

## Ricky Skaggs - Bio

**Ricky Skaggs** was born on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1954, in Cordell, Lawrence County, Kentucky. His father worked in construction during the week, and performed with the family band at weekends. A child prodigy, religion and music played vital roles in his early life. By the age of five he was playing mandolin, and went on to become accomplished on banjo, fiddle and guitar. Ricky performed with his family at church socials, and sang "Ruby" at a **Bill Monroe** gig in 1959, then appeared on **Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs** TV show during 1961. During the late 1960's Ricky began working in a duo with the late Keith Whitley [d. 1989], and during 1970 after being spotted in performance by **Ralph Stanley** both went on to join his **Clinch Mountain Boys**, with Skaggs taking the role of vocalist and mandolinist.

Supported by Stanley's band, in 1971 Rebel Records issued the Skaggs and Whitley album "**Second Generation Bluegrass.**" Disappointed by the low pay and lack of interest shown by the listening public, Skaggs turned his back on music during 1973 and moved to Washington D.C. where he worked for a time for Virginia Electric and Power. At that time D.C. was, however, a hotbed of bluegrass music and the following year Ricky joined the **Country Gentlemen** on fiddle, later worked and recorded [for Rounder Records] with **J. D. Crowe & The New South** in a line-up that also featured Tony Rice and Jerry Douglas, and then formed **Boone Creek** and cut one album for Sugar Hill Records. Having mixed with young musicians who merged Country and Bluegrass with Jazz and Folk – aka 'newgrass,' in 1977 Skaggs musically changed tack and replaced **Rodney Crowell** in **Emmylou Harris' Hot Band**. Ricky appeared on Emmylou's albums *Luxury Liner*, *Quarter Moon In A Ten Cent Sky*, *Blue Kentucky Girl*, *Roses In The Snow* and the Christmas collection *Light Of The Stable*. Skaggs penned the musical arrangements for *Roses In The Snow*.

Concurrent with working in the aforementioned bands during the mid to late nineteen seventies, Skaggs cut his debut solo album "**That's It**" for Rebel Records and followed four years later with "**Sweet Temptation**" for Sugar Hill Records. In 1980 former J. D. Crowe alumni Tony Rice and Skaggs cut "**Skaggs & Rice**" for Sugar Hill. Ricky married Sharon White of The Whites during 1982, and they have two children, Molly Kate and Lucas. Ricky also has a son, Andrew, from his first marriage. In 1980 Skaggs settled in Nashville, and the following year signed with Columbia Records subsidiary label, Epic, and made his U.S. Top 20 Country Singles Chart debut with "Don't Get Above Your Raising" [# 18, May 1981] and followed with ten [almost consecutive] # 1 hit singles - "Crying My Heart Out Over You" [Jan. 1982], "I Don't Care" [May 1982], "Heartbroke" [Sept. 1982], "I Wouldn't Change You If I Could" [Dec. 1982], "Highway 40 Blues" [April 1983], "Don't Cheat In Our Home Town" [Dec. 1983], "Honey [Open That Door]" [March 1984], "Uncle Pen" [July 1984], "Country Boy" [March 1985] and "Cajun Moon" [Jan. 1986]. Since he was enjoying commercial success, Rounder Records issued "**Family And Friends.**" Between 1986 and 1996 Skaggs only enjoyed one # 1 single "Lovin' Only Me" [April 1989] and nine other Country Top 20 entries. Since 1996 Skaggs releases haven't featured on the U.S. Country Singles Chart.

In 1982 Skaggs joined the Grand Ole Opry, and the same year he was voted the CMA Male Vocalist of the Year and also picked up their Horizon Award. In 1983 Skaggs picked up his first Grammy after contributing to the New South album "**Fireball,**" and the following year he won a Best Country Instrumental Performance Grammy for the "**Country Boy**" track "Wheel Hoss." Skaggs' band won the CMA's Instrumental Group of the Year during the period 1983 – 85 inclusive, and he was their 1985 Entertainer of the Year. Ricky and his wife Sharon were voted the 1987 CMA Vocal Duo of the Year. Skaggs produced Dolly Parton's 1989 renaissance album "**White Limozeen**" which saw her returned to her traditional country roots. Ricky was named Artist of the Decade in a BBC2 Radio listeners' poll during 1990. Between 1981 and 1993 Skaggs recorded for the Epic imprint, and in the mid 1990's moved to Atlantic Records for "**Solid Ground**" and "**Life Is A Journey.**"

During 1997 Ricky established his own record label, Skaggs Family Records, and to date the imprint has released eight albums by Skaggs and his band Kentucky Thunder, all of which have been nominated for Grammys with six of them picking up the award in the categories of Bluegrass, Country or Gospel. The Kentucky Thunder line-up consists of Andy Leftwich [fiddle], Cody Kilby [lead guitar], Mark Fain [bass], Darrin Vincent [baritone vocals, rhythm guitar], Paul Brewster [tenor vocals, rhythm guitar] and Jim Mills [banjo]. "**Bluegrass Rules**" was voted the IBMA's 1998 Album Of The Year. Since its inception Skaggs' label has gone on to release albums by bluegrass and roots music artists, including the Del McCoury Band, Blue Highway, The Whites, Cherryholmes and Cadillac Sky.

Featuring contributions from The Dixie Chicks, Travis Tritt, Joan Osborne and Bruce Hornsby, **“Big Mon”** received a Grammy nomination for Best Country Collaboration with Vocals. The album was re-released by Lyric Street Records in 2002 under the title **“Ricky Skaggs And Friends Sing The Songs Of Bill Monroe.”** **“Live At The Charleston Music Hall”** scored the Skaggs’ band the IBMA title Instrumental Group of the Year, the eighth occasion in ten years that they had gained the award. **“Instrumentals”** an album of all-original material, debuted at # 1 on Billboard’s Bluegrass Album Chart and, in the category Best Bluegrass Album, earned Skaggs his eleventh Grammy.

Backed by Kentucky Thunder, the duo recording **“Ricky Skaggs And Bruce Hornsby”** was released by Columbia Legacy during March 2007.

### **Discography**

with Keith Whitley – **“Second Generation Bluegrass”** [1971] :

with J. D. Crowe & The New South – **“J. D. Crowe & The New South”** [1975] :

with Boone Creek – **“One Way Track”** [1978] :

with Emmylou Harris' Hot Band – **“Luxury Liner”** [1977] ; **“Quarter Moon In A Ten Cent Sky”** [1978] ;

**“Blue Kentucky Girl”** [1979] ; **“Roses In The Snow”** [1980] ; **“Light Of The Stable”** [1980] :

with Tony Rice – **“Skaggs & Rice”** [1980] :

with Jimmy Douglas – **“Ricky Skaggs & Jimmy Douglas”** [1994] :

with Kentucky Thunder – **“Bluegrass Rules”** [1997] ; **“Ancient Tones”** [1999] ; **“Soldier Of The Cross”** [1999] ; **“History Of The Future”** [2001] ; **“Weapon Of Prayer”** [2001] ; **“Live At The Charleston Music Hall”** [2003] ; **“Brand New Strings”** [2004] ; **“Instrumentals”** [2006] :

with Doc Watson and Earl Scruggs - **“The Three Pickers”** [2003] :

with Ole Smucker - **“Hunting Dog Blues”** [2005] :

with Bruce Hornsby – **“Ricky Skaggs & Bruce Hornsby”** [2007] :

Solo – **“That's It”** [1975] ; **“Sweet Temptation”** [1979] ; **“Waitin' For The Sun To Shine”** [1981] ;

**“Highway & Heartaches”** [1982] ; **“Family & Friends”** [1982] ; **“Don't Cheat In Our Hometown”** [1983] ; **“Country Boy”** [1984] ; **“Favorite Country Songs”** [1985] ; **“Live In London”** reissued with bonus tracks in 2003 [1985] ;

**“Love's Gonna Get Ya!”** [1986] ; **“Comin' Home To Stay”** [1988] ;

**“Kentucky Thunder”** [1989] ; **“Radio Special”** [1990] ; **“My Father's Son”** [1991] ; **“Ricky Skaggs Portrait”** [1992] ;

**“Super Hits”** [1993] ; **“Solid Ground”** [1995] ; **“Life Is A Journey”** [1997] ; **“Big Mon: The Songs Of Bill Monroe”** [2000] ;

**“A Skaggs Family Christmas”** [2005] :

### **Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 04/07

[975 words]