woman don't need no money," Dees remarked after she'd left, and the two men began trying to work that idea into the song's Spanish melody.

Of the songs Orbison wrote himself, **In Dreams** has become a standard thanks to its pivotal role in the 1986 movie *Blue Velvet*. The fanciful opening line came to Orbison one night as he was falling asleep. By the next morning, he had figured out where to go with the idea: the whole song should come from someone who could live the good life only in dreams. **Leah** was a name both Orbison and Foster liked; a year after the record, Foster named his



Orbison's guitar was his gun in the 1968 movie *The Fastest Guitar Alive*.



newborn daughter Leah.

Only a few of Orbison's songs came from other writers. He recorded **Mean Woman Blues** because he needed an up-tempo track, and the song had been going over well on the road. **Candy Man**, after which Roy named his band, was submitted by New York publisher Aaron Schroeder. One of the writers was Fred Neil, a folk singer who drifted between Miami's Coconut Grove and Manhattan's Greenwich Village, and who later wrote *Everybody's Talkin'*, the theme from *Midnight Cowboy*. Willie Nelson was a Monument artist when he brought **Pretty Paper** to Foster. Foster called Orbison, then touring England, and arranged to fly over and cut the song the next day so Monument could release it in time for Christmas. Orbison had a 103-degree fever and a sore throat; he could only get through the recording twice at the Decca studios in London, so they wound up using a take they weren't really happy with. Foster got some of the novel sound by putting throat mikes on the string section.

In 1965, Orbison left Monument for MGM, hoping to expand his career into movies. His records for that label rarely measured up to his previous hits—only three made the Top 40, all in 1965 and 1966. Orbison was virtually wiped out by the British Invasion. He didn't reach the American charts again until 1980, when *That Louie! You Feelin' Again*, a duet with Emmylou Harris, was taken from the *Roadie* soundtrack (it went on to win a Grammy). Momentum built with *Blue Velvet* and *In Dreams*, which, ironically, director David Lynch defiantly used even though he had been denied permission.

In 1987, Orbison was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame after a laudatory speech by Bruce Springsteen. In quick order, Orbison recorded an album of old hits, starred in a concert video (backed by Springsteen, Elvis Costello, Jackson Browne and others), recorded an album of new material (released posthumously), and joined Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, George Harrison and Jeff

Lynne in the Traveling Wilburys, an impromptu band whose popular album yielded chart singles as well. At the time of his death on December 7, 1988, Roy Orbison could be heard all over the radio.

"You always need your dreams, and you should always keep your next dream in front of you," he said in a video documentary shortly before his untimely death. "If you're capable of having big dreams, you should live them out." And he did.

—John Morthland

Orbison's image, as well as his tragic life and death, suggested he was singing about himself.



DISCOGRAPHY

**Indicates highest Billboard chart position*

- 1. Uptown Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 412 (1960). No. 72*
- 2. Only the Lonely Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 421 (1960). No. 2*
- 3. Blue Angel Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 425 (1960). No. 9*
- 4. I'm Hurtin' Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 433 (1960). No. 27*
- 5. Candy Man Music** and lyrics by Fred Neil and Beverly Ross. Six Continents Music Publishing Inc. Monument 447 (1961). No. 25*
- 6. Love Hurts Music** and lyrics by Boudleaux Bryant. House of Bryant Publications. Monument 438 (1961). Did not chart.
- 7. Crying Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 447 (1961). No. 2*
- 8. Workin' for the Man Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 467 (1962). No. 33*
- 9. Dream Baby Music** and lyrics by Cindy Walker. Combine Music Corp. Monument 456 (1962). No. 4*
- 10. The Actress Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 456 (1962). Did not chart.
- 11. In Dreams Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 806 (1963). No. 7*
- 12. The Crowd Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 467 (1962). No. 25*
- 13. Leah Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 467 (1962). No. 25*
- 14. Running Scared Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 438 (1961). No. 1*
- 15. Falling Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 815 (1963). No. 22*
- 16. Mean Woman Blues Music** and lyrics by Jerry West and Whispering Smith. Excellorec Music Co., Inc. Monument 824 (1963). No. 5*
- 17. Blue Bayou Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 824 (1963). No. 29*
- 18. Pretty Paper Music** and lyrics by Willie Nelson. Tree Publishing Co., Inc. Monument 830 (1963). No. 15*
- 19. It's Over Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Bill Dees. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 837 (1964). No. 9*
- 20. Oh, Pretty Woman Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Bill Dees. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 851 (1964). No. 1*
- 21. Goodnight Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Bill Dees. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 873 (1965). No. 21*
- 22. (Say) You're My Girl Music** and lyrics by Roy Orbison and Bill Dees. Acuff-Rose Publications Inc. Monument 891 (1965). No. 39*

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Executive Producer: Charles McCardell

Creative Director: Don Sheldon

Art Director: Robin Bray

Associate Producer: Robert Hull

Series Consultant: Joe Sasy

Art Studio: Nina Bridges

Chief Financial Officer: Eric R. Eaton

Production Manager: Karen Hill

Roy Orbison: 1960-1965 was produced by Time-Life Music in cooperation with CBS Special Products. Digitally remastered by Ken Robertson; compilation produced by Nick Shaffran.

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