

Johnny paycheck: the country outlaw who made a mark in country music

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Johnny Paycheck, his life, his songs, his hardships, and even his name, are all such great masterpieces that were revealed to the world. His existence has been a wonderful influence to many people. We are lucky enough to meet such a rare and glorious artist whose life, despite his struggle with drugs and alcohol, became an inspiration to the world of country music.

The Young Johnny Paycheck

On May 31, 1938, a boy was born with the name Donald Eugene Lytle. When he grew up, he discovered his love for music which eventually led him to join some contests. His early exposure to music had set his life into the path of being a musician. Lytle first entered the country music scene by being George Jones' back up vocals, and bass and steel guitar player. During his time with Jones, Lytle also began writing songs. This became a common thing for him and as he constantly wrote, he became good at it. In fact, he was one of the songwriters who penned Tammy Wynette's ' Apartment No. 9.'

Johnny Paycheck Turns Outlaw

Lytle changed his name to Johnny Paycheck in 1964. It was the year he began to release singles as a solo artist. The first song he had charted was ' A-11.' After which, Paycheck had released song after song that earned their respective spots on the chart. His style was a lot different from when he started. Perhaps, he was still finding his way into the world of country music. However, Paycheck finally discovered his true style when the likes of Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson were popular for their outlaw music. Paycheck became an outlaw!

‘ Take This Job and Shove It’

This kind of music suits him. He has the freedom to express himself and sing the way he wanted it. Paycheck’s shift from his singing style had made him enormously successful. Outlaw music eventually gave him his first and only number one song on the chart. Paycheck, in 1977, took David Allan Coes’ ‘ Take This Job and Shove It’ to the top of the chart. As a result, the single has been marked as Paycheck’s signature song.

Breaking the Law

Eventually, his career declined as he increased his dependence on alcohol and drugs. Paycheck was sentenced for seven years in prison after shooting a man. He said that even though he was in jail, people still send him letters. People still admire his music that not even imprisonment will stop them.

End of Life

Paycheck continued to make music after he was pardoned. He eventually retired in 1997, and on 2003 he laid to rest at the age of 64. Despite his death, his music remained to be a great influence to many.’To me, an outlaw is a man that did things his own way, whether you liked him or not. I did things my own way.’ – Johnny Paycheck.