

## Kris Kristofferson – Bio

Kris Kristofferson was born on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1936 in Brownsville, Texas. His father was a two-star general in the U.S. Air Force, so the Kristofferson clan was constantly on the move as Kris was growing up. During his teen years Kris was a Golden Gloves boxer, graduated from high school in San Mateo, California and went on to study at Pomona College. Having earned a Rhodes scholarship, Kris crossed the Atlantic to study literature in England at Oxford University's Merton College. While at Oxford, Kristofferson, who was already writing songs, was signed by the artist manager Larry Parnes. Scoring a deal with Top Rank Records, he cut a number of singles as Kris Carson but they were never released. In 1960 Kris graduated with a master's degree in English literature, and the same year married Fran Beir. The couple had two children, but divorced in 1969. Probably influenced by his father, Kris went on to join the army, was stationed in West Germany for a time, and rose to the rank of captain. In Germany he formed a band and performed on bases and in clubs. A qualified helicopter pilot, in 1965, having been assigned to teach literature at West Point, Kris resigned his commission. He had made the decision to pursue a career as a songwriter, after having sent, via a friend, some of his compositions to Marijohn Wilkin, the Nashville based hit songwriter ["Waterloo" and "Long Black Veil"].

In Nashville Kris worked as a studio janitor at Columbia Records, and as a barman. He also worked as a commercial helicopter pilot. In 1966 Dave Dudley covered Kris' "Viet Nam Blues" [# 12 U.S. Country single] and in 1967 Kristofferson signed with Epic Records, a CBS subsidiary. He cut a number of unsuccessful singles for Epic. Other covers followed, including Roy Drusky ["Jody and the Kid" # 24, 7/68], Billy Walker & The Tennessee Walkers ["From The Bottle To The Bottom" # 20, 2/69], Ray Stevens ["Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down" # 55, 11/69], Faron Young ["Your Time's Comin'" # 4, 11/69] and Roger Miller ["Me And Bobby McGee" # 12, 7/69, plus covers of "Best Of All Possible Worlds" and "Darby's Castle"]. While working at the studio Kris managed to pass some songs to Johnny Cash. When the Man in Black failed to record them, Kris landed a helicopter at the Cash's house on the lake and handed John more recordings. Cash got the message and his live version of "Sunday Morning Coming Down" made # 1 on the U.S. Country singles chart during Sept. 1970. The song was voted the CMA's 1970 Song Of The Year, and the same year "For The Good Times," cut by Ray Price [# 1, 6/70], won the Academy of Country Music's "Song of the Year" award. The song also scored Price a Best Country Vocal Performance Grammy.

Signing with Monument Records, another CBS subsidiary, Kristofferson's self-titled debut album appeared the same year but failed to create major sales. Kristofferson's songs remained in demand with country performers, 1970 examples being Jerry Lee Lewis ["Once More With Feeling" # 2, 2/70], Waylon Jennings ["The Taker" # 5, 8/70] and Bobby Bare ["Come Sundown" # 7, 12/70]. In 1971 Kristofferson managed to cross genres when Janis Joplin scored a posthumous # 1 U.S. Pop single with "Me And Bobby McGee." Sammi Smith took Kristofferson's "Help Me Make It Through the Night" to # 1 on the Country Singles Chart the same year, and she went on to score a Best Country Vocal Performance Grammy, while Kristofferson picked up the Best Song Grammy. More country hits followed, including Ray Price ["I Won't Mention It Again" # 1, 3/71 and "I'd Rather Be Sorry" # 2, 8/71], Bobby Bare ["Please Don't Tell Me How the Story Ends" # 8, 5/71], Patti Page ["I'd Rather Be Sorry" # 63, 8/71] and Jerry Lee Lewis ["Me And Bobby McGee" # 1, 11/71]. During 1971 O. C. Smith and Joe Simon, separately, took "Help Me Make It Through The Night" into the Pop Chart. Kristofferson's sophomore album **"The Silver Tongued Devil And I"** sold well, establishing his reputation as a performer as well as a writer, and in the Spring of 1973 he scored a # 1 Country single with "Why Me, Lord." The same year Kris married fellow performer Rita Coolidge, and in tandem with his solo recording career, between 1973/78 the pair released a trio of duo albums. The Coolidge/Kristofferson union was dissolved in 1980 having produced one child. The duo scored a pair of Grammys for Best Vocal Performance by a Duo, with "From The Bottle To The Bottom" [1973] and "Lover Please" [1975]. Ronnie Milsap took Kristofferson's "Please Don't Tell Me How The Story Ends" to # 1 on the Country Singles Chart in the summer of 1974, and the cut won Milsap a Best Country Vocal Performance Grammy. By the close of the 1970's Kris had cut ten original albums, of varying quality, for Monument Records.

Kristofferson appeared in his first movie during 1971. **"The Last Movie"** starring, directed and based on a story by Dennis Hopper, was shot in Chile. Kristofferson had a small part in the movie, as had musician John Buck Wilkin [Marijohn's son], and the pair penned music for the film soundtrack. A couple of years later Kris played Billy The Kid in Sam Pekinpah's **"Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid,"** and the cast also included Bob Dylan who, appropriately, took the part Alias. As rock star John Norman Howard, Kris

played opposite Barbra Streisand in the hit movie **“A Star Is Born”** [1976]. To date Kristofferson has starred in over eighty film productions, although his career in movies slowed for a few years following the release of **“Heaven’s Gate”** [1980]. In fact his movie and music careers have at times clashed, one peaking when the other stalled. In 1979 Willie Nelson cut the album **“Willie Nelson Sings Kris Kristofferson,”** and the pair later started in the movie about musicians **“Songwriter”** [1984].

In 1983 Kris married attorney Lisa Meyers and they have five children. Two years later, Kristofferson and Cash teamed with Willie Nelson and the late Waylon Jennings to form The Highwaymen. In the early summer of that year, the quartet scored a # 1 Country single with Jimmy Webb’s “Highwayman,” and they went on to cut three albums together. Following a six-year long solo silence, in 1986 Kristofferson cut **“Repossessed”** for the Polygram label, and he continued to release original albums, of varying quality, every four or five years for the next two decades on Justice, Atlantic and Oh Boy Records. Over the last two decades Kristofferson’s movie career has experienced several peaks and dips. Kris has appeared in a number of television shows including **“Saturday Night Live,”** and also in a number of made-for-tv movies. Kris played Jesse James in **“The Last Days Of Frank And Jesse James”** [1986] and took the lead part in the mini-series **“Amerika”** [1987].

In 1977 Kristofferson was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, and in 2004 into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Kristofferson’s latest solo album, the introspective **“This Old Road”** was released by New West Records in early 2006.

#### Discography :

with Rita Coolidge – **“Full Moon”** [1973] ; **“Breakaway”** [1974] ; **“Natural Act”** [1978] :

with Barbra Streisand – **“A Star Is Born”** [1976] :

with Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton and Brenda Lee – **“The Winning Hand”** [1982] :

with Willie Nelson – **“Songwriter O/St.”** [1985] :

with Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash [as The Highwayman] - **“Highwayman”** [1985] ;

**“Highwayman 2”** [1990] ; **“Highwaymen : The Road Goes On Forever”** [1995] :

Solo [excluding compilations] - **“Kristofferson”** [1970] ; **“Me And Bobby McGhee”** reissue of **“Kristofferson”** [1971] ; **“The Silver Tongued Devil And I”** [1971] ; **“Border Lord”** [1972] ; **“Jesus Was A Capricorn”** [1972] ; **“Spooky Lady’s Sideshow”** [1973] ; **“Who’s To Bless...And Who’s To Blame”** [1975] ; **“Surreal Thing”** [1976] ; **“Easter Island”** [1978] ; **“Shake Hands With The Devil”** [1979] ; **“To The Bone”** [1980] ; **“Repossessed”** [1986] ; **“Third World Warrior”** [1990] ; **“Live From The Philharmonic”** [1992] ; **“A Moment Of Forever”** [1995] ; **“The Austin Sessions”** [1999] ; **“Broken Freedom Song : Live From San Francisco”** [2003] ; **“This Old Road”** [2006] :

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