

# Lefty Frizzell

William Orville “Lefty” Frizzell was born on March 31, 1928 in Corsicana, Texas, but moved with his family shortly after his birth to El Dorado, Arkansas, where Frizzell began playing the guitar as a very young boy. In the late 1930s Lefty had a featured spot on a children’s radio program broadcast from KELD. In his teens he worked country fairs, dances, bars, and clubs throughout North Texas.



The family moved back to Texas when Frizzell was still a teenager, and his music career got a boost when he won a Dallas talent contest. In his late teens, he was performing at fairgrounds and other venues, developing his unique, soulful voice, and soon his growing popularity as a singer afforded him regular work on the “Honky-Tonk” nightclub circuit. At age 19 he had a half-hour show on a small Texas radio station, and in 1950, at age twenty two, he signed to Columbia Records, and was invited to perform at the Grand Ole Opry. The following year he appeared on the Louisiana Hayride and began touring with country music’s biggest star of the era, Hank Williams. A prolific songwriter, Frizzell had four songs in the country top ten at the same time in 1951 — a feat that would not be repeated on any chart until The Beatles accomplished it on the popular chart in 1964.

In 1953 he moved to Los Angeles and became a regular on Town Hall Party, a radio and TV show featuring all the top country artists of the era. During his career, he had thirteen hits make it to the top ten in the charts, and three made it to number one. His most successful recordings include “If You’ve Got the Money, I’ve Got the Time,” “I Love You in a Thousand Ways,” “Always Late,” and “I Want to be with You Always.” By the end of the 1950s, rock and roll was dominating the North American music scene, but his 1959 hit titled “Long Black Veil” gained wide acceptance with a variety of music fans. A few years later, Frizzell recorded “Saginaw, Michigan,” which took the #1 spot on the country music charts and broke into the pop charts as well. The song earned him a Grammy Award nomination.

In 1972 Lefty Frizzell was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame and his song “If You’ve Got the Money, I’ve Got the Time” earned him a Grammy Hall of Fame Award. Unfortunately, success and money only added to Frizzell’s alcohol addiction, and on July 19, 1975, he suffered a massive stroke and passed away at age 47. He was buried on “Music Row” at Forest Lawn Memorial Gardens in Goodlettsville, Tennessee.

Frizzell’s style of singing influenced a great many singers, particularly Merle Haggard, and in addition he was widely recognized for his songwriting talents. Willie Nelson’s 1977 album *To Lefty From Willie* was a tribute to Frizzell and consisted entirely of cover versions of Frizzell songs. Frizzell was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1982 and has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

