

Introduction

Welcome to “The Greatest Hits Explained”. My name is Michael Winter and I’m the host and editor of the show. I’m a German American passionate music lover and I would now like to invite you to go on an exciting musical journey with me. If you’re in the mood for some entertaining pop music history, you’ve come to the right place. I’m glad you’re here and I’m really looking forward to this journey together.

Today, we’re gonna talk about a wonderful song that was written by legendary American singer-songwriter Dolly Parton and originally released by her in 1974. While the song was quite a success at the time, reaching the number one spot of the “Billboard Hot Country Songs Chart” in 1974 and again in 1982 after Dolly re-recorded and re-released it, it was not until 1992, when American R&B singer Whitney Houston recorded and released a new version of the song for the soundtrack of the movie “The Bodyguard”, that the song became one of the most successful songs of all time. Yes, you guessed right: I’m talking about the song “I Will Always Love You” – one of the best-selling singles of all time.¹

Since the song “I Will Always Love You” is copyrighted material and purchasing the rights would be awfully expensive, I’m not able to play it here for you. But don’t worry, I’m gonna tell you everything about the song you need to know and then you can listen to it elsewhere after you finished this episode here.

If you like this show, please subscribe, leave a review, a like, a comment – whatever applies to the specific platform on which you’re listening to this. Also, I really appreciate donations. Those donations help me cover my expenses for this show such as hosting fees, equipment cost, etc. I’m doing all of this to entertain *you* based on *my* endless love for music and since there is no big network pumping dollars into this show, I’m the one who has to pay for all related expenses. Therefore, a small donation would already be amazing. Also, maybe you want to drop me a note from one music lover to another – I hope to hear from all of you. It’s now time to travel back into time and, since the focus of this episode is on the 1992 version of “I Will Always Love You” which was the number one US Billboard Hot 100 song of the year 1993, we’re first gonna go through some of the important events of the year 1993 before we’re gonna focus on the music by discussing the song, its production, success and reception.¹ After that, we’ll get to know the artists and musicians behind it, Dolly Parton and Whitney Houston, among others, a lot better and we’ll also explore more of the musical aspects related to “I Will Always Love You” including its lyrics. The grand finale will then be a quick exploration of the song’s legacy.

By the way, please note that you can find a link to the sources I used for this show in the show description. Also, I’m mentioning all the sources I used at the very end of this show. This show is based on my personal research of sources I found online and otherwise. Therefore, I owe a lot of thanks to the authors of these original sources. I have used both paraphrased and literal content and quotes from these sources without declaring them during the show as it would have taken away from the flow. In no way was this intended to claim that I came up with all the original content. I see my job as putting together and processing the content from a variety of different sources in a way that it creates a new and exciting narrative that wouldn’t necessarily be possible and available using the single sources alone in an unprocessed way. And if there’s anything that I stated or pronounced incorrectly, please forgive me. I did my best.

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

The Times

Whitney Houston's version of "I Will Always Love You" was the US Billboard Hot 100 song of the year 1993 and, therefore, we're gonna take a look at the year 1993 before focusing on the song and the people behind it.¹ Shining a light on the situation the world was in when the song was successful provides us with some helpful context.

1993 was the 993rd year of the 2nd millennium, the 93rd year of the 20th century and the 4th year of the 1990s decade.²

Here's a quick but not exhaustive list of what happened in 1993:

The year started with Czechoslovakia ceasing to exist on January 1st when the Czech Republic and Slovakia separated in what was called the Velvet Divorce.²

US President George Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Moscow on January 3rd.²

On January 20th, Bill Clinton was sworn in as the 42nd President of the United States.²

And on January 26th, Václav Havel was elected President of the Czech Republic.²

On February 26th, the World Trade Center in New York City was bombed killing six and injuring over one thousand people.²

April 19th: A stand-off at a compound of religious sect The Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas, ends after 51 days with a fire that kills 76 people, including the cult leader David Koresh.²

Tennis player Monica Seles – at the time the world's number one in women's tennis – was stabbed during a match in Hamburg on April 30th.²

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was created in The Hague on May 25th.

On June 9th, the movie Jurassic Park was released.²

Windows NT 3.1, the first version of Microsoft's line of Windows NT operating systems, was released to manufacturing on July 27th.²

On October 3rd, the Battle of Mogadishu which consisted of the U.S. Army conducting Operation Gothic Serpent in the city of Mogadishu, Somalia took place. Over 1,000 Somalians died, over 73 Americans were wounded in action, 18 were killed and 1 was captured.²

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

² Source 2: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1993>

The Maastricht Treaty took effect on November 1st, formally establishing the European Union or, short, EU.²

And here are a couple of birthdays of famous people:

January 11th: Michael Keane, an English soccer player.²

February 6th: Tinashe, an American actress and singer.²

March 4th: Bobbi Kristina Brown, daughter of Whitney Houston who's the focus of this episode, and an American media personality and singer – she died in 2015.²

April 16th: Chance the Rapper, an American rapper.²

May 9th: Ryosuke Yamada, a Japanese singer and actor.²

June 26th: Ariana Grande, an American singer, songwriter, and actress.²

July 28th: Cher Lloyd, an English singer.²

August 29th: Liam Payne, a British singer-songwriter.²

September 12th: Kelsea Ballerini, an American singer.²

October 9th: Scotty McCreery, an American singer.²

November 30th: Yuri Chinen, a Japanese singer and actor.²

December 22nd: Meghan Trainor, an American singer-songwriter, musician and producer.²

Next up, the deaths of a number of famous people:

January 6th: Dizzy Gillespie, an American jazz musician born in 1917 and Rudolf Nureyev, a Russian dancer born in 1938.²

January 20th: Audrey Hepburn, a Belgian-born British actress born in 1929.²

February 20th: Ferruccio Lamborghini, an Italian automobile manufacturer born in 1916.²

February 24th: Bobby Moore, an English soccer player born in 1941.²

February 25th: Eddie Constantine, an American-born French actor and singer born in 1917.²

² Source 2: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1993>

March 31st: Brandon Lee, an American actor and son of Bruce Lee born in 1965.²

June 5th: Conway Twitty, an American musician born in 1933.²

August 16th: Stewart Granger, an Anglo-American actor born in 1913.²

September 12th: Raymond Burr, a Canadian American actor born in 1917.²

October 25th: Vincent Price, an American actor born in 1911.²

October 31st: Federico Fellini, an Italian film director born in 1920 and River Phoenix, an American actor born in 1970.²

December 2nd: Pablo Escobar, a Colombian drug lord born in 1949.²

December 4th: Frank Zappa, an American singer, guitarist and composer born in 1940.²

Other than that, 1993 was the year that Nelson Mandela received the Nobel Peace Prize and Toni Morrison won the same prize in category Literature to name two Nobel prize winners in that year.

On the fashion side of things, very popular were Doc Martens boots, skin-tight dresses like Sharon Stone wore it in the movie Basic Instinct, bodysuits, the so-called mom jeans that were worn not only by moms but also by a lot of young people, overalls, Carhartt jackets and plaid flannel shirts to only name a few trends.³

People born in 1993 belong to the Millennials generation, also known as Generation Y, which defines the demographic cohort of people born between around 1981 and 1996.⁴

A gentleman named Karol Józef Wojtyła – better known as Pope John Paul II – was the head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State.⁵

François Mitterrand was the President of France, Helmut Kohl was the Chancellor of Germany, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro was the President of Italy, John Major was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Bill Clinton, was the President of the United States from January on, Akihito was the Emperor of Japan and Canada had even three Prime Ministers in one year: Brian Mulroney, Kim Campbell and Jean Chrétien.⁶

² Source 2: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1993>

³ Source 3: <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/52657/11-fashions-kids-were-wearing-back-1993>

⁴ Source 4: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennials>

⁵ Source 5: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II

⁶ Source 6: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_state_leaders_in_1993

The year also saw the 1993 Storm of the Century which was a large cyclonic storm that formed over the Gulf of Mexico on March 12th and then moved through the Gulf of Mexico, the eastern United States and eastern Canada before dissipating in the North Atlantic Ocean on March 15th. The storm caused 318 fatalities and more than one million power outages.⁷

With regard to music, as I mentioned earlier, Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" was the number one Billboard Year-End Hot 100 single of 1993 in the US. Here's a quick list of the other 9 top songs in the US from that year:⁸

- #2: "Whoomp! (There It Is)" by the Tag Team
- #3: "Can't Help Falling In Love" by UB40
- #4: "That's The Way Love Goes" by Janet Jackson
- #5: "Freak Me" by Silk
- #6: "Weak" by SWV
- #7: "If I Ever Fall In Love" by Shai
- #8: "Dreamliner" by Mariah Carey
- #9: "Rump Shaker" by Wreckx-n-Effect
- #10: "Informer" by Snow

Beyond the US Hot 100 and also beyond the US itself, other huge hit singles of the year were the following – to name just a few:⁹

- "Nuthin' But a 'G' Thang" by Dr. Dre featuring Snoop Doggy Dogg
- "The River Of Dreams" by Billy Joel
- "Somebody To Love" (Live) by Queen & George Michael
- "What Is Love" by Haddaway
- "What's Up?" by the "4 Non Blondes"
- "I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)" by Meat Loaf
- "All That She Wants" by Ace Of Base
- "Boosh! Shake the Room" by Jazzy Jeff & Fresh Prince
- "Cat's In The Cradle" by Ugly Kid Joe
- "More And More" by the Captain Hollywood Project
- "Mr. Vain" by Culture Beat
- And "No Limit" by 2 Unlimited

Also, on a more personal note, on August 8th, 1993, I got together with my wife. Therefore, for me, 1993 was a very good year.

⁷ Source 7: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1993_Storm_of_the_Century

⁸ Source 8: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billboard_Year-End_Hot_100_singles_of_1993

⁹ Source 9: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1993_in_music

The Song & Production

The song "I Will Always Love You" was originally written, performed and recorded in 1973 by American singer-songwriter and country legend Dolly Parton and it was released on March 11th, 1974 as the A side of record number APBO-0234 on the RCA Victor label; the B side was the single "Lonely Comin' Down". Some resources state a different release date of the record but I'm sticking with March 11th, 1974 here as this is the date most sources mention. "I Will Always Love You" was the second single from Dolly's thirteenth solo studio album, "Jolene", which was released in early 1974.¹

Dolly **wrote** the song as a farewell to her former professional partner, mentor and manager, Porter Wagoner, after she had initiated their professional break-up by deciding to leave "The Porter Wagoner Show" so she can pursue her solo career.¹ Porter had introduced Dolly, then a 21 year old from Tennessee, on his self-titled TV show six years earlier, in 1967, which was the start of a very successful collaboration as a vocal duo.¹⁰ Dolly initially had promised to stay on the show for five years but, as we all know too well, time flies.¹¹ Dolly's departure would put their friendship on ice for many years. She announced her departure on February 19th, 1974 which Porter formally answered on March 21st, 1979 by suing her for breach of contract demanding her to pay him 1 million US dollars, mostly future royalties and things like that which took Dolly years to pay back.^{18 19}

The two eventually reconciled shortly before Porter died from lung cancer in Nashville on October 28th, 2007.^{1 10} Dolly, along with Porter's family was at his side when he died.¹ I read somewhere that she sang "I Will Always Love You" to him one final time on the day that he died but I couldn't find a source that would confirm this 100%.

Dolly described their last few moments together on the "Dolly Parton's America" podcast as follows: "I asked everybody to go out, and I just talked to him myself. I knew he could hear me, but he was not able to talk to me. I could tell, and he could touch my hand and squeeze it a little bit. I just told him that I loved him and I appreciated him. I said I was sorry for all the things we had been through and I was so happy that we had become friends again and that I would always remember and treasure him. We had a special bond. I was happy that I was there."¹⁹

After Porter's death, Dolly performed a concert in memory of her former professional partner and boss at her theme park Dollywood.¹ Luckily, Dolly was even able to sing it one last time to Porter in front of a bigger audience a couple of months before he died as part of Porter's 50th anniversary celebration at the "Grand Ole Opry" on May 19th, 2007 introducing the song with the words "This was my goodbye song to Porter."¹² No matter if you have or if you haven't seen this performance before, I strongly recommend looking it up on the web after this podcast episode here to see one of the most emotional moments ever in country and pop music. Porter later said "It was the most emotional night that I've ever spent at the Opry in my whole life. And Dolly, of course, sang that song, 'I Will Always Love You', and they had me sitting on a stool, and she just came out and wiped some of the tears away. She meant it for me and wrote it for me, he said. That's a wonderful thing that she stood there and sang it for the whole world to see. And the evening was unbelievable."¹³

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

¹⁰ Source 10: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porter_Wagoner

¹¹ Source 11: <http://www.cmt.com/news/1657965/dolly-parton-shares-inspiration-of-i-will-always-love-you/>

¹² Source 12: <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/dolly-parton/i-will-always-love-you>

¹³ Source 13: <https://theboot.com/dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you-legacy/>

¹⁸ Source 18: <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country/flashback-dolly-parton-writes-i-will-always-love-you-for-former-boss-179134/>

¹⁹ Source 19: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/dolly-partons-america/episodes/i-will-always-love-you>

About their relationship, Dolly said the following in a 1993 “TV Guide” interview: “You get in these love-hate relationships with people that you work with. Porter and I were very competitive and passionate. Then you would get all jealous, too. And I am not ashamed of feeling this way. But finally, it was just breaking my heart because I thought, well, I'm going. He won't listen. There's nothing I can say that will make it easier. So I just sat down and wrote this song.”¹⁴

For Dolly, writing the song was no happy experience and she actually later described the process as emotional and difficult.¹⁵

She once described the song to be as deep-seeded in her heart and in her soul and in a 2017 conference call with music journalists to discuss her children’s album “I Believe In You”, Dolly said the following about the inspiration behind writing “I Will Always Love You”:¹⁶ “We had one of those relationships – we were either so much alike that we couldn’t get along or we were so different that we couldn’t get along. But we had a great love...it’s kind of the love/hate relationship. And I had told him at the start that someday I wanted to go out on my own and have my own band. He had a number one television show at the time and for me to leave, it was gonna take a big hunk out of his show. But I still wanted to move on. So anyhow, after much fighting, with all the love and depth that we had for each other, I wrote that song to try to say, “Here’s how I feel...and I will always love you. But I have to go and have to leave.” And it was a very hard song. But when I sang it to Porter (and he loved the song), he said, “Okay, you can go. But let me produce that record.” So it was personal to us.”

In a 2015 interview with “The Tennessean”, Dolly explained the situation saying that she had thought to herself “How am I gonna make Porter understand how much I appreciate everything, but that I have to go?” She then said “So I went home and I thought, ‘Well, what do you do best? You write songs.’ So I sat down and I wrote this song.”¹³

And in the “Dolly Parton’s America” podcast she described it like this: “I just finally just thought I'm going to break myself if I don't go, because all we were doing was fighting, and it just wasn't working. I couldn't think. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. He wasn't happy either. I thought, “This is just insane. We've got to do something.”¹⁹

And in another interview, she said:¹¹ “I thought, ‘He’s never going to listen. He’s just going to bitch every day that I go in to talk about this.’ So I thought, ‘Well, why don’t you do what you do best? Why don’t you just write this song?’ Because I knew at that time I was going to go, no matter what. So I went home and out of a very emotional place in me at that time, I wrote the song ‘I Will Always Love You.’”¹¹

The morning after Dolly wrote it, she went into Porter’s office and sang it for him. It was basically her resignation letter in the form of a song. Dolly said that Porter was in tears when she finished singing the song to him and that he called it the prettiest song he ever heard or the best song she ever wrote.^{11 12} I have resources with slightly different opinions on what his exact words were there. Anyway: Dolly replied “Well, you inspired it.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, Porter thought that Dolly was making a mistake and even felt that she was being disloyal after all that he had done for her and enabled her to do.¹²

¹¹ Source 11: <http://www.cmt.com/news/1657965/dolly-parton-shares-inspiration-of-i-will-always-love-you/>

¹² Source 12: <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/dolly-parton/i-will-always-love-you>

¹³ Source 13: <https://theboot.com/dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you-legacy/>

¹⁴ Source 14: <https://www.liveabout.com/i-will-always-love-you-history-931698>

¹⁵ Source 15: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/dolly-parton-2-songs-one-day/>

¹⁶ Source 16: <https://www.songwriteruniverse.com/dolly-parton-interview-2017.htm>

¹⁷ Source 17: <https://qz.com/work/1751337/dolly-partons-i-will-always-love-you-was-a-resignation-letter/>

¹⁹ Source 19: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/dolly-partons-america/episodes/i-will-always-love-you>

To leave Porter and his show was no easy decision for Dolly. Her star was rising at the time and she felt stifled by Porter's terms. Before deciding to leave, she suggested to him that she could stay and work for him while also making her own records, performing solo and, in a nutshell, being more independent. But he wouldn't agree and at one point told Dolly "This is my damn show." to which she replied "I know. This is my damn life, and we're not talking about the show, I'm talking about my life. I'm talking about my future. I can't stay here as the girl singer forever. I want an individual career. I am my own self. I didn't come to Nashville to be just part of a duet and to be a girl singer in somebody's group. I want my own band. I want my own show. I want my own dreams." Porter continued to produce Dolly's records until 1976 (including the number one hit "The Bargain Store" in 1975) due to contractual obligations but soon enough, she was on her own.^{17 19}

In the "Dolly Parton's America" podcast she described it as follows:¹⁹ "As I left his office and began to drive toward my home out in Brentwood, it began to rain, so did I. I cried. Not so much out of a sense of loss, but from the pain that almost always comes with change. It has a sad kind of freedom. Then I began to sing a song to myself. It's been a long dark night, and I've been waiting for the morning. It's been a long hard fight, but I see a brand-new day dawning. I've been looking for the sunshine. I ain't seen it in so long. Everything's going to work out just fine. Everything's going to be all right that's been all wrong. I can see the light of a clear blue morning. I swear to you on my life, as I said that, the sky cleared up, it stopped raining, the sun came out, and before I got home I had completely written the song called "Light of a Clear Blue Morning". It was like God saying, "Okay, you're free to go now, so just make the most of it." That was my first song in my freedom."²⁰ Without judging neither him nor her, let me just say that the rest is history. Well done, Dolly. We'll explore a few more details with regard to the collaboration and relationship between Dolly and Porter as they relate to and inspired the lyrics – this will happen in section "The Lyrics".

It is widely assumed that Dolly wrote "I Will Always Love You" the very same day she wrote her classic hit "Jolene".¹⁵ If that is indeed true, then that was one of the most significant days in pop music history. Wow. In a 2017 interview with Bobby Bones for his syndicated radio show "The Bobby Bones Show"¹⁵, Dolly said that she wrote "I Will Always Love You" at the same time as "Jolene" adding "That was a good writing day." Bobby Bones then asked, "You wrote them the same day?" and Dolly answered "Yeah, I believe so. It was right in that period of time because I remember all my paperwork, and like they came out pretty close at the same time. So everybody said, what was you taking, that was a good writing day."

To me, it sounded like Dolly backed off a little bit from the "same day theory" by saying "I believe so" and they came out pretty close at the same time" but, hey, it would still be a remarkable creative accomplishment within a relatively short period of time if she indeed wrote them one week apart, one month apart or even one year apart.

¹⁵ Source 15: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/dolly-parton-2-songs-one-day/>

¹⁷ Source 17: <https://qz.com/work/1751337/dolly-partons-i-will-always-love-you-was-a-resignation-letter/>

¹⁹ Source 19: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/dolly-partons-america/episodes/i-will-always-leave-you>

Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" was originally recorded in RCA Studio B in Nashville, Tennessee on June 17th, 1973:^{1 20 21 22 23}

The studio, located at 1611 Roy Acuff Place in Nashville's historic "Music Row" district, belongs to a set of two studios and "RCA Studio A" is housed in a different building right next to it on 17th Avenue. "RCA Studio B" was built by Nashville businessman Dan Maddox in 1956 and the larger "RCA Studio A" was built in 1964. They were commonly referred to as the "RCA Studios". Only after the larger 1964 studio was built, the studios were referred to as A and B studios from then on. Before that, the first studio was named "RCA Victor Studio". Other names used were "RCA Victor Studios", "Victor Sound" or "Home of a Thousand Hits". Leased to "RCA Records", this is where the famous "Nashville Sound" – that makes heavy use of background vocals and strings – originated. It helped revive country music and continue to turn Nashville into the country capital of the world when it comes to recording and performing country music. The studio took four months and a cost of \$37,515 to build. Offices occupy the front and both the area of the studio and the control room have a second story that contains an echo chamber. The studio measures 42.5 by 27 by 13 feet which translates to 13 by 8.2 by 4 meters.

Later on, Studio C was added to the Studio A building and Studio D was added to the Studio B building. The Studio A building was also the home of the RCA Nashville executive offices, booking agencies, music publishers and other music enterprises. A lot of famous and successful country and other singers, bands, producers, etc. used the studios for their recordings over the years: In addition to Dolly Parton, the studios welcomed Elvis Presley, Chet Atkins, Roy Orbison, the Everly Brothers, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Fats Domino to name just a few legends. Musician, songwriter, occasional vocalist and record producer Chet Atkins, who managed RCA's Nashville operation and produced hundreds of hits there between 1957 and 1973, played a huge role in creating the Nashville sound thereby expanding country music's appeal to adult pop music fans.

"RCA Studio B" saw a number of recording innovations such as new reverb techniques and the development of the "Nashville Number System" which is a form of shorthand for notating a song's chord structure. In addition to recording a lot of her songs in this studio, there is another reason why Dolly has a special relationship with RCA Studio B. The reason is that she drove her car through the side wall of the studio building when she was rushing to her first recording session there in October of 1967 a short time after having secured a contract with "RCA Victor". It seems that the spot where her car hit the wall is still visible.

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

²⁰ Source 20: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RCA_Studio_B

²¹ Source 21: <https://studiob.org/the-studio/>

²² Source 22: <https://studiob.org/the-studio/history/>

²³ Source 23: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chet_Atkins

June 17th, 1973, the day Dolly recorded "I Will Always Love You" for the very first time was a Sunday. Here are two examples of the main events of that day that made it into the news:²⁴

- The deep-sea scientific research submersible named "Johnson Sea Link" became entangled on the wreckage of the "USS Fred T. Berry" which had been sunk near Key West, Florida to create an artificial reef. It was trapped for 24 hours and eventually recovered by the rescue vessel "A.B. Wood II" but two of the four occupants died of carbon dioxide poisoning.²⁵
- Denny Hulme, a race car driver from New Zealand, won the 1973 Swedish Grand Prix Formula One motor race held at the Scandinavian Raceway in Anderstorp.²⁶

The high temperature in Nashville, Tennessee on June 17th, 1973 was 87 degrees Fahrenheit which was reached at 4pm. It was a cloudy day with a maximum wind speed of 16 miles per hour and a visibility of 20 miles.²⁷ Overall, Nashville has a humid subtropical climate with hot, humid summers and generally cool winters which is typical of the Upper South.²⁸

The city had around 450,000 people in the 1973/1974 timeframe when "I Will Always Love You" was recorded and released.

When Dolly recorded the song on June 17th, 1973, she collaborated with 15 other musicians and other folks who were all assembled in "RCA Studio B"; we'll get to know them in section "The Artist".¹

Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" was released on March 11th, **1974**, a Monday. This was a little bit more than a month after Dolly released the album that the song was on, "Jolene", which came out on February 4th, 1974. "I Will Always Love You" was the album's second single release after "Jolene" which was released on October 15th, 1973. Legendary country music songwriter and record producer Bob Ferguson is listed as the producer of "I Will Always Love You". A long-time collaborator of Dolly, he produced the whole "Jolene" album, by the way. I'll make sure to introduce you to his remarkable life and career in section "The Artist". "I Will Always Love You", 2 minutes and 53 seconds long, reached the number one spot on the "Billboard Hot Country Songs Chart" in June of 1974.^{1 29 30}

Speaking of 1974, that was the year, that the "Grand Ole Opry House" opened east of downtown Nashville.^{31 32}

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

²⁴ Source 24: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_1973#:~:text=June%2017%2C%201973%20\(Sunday\),-The%201973%20Swedish&text=In%20the%20final%20of%20the,Berry%20off%20Key%20West%2C%20Florida.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_1973#:~:text=June%2017%2C%201973%20(Sunday),-The%201973%20Swedish&text=In%20the%20final%20of%20the,Berry%20off%20Key%20West%2C%20Florida.)

²⁵ Source 25: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnson_Sea_Link

²⁶ Source 26: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973_Swedish_Grand_Prix

²⁷ Source 27: <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/KBNA/date/1973-6-17>

²⁸ Source 28: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nashville,_Tennessee

²⁹ Source 29: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jolene_\(album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jolene_(album))

³⁰ Source 30: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Ferguson_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Ferguson_(musician))

³¹ Source 31: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Nashville,_Tennessee

³² Source 32: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Ole_Opry

Dolly was with “RCA Records”, the label that “I Will Always Love You” was released on, between 1967 when Porter Wagoner convinced the label to sign her and 1986 when the label decided not to renew her contract – despite relatively strong record sales. “RCA Records” was founded by Eldridge R. Johnson and Emile Berliner in 1900 as the “Consolidated Talking Machine Company” and is, at the time of this recording, owned by Sony Music Entertainment, a subsidiary of Sony Corporation of America. Dolly Parton was, especially during the 1980s, one of the most successful acts recording for the label. The company has a long and storied history and was or is the home of some of the most successful artists of all time with names such as Elvis Presley, Kenny Rogers, Barry Manilow, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Alicia Keys, Justin Timberlake, Shakira, Enrique Iglesias or Miley Cyrus on their roster to name just a few.^{33 1 34}

Speaking of the record label: As I mentioned earlier, “I Will Always Love You” was released as number “APB0-0234” on the “RCA Victor” label. It should be mentioned here that the “APB0” series was the first attempt that RCA made to have a consolidated numbering system for singles owned and / or distributed by them. The label used this new system only for a short time between mid-1973 until mid-1974. Why they discontinued it is not really clear but it is assumed that their APL1-typed LP numbering system was too similar. The “APB0” series was replaced by the “PB- xxxx” series.

The prefix “APB0” is actually easy to decipher based on RCA’s information on their prefixes:

- The first letter tells us whether the record is a parent release or a subsidiary or distributed label release – the “A” in this case means it was a parent release by “RCA Victor” itself.
- The second letter represents the label or series – the “P” here stands for “RCA Victor”.
- The third letter represents the format and whether the recording is in mono or stereo – the “B” here stands for “STEREO, 45, RPM, 7-Inch”.
- The fourth letter is usually a “zero” but some sources use an “O” here.

By the way, the record was released with the same number by RCA Victor in Canada and South Africa and by RCA in New Zealand. There was also a promo 7-inch that was released by RCA in the US with number “DJA0-0234”.³⁵

In **1975, Linda Ronstadt** recorded and released “I Will Always Love You” as part of her sixth solo album titled “Prisoner In Disguise” which went on sale on September 15th, 1975. However, Linda’s 3-minute version of the song wasn’t released as a single from the album for which Linda chose songs from friends and songwriters.³⁶

In February of **1982, Dolly Parton** went back to “RCA Studio B” to re-record “I Will Always Love You” for the soundtrack of the movie version of “**The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas**”. This version, produced by Dolly herself and Gregg Perry, was released on July 12th, 1982 and in October 1982, also this version reached the number one spot on the “Billboard Hot Country Songs Chart”. The remake, also released on RCA, which has a more modern and updated instrumentation that is typical for 1980s country music

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

³³ Source 33: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RCA_Records

³⁴ Source 34: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_RCA_Records_artists

³⁵ Source 35: <http://labeldiscographies.blogspot.com/2012/06/test.html>

³⁶ Source 36: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner_in_Disguise

compared to the original version, earned positive reviews by critics. It seems that there are quite a few folks who prefer the 1974 version and there are folks who prefer the 1982 version. If you asked me, I 'd pick the 1974 version. I just love the warm sound of 1970s country music. "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas", by the way, is a live-action musical film starring Dolly Parton and Burt Reynolds.^{1 37}

Dolly Parton's 1982 remake of "I Will Always Love You" was released as a 7-inch single on RCA with catalog number "PB-13260"; it is 3 minutes and 2 seconds long and on the B side of the record is the song "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind" from Dolly's "Heartbreak Express" album which was her 24th solo studio album that she released on March 29th, 1982 and which made it to the number 5 spot of Billboard's "US Top Country Albums".^{38 39}

The 1982 version was not the last one Dolly recorded. In **1995**, she joined forces with **Vince Gill** to record a successful duet of "I Will Always Love You" for her album "Something Special" that features Vince's distinctive and beautiful voice. Released on the "Columbia" label in November of 1995, this one, which was produced by herself and Steve Buckingham, made it to the number 15 spot on the "Billboard Hot Country Singles & Tracks" chart which marked the third time that Dolly herself landed a top 20 hit with the song. Unbelievable.¹

And another duet followed in **2017**: One with **Michael Bolton** that was released on his album "Songs of Cinema". This one is even more beautiful than the 1995 duet, in my opinion, but it wasn't as successful commercially.¹

Soon after "I Will Always Love You" had become such a huge success, **other artists**, who also wanted to record the song, knocked on Dolly's door. While the song was covered numerous times over the years – and I'll mention some examples in section "The Legacy" – there's one noteworthy situation in particular where Dolly said "No". I'm sure she said "no" more than once but this situation here is worth telling because she said "no" to Elvis Presley, the king. Initially, Dolly was not against **Elvis** covering her song but then Colonel Tom Parker, the manager of the king, told her that she would have to sign over half of the song's publishing rights. This is when Dolly said "no". Here's Dolly in her own words: "I said, 'I'm really sorry' and I cried all night. I mean, it was like the worst thing. You know, it's like, oh, my God ... Elvis Presley.' And other people were saying, 'You're nuts. It's Elvis Presley.' I said, 'I can't do that. Something in my heart says, 'Don't do that. And I just didn't do it. He would have killed it. But anyway, so he didn't. Then when Whitney Houston's version came out, I made enough money to buy Graceland.'" ¹

In another interview, she said "I couldn't do it, because I was leaving that for my family, and so I just didn't do it. And Elvis didn't do it. After Whitney recorded it, I realized that that was the best choice." That was an incredibly smart decision by Dolly as the song has been covered numerous times and it reached the top 10 of the charts a couple of times over the years and, since she said "no" to Elvis, all the royalties have gone to her bank account making her an unbelievably wealthy woman.⁴⁰

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

³⁷ Source 37: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Best_Little_Whorehouse_in_Texas_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Best_Little_Whorehouse_in_Texas_(film))

³⁸ Source 38: <http://www.45cat.com/record/pb13260>

³⁹ Source 39: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heartbreak_Express

⁴⁰ Source 40: <https://news.amomama.com/199809-dolly-parton-revealed-why-she-didnt-let.html>

Some say that this cutthroat practice of demanding artists, songwriters, etc. to give up half of their publishing rights and royalties for songs prevented Elvis from getting to record a lot of great songs later in his career. For Dolly and many others, it was proof that selling out one's property isn't the only, and at least, not the best way to be successful. Later she said: "I think stories like that are the reason why younger female artists say I've influenced them."⁴¹

In addition to the artists that wanted to cover the song, I found some information about a situation where Dolly told **Patti Labelle** that she should sing the song as she felt that Patti could have sung it really well. Patti though kept putting it off and eventually regretted not taking action after hearing Whitney Houston's version.¹ That's a good lesson learned. There are opportunities out there you just need to go after. Don't wait. Take action.

Now that we explored the origins and early years of the song, it's time to talk about **Whitney Houston's** record-breaking **cover version** of "I Will Always Love You" which she recorded for the soundtrack of the movie "The Bodyguard" starring herself and Kevin Costner and which was released as a single on November 6th, 1992. It went on to become one of the most successful songs of all time – worldwide that is – spending 14 weeks on top of the "Billboard Hot 100" chart alone. More on its success though in section "Success & Reception". Believe it or not, it was Kevin Costner who suggested to Whitney to use "I Will Always Love You" as she was looking for a lead single for the soundtrack – and especially for the grand finale of the movie – as it had turned out that the song that she had picked originally, Jimmy Ruffin's 1966 Motown ballad "What Becomes of the Brokenhearted", was to be used for the movie "Fried Green Tomatoes" already.¹

Producer legend David Foster remembers: "I called Kevin and feigned sadness, like, "Oh, Kevin, this is such a bummer. We can't use this song now!" He told me to listen to "I Will Always Love You," and that it was the perfect song. So I ran down to a record store in Malibu and bought the Linda Ronstadt version — that was the only one I could find. The minute I heard it, I knew I could make it work with Whitney."⁴²

In another interview, David once said, that at the time he had never heard of "I Will Always Love You" but once he listened to Linda Ronstadt's cover song he said he was "immediately" struck with inspiration.

Kevin played Linda Ronstadt's cover version of "I Will Always Love You" from Linda's 1975 album "Prisoner in Disguise" to Whitney proposing it as a replacement option. Whitney liked and picked it. And Dolly approved it.¹

Dolly once said the following about the situation: "Kevin Costner and his secretary are the ones that loved the song. They had another song that was going to go in that place and someone had recorded the song they were going to use. They were just in a panic at the last minute. And so they asked me about the song. I sent it. I didn't hear anything more."⁴³

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

⁴¹ Source 41: <https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/bp/12-things-didn-t-know-always-love-192744564.html>

⁴² Source 42: <https://ew.com/article/2012/12/14/oral-history-whitneys-anthem-i-will-always-love-you/>

⁴³ Source 43: <https://www.biography.com/news/whitney-houston-dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you>

David Foster used the inspiration he got from listening to Linda Ronstadt's version and made a demo. Here's him describing this in his own words: "I made a demo ... ran to Houston's trailer because I was so excited. I said, 'Whitney, I've got it, I've got it, I've got it' and I played it for her. And, of course her face lit up because she knew and I knew that I had got it" Foster said.⁴⁴

David also said: "I knew immediately that I could kill this song. When you see it in the movie where she's getting on the plane and then she stops and she comes back out and hugs him and you know they're in love but they're never going to be together." Ah, so beautiful.¹⁹

Whitney, together with David Foster, turned "I Will Always Love You" into a soul ballad, drawing from both Dolly Parton's and Linda Ronstadt's versions, and also, they added an acapella introduction which was Kevin Costner's idea.¹

At first, David Foster wasn't a fan of the acapella intro. Later, David said: "I thought using no music at the beginning was a stupid idea. And I hate being wrong, but when you're wrong you got to be wrong big because when you're wrong big, it means you get to be right big, too, and the song certainly ended up being very right". That's an interesting logic. Anyway, gladly, Kevin and also Whitney insisted on keeping the acapella intro.^{1 41 44}

In another interview, David said: "The a cappella part was Kevin's idea. And I was like, 'Kevin, you're a great actor, but that is not a good idea.' But I relented." And record label executive Clive Davis remembers: "Radio approached my promotion team and asked us to take off that a cappella beginning and I absolutely refused. To me, this was magic."⁴²

Speaking of Clive, it seems he wasn't blown away by from the start the idea of using Dolly's song. Kevin Costner later recounted a situation with record company executives including Clive Davis in the room: When I said to Whitney, 'You're gonna sing "I Will Always Love You"' the ground shook. Clive Davis and those guys were going, 'What?!' Kevin insisted as he was a real fan of especially Linda Ronstadt's version of the song and he was convinced that it would be a good fit for both Whitney and the movie.⁴¹

In a 2008 interview, Kevin told the reporter: "I said, 'This is a very important song in this movie.' I didn't care if it was ever on the radio. I didn't care. I said, 'We're also going to do this a cappella at the beginning. I need it to be a cappella because it shows a measure of how much she digs this guy — that she sings without music.'" ⁴³

As soon as Dolly heard that Whitney would record her song, she sent David the final verse which was not part of Linda Ronstadt's version; Dolly felt that the last verse was important to the song.¹

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

¹⁹ Source 19: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/dolly-partons-america/episodes/i-will-always-leave-you>

⁴¹ Source 41: <https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/bp/12-things-didn-t-know-always-love-192744564.html>

⁴² Source 42: <https://ew.com/article/2012/12/14/oral-history-whitneys-anthem-i-will-always-love-you/>

⁴³ Source 43: <https://www.biography.com/news/whitney-houston-dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you>

⁴⁴ Source 44: <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/david-foster-bodyguard-anthem-love-happen/story?id=15577131>

Here's how David remembered the day of the recording during the filming of the movie: "Right before we started, I called Dolly Parton. I told her, 'We're doing your song — I got the Linda Ronstadt version.' And she goes, 'Oh, no! You have to go get my version because there's another verse.' She gave me the lyrics to the final verse over the phone — 'And I wish you joy and happiness' — right before I went downstairs. We had to call an audible at the last minute and make the song, like, 40 seconds longer after the director had already worked it out. But that last verse is so important. Can you imagine the song without that lyric?" What David was referring to here was the fact that he and the rhythm section of the band and the sax player had flown to Miami where "The Bodyguard" movie with Whitney was being shot at the Fontainebleau Hotel where Whitney insisted on singing the song live in the film with the band playing along with her. Since Whitney was filming all day, she could only record the song at midnight. According to saxophonist Kirk Whalum, "she was incredible. Like a laser beam. Like a racehorse — she would just step up to the microphone and go." Rickey Minor, Whitney's musical director and bandleader later said: "Whitney came out, sang the song — I think we did it twice — and what everyone has is the first take." Again, David wasn't happy with the acapella intro at first. But that had all changed the second he saw and heard Whitney sing the song for the movie. Here are his own words: "So Whitney's standing in the ballroom of the hotel, and we're rolling, and she goes, 'If I...' and I was like, 'Oh my God.'" ⁴²

"I was standing beside Whitney's mother and she turned to me and said, 'I don't know who you are and why you are here or what you are to me, but you are witnessing greatness right here.' I don't think she just meant that her daughter was great. She meant that this would be the pinnacle of what she believed what would be her daughter's success and she was right." ^{42 44}

This explains why Whitney recorded two different versions of the song — one for the movie and one for the soundtrack. Because she wanted the movie version to be a live recording with the band playing along with her. The movie version was never released outside of the movie but a lot of fans and music lovers still think that the movie version was superior. Feel free to listen to both and then decide — which one is better in your opinion? ⁴¹

Whitney's studio version of the song "I Will Always Love You" was recorded for its release on CD on April 22nd, 1992 with the help of around 10 of the finest musicians plus engineers in addition to herself and David Foster who produced and arranged the song and also played the keyboards. I'll introduce you to the musicians in section "The Artist". ¹

The song was **recorded** at the "Ocean Way Recording" studio complex which was located at 6000 Sunset Boulevard and 6050 Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood with Whitney's vocals being recorded in studio 2. The main building was built in 1900 and was once the soundstage used by Douglas Fairbanks. Bill Putnam, a famous audio engineer, songwriter, producer, studio designer and businessman who lived from 1920 until 1989 and has been described as "the father of modern recording" bought the building in 1959 as well as

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

⁴¹ Source 41: <https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/bp/12-things-didn-t-know-always-love-192744564.html>

⁴² Source 42: <https://ew.com/article/2012/12/14/oral-history-whitneys-anthem-i-will-always-love-you/>

⁴⁴ Source 44: <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/david-foster-bodyguard-anthem-love-happen/story?id=15577131>

another building nearby and combined them into his “United Western Recorders”. Allen Sides then bought the complex and renamed it to “Ocean Way Recording” in 1988. The building at 6000 Sunset Boulevard was sold in 1999 and from then on operated as “Cello Studios” until 2005; after it changed its ownership and was renovated, it re-opened in 2009 as “EastWest Studios” and has received over 120 Grammy nominations for music recorded there. The remaining “Ocean Way Recording” building was sold and renamed to “United Recording Studios” in 2015; according to the oceanwayrecording.com website, the studio at 6050 Sunset Boulevard is owned and operated by “Hudson Pacific Properties” at the time of this recording. The “Ocean Way Hollywood” studio consisted of four different studios A, B, C and D: Studios A and B could accommodate up to 50 musicians and were designed by Bill Putnam. Studio C was a small multi-purpose mix and edit room. And studio D was a large mix room designed by Allen Sides. Over the years, this studio complex has been one of the most famous and successful in the world where the world’s biggest stars recorded countless famous songs. To give you an idea how big the role they played was, here are just a few examples of albums that were recorded there in addition to “The Bodyguard” soundtrack: Michael Jackson – Thriller, Bad, Dangerous and History, Natalie Cole – Unforgettable, Dr. Dre – 2001, Madonna – Ray of Light, Mariah Carey – Rainbow and Kanye West – Late Registration. Again, this was just a small list of examples. These studios have seen them all: From Elton John to The Rolling Stones, from Bob Dylan to Rod Stewart, from Eric Clapton to AC/DC and from Paula Abdul to Miles Davis. When it comes to music recording on the West Coast of the US, “Ocean Way Recording” as well as their predecessors and successors have been operating out of one of the most acclaimed recording facilities in the world or, in other words, they have been the place to go.^{45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52}

The studios were and are unique when it comes to their sound design, custom equipment such as their collection of microphones, for example, and electronic maintenance. They have won many awards ranging from Grammys for “Best Engineered Record of the Year” – which, by the way, was won for Michael Jackson’s “Bad”, “Dangerous” and “History” – to mixing and recording industry awards like at least five prestigious “Mix Magazine Awards” for “Technical Excellence and Creativity” or short “TEC Awards” which are given to the best recording studio in the entire recording industry.⁵³

In addition, another important thing that made the studios so special was their “vibe”: A balancing relaxed atmosphere with technical proficiency where everyone felt at home. Allen once said: “Rick Rubin, who works here a lot, told me that he wouldn’t work here if I took out the old carpet in the hallway. He really appreciates what this place is all about.”

Despite the sophistication of the equipment and the technical crew, when you went there, you got the feeling that some of the rooms hadn’t been upgraded in decades. And that’s exactly how Allen liked it.⁵²

⁴⁵ Source 45: <https://www.gearslutz.com/board/so-much-gear-so-little-time/887428-ill-always-love-you-w-houston.html>

⁴⁶ Source 46: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocean_Way_Recording

⁴⁷ Source 47: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EastWest_Studios

⁴⁸ Source 48: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Western_Recorders

⁴⁹ Source 49: <https://www.oceanwayrecording.com/about-allen.php>

⁵⁰ Source 50: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Putnam

⁵¹ Source 51: <https://equitech.com/clients/>

⁵² Source 52: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-sep-27-ca-26857-story.html>

⁵³ Source 53: https://evanescencereference.info/wiki/index.php?title=Ocean_Way_Studios

The high temperature in Hollywood, California on April 22nd, 1992 was a pleasant 74 degrees Fahrenheit which was reached at 7pm. It was a cloudy day with a maximum wind speed of 17 miles per hour and a visibility of 50 miles.⁵⁴

Whitney's original US 7-inch single had Arista catalog number 07822-12490-7 and the CD single had number 07822-12503-2. 4 minutes and 31 seconds long, "I Will Always Love You" was the A side of the 7-inch 45RPM single and on the B side was the song "Jesus Loves Me". The CD single had two other songs on it: "Jesus Loves Me" also and "Do You Hear What I Hear?". On both, "I Will Always Love You" is 4 minutes and 31 seconds long. The CD soundtrack for the movie "The Bodyguard" has Arista catalog number 07822-18699-2 and "I Will Always Love You" is the number one track on both the vinyl and the CD album. By the way, the vinyl album has Arista catalog number 07822-18699-1. Clive Davis and Whitney Houston are listed as the Executive Producers for both the single and the soundtrack.⁵⁵

Arista Records, Incorporated was an American record label founded by Clive Davis in 1974. We'll get to know Clive better in section "The Artist".⁵⁶

Whitney's website states her own words regarding recording Dolly's song:

"I think Dolly Parton is a hell of a writer and a hell of a singer. I was so concerned when I sang her song how she'd feel about it, in terms of the arrangement, my licks, my flavor. When she said she was floored, that meant so much to me."⁵⁷

Not only Whitney's version of "I Will Always Love You" is featured in "The Bodyguard" movie, by the way: There's a scene in which Whitney dances with her co-star Kevin Costner where a cover version by punk rock singer John Doe can be heard playing on a jukebox. That version never made it onto the official soundtrack for the film, unfortunately.¹

Dolly, who had given the OK to Whitney covering her song heard Whitney's version for the very first time when she was driving her car sometime in 1992. She later said that it took her a moment to recognize the song as the newly added acapella intro wasn't something she was familiar with. She said "I thought, 'That sounds familiar — 'If I should stay' and it didn't hit me. It was just one of those things where you think, 'What is that?' and, then all of a sudden, when she started singing, 'I will always love you', I just about wrecked the car."⁴³

Dolly once said "When Whitney did 'I Will Always Love You', I mean look what a grand song she made out of that simple, heartfelt, you know, song...it was just amazing. Whitney is the one who took it worldwide and really made it a household word — or song, I should say — so I'll always be thankful to her for that." Also, Dolly acknowledged that she owes to both Kevin Costner and David Foster as well by saying "I really

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

⁴³ Source 43: <https://www.biography.com/news/whitney-houston-dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you>

⁵⁴ Source 54: <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/ca/burbank/KBUR/date/1992-4-22>

⁵⁵ Source 55: <https://www.discogs.com/Various-The-Bodyguard-Original-Soundtrack-Album/release/8696282>

⁵⁶ Source 56: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arista_Records

⁵⁷ Source 57: <https://www.whitneyhouston.com/track/i-will-always-love-you/>

feel like that song belongs to all of us....I thought God was looking out for me, that it was meant to be, because how lucky was I that that got to be such a huge song." ⁴³

In addition to the royalties, Dolly benefitted from Whitney's worldwide success in another way: According to Dolly, it put her "in the forefront as a writer": "I was just a girl with the big hair and big tits and a big personality, but I think that one kind of pointed a finger at me as a serious songwriter and the fact that it did so well. I was so touched and honored by it. That one will stand out in my mind forever." ⁴³

"I Will Always Love You" was played at Whitney Houston's funeral on February 19th, 2012. Dolly described hearing the song there as follows: "It just shattered me to hear that song played under those conditions. I thought my heart was gonna stop. It just pierced me like a knife. It's just — I can't explain that feeling, to think that that was so final for her and that that was my words and my feeling — I would forever be so connected to her." ⁴³

Dolly told the Billboard magazine the following after Whitney died: "Mine is only one of the millions of hearts broken over the death of Whitney Houston, I will always be grateful and in awe of the wonderful performance she did on my song and I can truly say from the bottom of my heart, 'Whitney, I will always love you. You will be missed.'" ⁵⁸

"I Will Always Love You" is a wonderful piece of art that is a prime example of what makes this show so interesting to me. It shows that it takes a number of life paths and destinies of different people to cross as well as coincidences, luck, etc. to end up with a song like "I Will Always Love You" that not only enriched the lives of millions of listeners but also forever changed the trajectory of most of the people involved in the making of the song or its cover versions.

Success & Reception

As I mentioned earlier, Dolly Parton's version of "I Will Always Love You" was a commercial success already as it made it to the number one spot of the "Billboard Hot Country Songs Chart" twice: First the original recording in June **1974** and then again in October **1982** after Dolly re-recorded it for the movie "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas". Reaching the top of the charts with the same song twice is a very, very rare accomplishment. Chubby Checker, for example, had done this before Dolly with his song "The Twist" topping the charts in both 1960 and then again in 1962.¹

Dolly's **1974** version of "I Will Always Love You" was one of the best-selling singles in the US that year and it also reached the number four spot on the Canada "Country Tracks" chart by publication RPM.¹

It was the second of five consecutive number one country hits that Dolly had after leaving Porter Wagoner establishing herself as a solo artist.¹²

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

¹² Source 12: <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/dolly-parton/i-will-always-love-you>

⁴³ Source 43: <https://www.biography.com/news/whitney-houston-dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you>

⁵⁸ Source 58: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/briangalindo/11-fascinating-facts-about-the-song-i-will-always-love-you>

Also, the song helped Dolly win the “Female Vocalist of the Year Award” at the 1975 CMA Awards.¹ However, it wasn’t a worldwide success – yet.

The **1982** version then, in addition to topping the “Billboard Hot Country Songs Chart”, also reached number 53 on the “Billboard Hot 100” chart and number 17 on Billboard's “Adult Contemporary Chart”. In Canada, the song reached number 1 on both RPM’s “Canada Country Tracks” and the “Canada Adult Contemporary” charts and number 8 on RPM’s “Canada Top Singles” chart. Also, it reached number 72 in Australia. At the time, the “Billboard” magazine gave the hit a positive review and said that “The first single from ‘The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas’ isn't the sort of brassy main theme normally used to launch a major movie musical: Here, Dolly reinterprets one of her earliest exercises in pure pop writing and while older fans may be divided over the breathier, more stylized reading she offers here, the song itself is still a lovely ballad with a soaring chorus.” And also “Cashbox” had good things to say about the remake stating that “hoisted over a building arrangement, Parton’s vocals have never been more convincing or moving. The single choice from her Hollywood flick, ‘The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas’, the tune is sentiment wrapped in an appropriate package replete with strings, oboe and harp in addition to a delicate rhythm section.”¹ Still not a worldwide hit – yet.

Linda Ronstadt’s 1975 version of “I Will Always Love You” was not released as a single – it was only track number 10 on her album “Prisoner In Disguise”. Critic Steve Simels wrote in the December 1975 issue of magazine “Stereo Review” that Linda's singing on Dolly’s number was “absolutely gorgeous, full-bodied and intense”. The “Prisoner In Disguise” album, which has been certified Platinum, made it to number 4 on the “Billboard 200 Chart” for albums and it reached number 2 on the “Billboard Top Country Albums Chart”.³⁶ But not every critic shared this opinion: Dave Marsh of the “Rolling Stone” magazine wrote in September of 1975 that while Linda’s voice was a “truly remarkable instrument”, “she has never learned to control” it. He went on to write: “Ronstadt and Parton have similar voices and Ronstadt likes to play that up but she lacks the distinctiveness of Parton’s upper range.”⁵⁹

Dolly’s **1995** duet version of “I Will Always Love You” with Vince Gill reached spot number 15 on the “Billboard Hot Country Singles & Tracks” chart in November of 1995. This marked the third time Parton had a top 20 hit with “I Will Always Love You” which is quite remarkable. Also, their duet was nominated at the 38th Annual Grammy Awards in category “Best Country Collaboration with Vocals” and at the “30th Annual CMA Awards” it was named the “Vocal Event of the Year”. In Canada, the song reached number 22 on RPM’s “Canada Country Tracks” chart. And still not a worldwide hit – yet.¹

It seems that the **2017** duet version with Michael Bolton from his 23rd studio album “Songs of Cinema” wasn’t released as a single. While the duet is a nice one and the album did enter the charts in the US, the UK, Germany, Australia and Scotland, the album wasn’t a real commercial success in any of these countries.¹⁶⁰

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

³⁶ Source 36: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner_in_Disguise

⁵⁹ Source 59: <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-album-reviews/prisoner-in-disguise-94415/>

⁶⁰ Source 60: <https://michaelbolton.com/album/songs-of-cinema/>

At the time of this recording, in addition to record and CD sales, Dolly's song "I Will Always Love You" has accumulated around half a million **digital downloads** since the advent of the internet.¹

Whitney Houston's **1992** version of "I Will Always Love You" undoubtedly became Whitney's "signature song".¹ It was the peak of her career.⁶¹

The single, which was the biggest success of its label "Arista", topped the "Billboard Hot 100" singles chart for 14 weeks, a record at the time. Whitney's previous record was three weeks with "Greatest Love of All" in 1986. "I Will Always Love You" clearly surpassed that and became Whitney's longest run at number one. Not only that, it is also the longest running number one single from a soundtrack album.¹

The song entered the singles chart at number 40 and only two weeks later, it had turned into Whitney's tenth number one hit. In addition to the singles chart, it also topped Billboard's "Hot 100 Airplay (Radio Songs)" chart for 11 weeks, the "Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks" chart for five weeks and the "Hot R&B Singles" chart for 11 weeks becoming the longest running number one on the R&B charts at the time. In total, the song was in the top 40 for 24 weeks. And here's another fact: It was on top of Billboard's "Hot 100", "Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks" and "Hot R&B Singles" charts at the same time for five weeks which equaled the previous record by Ray Charles who topped the same charts at the same time for the same period with his song "I Can't Stop Loving You" in 1962. "I Will Always Love You" broke a couple of records. One of them was that, Billboard didn't rank a new number one single in the US until March of the new year because the song was the number one in the US throughout both January and February of 1993.¹

On to more records now: When Whitney's "I Will Always Love You" was at the top of the US charts in its second week, it sold around 400,000 copies which made it the best-selling song in a single week – a record that was previously held by Bryan Adams with his song "(Everything I Do) I Do It for You". In the three weeks that followed, the single broke its own record again and again and reached its peak in the week ending December 27th, 1992 when it sold 632,000 copies. Never before had a song sold more copies in a single week. Elton John's 1997 version of "Candle in the Wind" later broke this record when it sold 3.4 million copies in the last week of September 1997.¹

"I Will Always Love You" went four times Platinum in the US for over 4 million copies sold which made Whitney the first female artist to reach that level with a single. As sales continued and continue to this very day, the single has become the second best-selling physical single in the US behind Elton John's 1997 version of "Candle in the Wind".¹

Needless to say that, when the year 1993 had ended, Whitney's "I Will Always Love You" was, of course, the year-end single of 1993 in the US. And speaking of year-end charts: The song topped both the 1993 "Billboard Hot 100" and the Billboard "Hot R&B Singles" year-end charts at the same time; this was the first time a female artist had accomplished this and only the second time overall for someone to achieve this - Prince was the first one with his song "When Doves Cry" in 1984.¹

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

⁶¹ Source 61: <https://www.nickiswift.com/211533/the-real-reason-whitney-houston-covered-i-will-always-love-you-by-dolly-parton/>

Finally, Dolly Parton had a worldwide hit. On an international level, Whitney Houston's rendition of "I Will Always Love You" was a hit in many, many countries and it reached the number one spot in almost all of the significant music markets. It topped the "Eurochart Hot 100 Singles" chart for 13 weeks, the UK charts for 10 weeks, the German charts for 6 weeks where it received Platinum for more than 500,000 copies sold, it topped the French charts for 8 weeks, the Italian charts for 2 weeks, the Spanish charts for 1 week, the Austrian charts for 5 weeks, the Swiss charts for 8 weeks, the Irish charts for 8 weeks, the Dutch charts for 6 weeks, the Belgian charts for 7 weeks, the Norwegian charts for 9 weeks, the Swedish charts for 6 weeks, the Australian charts for 10 weeks and the New Zealand charts for 14 weeks. In Japan, the song sold more than 810,000 copies and stayed 27 weeks on the charts and became the best-selling single by a foreign female artist at the time – although it never topped the charts there. Also, the song won the 1994 "International Song of the Year Special Award" for Japanese sales of over one million units.¹

Whitney broke two records in the UK: Her 10 weeks at number one there were the longest number one run by a solo female artist in the history of the British singles chart – a record that held up until 2019. Also, her song was the number one single of 1992 and then was listed in the year end charts again in 1993 – this time on position nine; this marked the first time any artist or group had the same single ranked in the top 10 of the UK's year-end review two years in a row. The song sold over 1,550,000 copies in the UK which made it the tenth best-selling single of the 1990s. There, it received two times Platinum on January 1st, 1993.¹

Since Whitney's "I Will Always Love You" was such a phenomenal success, it entered many "best of" charts over the years: It was placed at number six on "Billboard's" list of the "Top 50 Love Songs of All Time" in February 2014. Also, it ranks number nine on British magazine "NME's" "Greatest Number 1 Singles in History" list. In May 2002, it was ranked at number 22 on "The Guardian's List of Britain's Favorite 100 Songs". In 2004, it was ranked number 65 on the "American Film Institute's" (short "AFI") "AFI's 100 Years...100 Songs" survey of top tunes in American cinema. And in 2015, "I Will Always Love You" was named the "Number One Song of the Rock Era" in the book "The Top 500 Songs of the Rock Era".¹

And to now close this section about Whitney's charts success out with a bang:

By January 2013, her version of "I Will Always Love You" had sold over 20 million copies worldwide which made it the best-selling song by a female artist of all time as well as one of the best-selling songs of all time.¹ It is currently sharing spot number six on the best-selling singles list with "It's Now or Never" by Elvis Presley and USA For Africa's "We Are the World" both of which also sold around 20 million copies worldwide.⁶²

One thing is very clear: Whitney Houston's version of Dolly Parton's song "I Will Always Love You" was one of the commercially most successful and, therefore, greatest hits of all time.

After Whitney's early and tragic death on February 11th, 2012, which we'll examine in section "The Artist", her version of "I Will Always Love You" charted again. It went to the number spot on the iTunes charts and it also entered the "Billboard Hot 100" again almost 20 years after the first time where it peaked at number 3. This was her first top ten hit since 2001.¹

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

⁶² Source 62: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_singles

It also performed well on the “Billboard Digital Song Sales” chart with around 200,000 downloads. The song even returned to the UK charts where it became another top 10 hit for Whitney. Unlike many other sources I found on the web, I’m not gonna claim with a nasty undertone that this made Dolly even richer. It surely did. But I’m sure Dolly would have loved and preferred for Whitney to still be around instead of generating this revenue on top of her wealth. Dolly is and always has been a good person.¹

Whitney’s “I Will Always Love You” earned numerous **awards**.

Here are the US awards it won in 1993 alone:¹

- At the “4th Billboard Music Awards”, the song won in categories
 - “Hot 100 Single of the Year”,
 - “R&B Single of the Year”,
 - “No. 1 Hot 100 Singles Sales”,
 - “No. 1 Hot R&B Singles Sales”,
 - “No. 1 World Single”.

And it won a Special Award in category “Single Most Weeks at No. 1 (14 weeks)”

- At the “7th Soul Train Music Awards”, it won in category “Best R&B/Soul Single, Female”.
- At the “19th People’s Choice Awards”, it won in category “Favorite New Music Video”.

And here are the US awards the song won in 1994:¹

- At the “36th Grammy Awards”, it won in categories “Record of the Year” and “Best Pop Vocal Performance, Female”.
 - None other than Dolly Parton and David Foster presented the Grammy in category “Record of the Year” to Whitney during the Grammys.
 - The Grammy in category “Best Pop Vocal Performance, Female” was Whitney’s third award in this category after earlier awards in 1986 and 1988.
- At the “21st American Music Awards”, the song won in categories “Favorite Pop/Rock Single” and “Favorite Soul/R&B Single”.

This was the first record by a solo female artist to win in both those categories and only the third time overall in “American Music Awards” history for an artist to win in both those categories. The first two records to accomplish this were “Endless Love” by Lionel Richie & Diana Ross in 1982 and “Beat It” by Michael Jackson in 1984.
- At the “8th Soul Train Music Awards”, the song won in category “Best R&B Song of the Year”.

Even the **critics** liked and still like Whitney Houston’s “I Will Always Love You” – let’s now hear from some of them. I always enjoy reading the opinion of music critics.

In Stephen Holdens opinion which he shared in the “The New York Times”, the song was a “magnificent rendition”. He wrote: “Houston transforms a plaintive country ballad into a towering pop-gospel assertion of lasting devotion to a departing lover. Her voice breaking and tensing, she treats the song as a series of emotional bursts in a steady climb toward a final full-out declamation. Along the way, her virtuosic gospel embellishments enhance the emotion and never seem merely ornamental.”¹

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

“The Hollywood Reporter’s” Joe Levy wrote that "the doomed romance of the lyric and the way it's at pains to find good wishes in sadness, fit the interracial Romeo-and-Juliet love story of the film much better. Whitney copped Ronstadt's arrangement – Parton's original is actually much closer to a classic soul ballad - and her power note at the end. But her vocal takes Parton's high-lonesome pain as a jumping-off point and goes wild from there, rounding through operatic technique, blue yodels and gospel before climaxing in pure Elvis-in-Vegas glory. It's almost like a historical tour of American singing – or America itself." ^{61 63}

James T. Jones IV called it a "tour-de-force" in “USA Today” and added "Houston gives a 3 1/2-star out of four performance. Where Dolly Parton's original 'I Will Always Love You' was plaintive and tear-stained, Houston's is gospel-infused and dramatic." ¹

Stewart Mason of “AllMusic” found Houston's cover "repulsively overwrought... so boomingly bombastic and glutinous with self-approration that the tenderness of Dolly Parton's song is lost in the mire".¹

Amy Linden of “Entertainment Weekly” wrote that Houston's version "is artistically satisfying and uncharacteristically hip for the middle of the road songbird." ¹

And Chris Willman of the “Los Angeles Times” wrote: "Houston has the goods to deliver on the tune's haunting beauty and resists overpowering it – until the finale, when the key changes and stratospheric notes drain all the heart-rending sadness out of the song and make it sound like just another anthem of survival." ¹

The **Bodyguard soundtrack** was released by Arista Records on November 17th, 1992. The soundtrack contains 13 songs (except for the German special edition which had two bonus tracks on top) – 6 of which are sung by Whitney Houston. “I Will Always Love You” is the first track on the soundtrack and just like its first track, the whole soundtrack was a huge worldwide charts success. It is the best-selling soundtrack album of all time selling more than 45 million copies worldwide. The soundtrack was the first album to sell more than a million units within a one-week period which was the week ending December 27th, 1992. It won a Grammy Award in category “Album of the Year” and it received 18 times platinum in the US alone for around 13,450,000 units sold as of November 2017 – the number must be even higher by now. The soundtrack for “The Bodyguard” is the 15th best-selling album of all time in the US. ⁶⁴

Whitney Houston, David Foster, Clive Davis and everyone else involved in this project really wrote music history together. Unbelievable.

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

⁶¹ Source 61: <https://www.nickiswift.com/211533/the-real-reason-whitney-houston-covered-i-will-always-love-you-by-dolly-parton/>

⁶³ Source 63: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/earshot/whitney-houston-death-i-will-always-love-you-291466>

⁶⁴ Source 64: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bodyguard_\(soundtrack\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bodyguard_(soundtrack))

One of the many reasons why the song was and remains such a success is the fact that it resonates with listeners as it demonstrates how we'd all like to behave at the end of a loving relationship, which is with dignity and compassion intact, though only few of us are able to reach that high ground at such a low point. Another reason is – as Porter once described the song – "I Will Always Love You" is just the prettiest song you'll ever hear.⁶⁵

Dolly, fully aware of how special her song was and is, once stated: "Of course, 'I Will Always Love You' is the biggest song so far in my career. I'm famous for several but that one has been recorded by more people and made me more money, I think, than all of them. But that song did come from a true and deep place in my heart."¹¹

The Artist

We're now gonna get to know a couple of people who were instrumental in making Whitney's Houston version of "I will Always Love You" a worldwide success.

This doesn't involve only the folks that were directly involved in Whitney's recording of the song. To be able to tell the full story and pay tribute to everyone who deserves it, we have to go back to and include Dolly's first recording of the song in 1974 as well as Linda Ronstadt's cover version from 1975 which ultimately made Kevin Costner suggest to Whitney to use the song for the movie.

Since the focus of this episode is Whitney's hit of the year 1993, we're not gonna explore details around the personnel involved in Dolly's 1982, 1995 and 2017 recordings of "I will Always Love You" as they don't really have anything to do with Whitney's version – at least not directly. But without the original recording of the song in 1974, there would have been no Linda Ronstadt version in 1975 and without no Linda Ronstadt version in 1975, Kevin Costner may not have suggested the song to be used in the soundtrack for the movie "The Bodyguard".

Here's a quick overview of the people we're gonna talk about in this section here along with the context why we're gonna talk about them:

For **Dolly Parton's 1974 original recording** of "I will Always Love You", we're gonna get to know the following people:

First, we're gonna include some information about key people that played a role in Dolly's life with regard to the song such as **Porter Wagoner**, who helped Dolly become known as an artist and whom she wrote "I Will Always Love You" for. Then, **Bob Ferguson**, the producer of Dolly's original "I Will Always Love You" recording and finally **Don Warden**, who became Dolly's manager when they both left Porter Wagoner's show in 1974.

¹¹ Source 11: <http://www.cmt.com/news/1657965/dolly-parton-shares-inspiration-of-i-will-always-love-you/>

⁶⁵ Source 65: <https://americansongwriter.com/lyric-of-the-week-dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you/?nab=1>

Next will be the 15 musicians that recorded the song together with Dolly:¹

- **Jimmy Colvard** – Guitar
- **Chip Young** – Guitar
- **Stu Basore** – Pedal steel guitar
- **Bobby Dyson** – Bass
- **Larrie Londin** – Drums
- **Ralph Gallant** – Drums
- **Buck Trent** – Banjo
- **Bobby Thompson** – Banjo
- **Mack Magaha** – Fiddle
- **Johnny Gimble** – Fiddle
- **Hargus "Pig" Robbins** – Piano
- **Dolores Edgin** – Background vocals
- **Hershel Wiginton** – Background vocals
- **Joe Babcock** – Background vocals
- **June Page** – Background vocals

And of course, we're gonna talk a lot about **Dolly Parton** herself who sang and played the guitar on the song.

For **Linda Ronstadt's 1975 cover version** of "I will Always Love You" from her "Prisoner In Disguise" album, we're gonna get to know the following people:³⁶

- **Linda Ronstadt** – She sang on the song
- **Peter Asher** – The Producer of the album and the song
- **Val Garay** – The engineer for the album and the song
- **Doug Sax** – He mastered the album and the song
- **David Campbell** – String arrangements and conductor
- **Andrew Gold** – Acoustic piano, electric guitar and tambourine
- **Dan Dugmore** – Steel guitar
- **Ed Black** – Electric guitar
- **Russ Kunkel** – Drums
- **Pat Henderson** – Background vocals
- **Julia Tillman Waters** – Background vocals
- **Maxine Willard Waters** – Background vocals

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

³⁶ Source 36: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner_in_Disguise

And then – drum roll – for **Whitney Houston’s 1992 cover version** of “I will Always Love You”, we’re gonna get to know the following people:¹

- **Clive Davis** – The founder of Arista Records, the label that released the song and soundtrack.
- **Allen Sides** – The owner of Ocean Way Recording where the song was recorded.
- The recording engineers – **Bill Schnee**, **Dave Reitzas** who was also the mixing engineer and **Peter J. Yianilos**.
- **Don Grossinger** – He mastered the single
- **Rickey Minor** – Whitney’s musical director and bandleader slash conductor
- **Kirk Whalum** – Saxophone
- **Ronn Huff** – He arranged the strings
- **Neil Stubenhaus** – Bass
- **Ricky Lawson** – Drums
- **Dean Parks** – Guitar
- **Michael Landau** – Guitar
- **Claude Gaudette** – Synthesizer and Synthesizer programming
- **Tony Smith** – Synthesizer and Synthesizer programming
- **Bashiri Johnson** – Percussion
- **Kevin Costner** – who co-starred with Whitney in the movie “The Bodyguard” and who suggested to Whitney to sing “I will Always Love You” in the movie.
- **David Foster** – who arranged and produced the song and the soundtrack for the movie “The Bodyguard”. He also played the keyboards on the song.
- And then, of course, **Whitney Houston** herself – she sang and arranged the vocals – she will have a special section later on as one of the main characters of this episode

As always, if I talk about some folks more than about others than that doesn’t mean that I found some folks more interesting than others but that some just played a bigger role with regard to the story than others or that for some I just found more information on the web than for others.

Let’s get things started with the details about the people behind **Dolly Parton’s original recording** of “I will Always Love You” from the year **1974**.

We’ll start with **Porter Wagoner** who was the inspiration for the song:^{10 66}

Porter was born in West Plains, Missouri, on August 12, 1927 and he died in Nashville, Tennessee, on October 28, 2007 at the age of 80.

Porter was working as a butcher when he had his first band, the “Blue Ridge Boys”. They performed on radio station KWPM-AM out of the butcher shop where Porter was working.

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

¹⁰ Source 10: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porter_Wagoner

⁶⁶ Source 66: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Si_Siman

Si Siman, a country music executive, radio producer, talent agent, songwriter, record producer, television producer and music publisher, hired Porter in 1951 to perform on radio station KWTO in Springfield, Missouri, which helped him secure a contract with the "RCA Victor" label.

Porter's first success came in 1953 when Carl Smith had a hit with his song "Trademark" which was followed by a few hits of his own. From 1955 on, Porter performed the TV show "Ozark Jubilee" in Springfield, Missouri, where he often was a member of the "Porter Wagoner Trio" with Don Warden and Speedy Haworth. 1957 was an important year for Porter as he, together with Don, moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where they joined the "Grand Ole Opry".

Porter's big break came in 1960 when he started to host his own TV show titled "The Porter Wagoner Show" which ran until 1981 and, at the end, had produced 686 episodes. At the height of its success, the show aired in more than 100 TV markets in the US and had over 3 million viewers per episode. Every 30-minute episode was packed with solo performances by Porter, duets with Norma Jean and later Dolly Parton, usually performing duets with Porter, as well as comedic sketches or skits and guests who performed one or two of their own songs. The shows had a friendly and informal feel which, in combination with the great musical performances, made it a huge success at the time.

As we discussed already, Dolly left the show in 1974 and she handed Porter her resignation letter in the form of a song: "I Will Always Love You".

After Dolly's departure, Porter replaced Dolly and also moved his show to the "Opryland USA" park.

After the TV show ended in 1981, Porter continued to produce music and he also formed a girl group named "The Right Combination". In the 1990s then, he was the host of "Opry Backstage" on "The Nashville Network". Porter and Dolly reconciled in the late 1980s and in 2002, it was her who inducted Porter into the "Country Music Hall of Fame".

On May 19th, 2007, Porter was honored by the "Grand Ole Opry" for his 50 years of membership.

I already mentioned this event as it was the one where Dolly sang "I Will Always Love You" for him live on stage. Porter's final album "Wagonmaster" was released on June 5th, 2007 and he even went on a promotion tour for the album during the summer of 2007.

He died from lung cancer in Nashville, Tennessee, on October 28th, 2007. Dolly and his family were by his side when he passed away.

81 of Porter's records charted over the years and here's a small list of his biggest hits:

- "A Satisfied Mind" was a number 1 hit in 1955.
- "Misery Loves Company" was number 1 in 1962.
- "I've Enjoyed as Much of This as I Can Stand" reached number 7 in the 1962 / 1963 timeframe.
- "Sorrow on the Rocks" landed on the number 5 spot in 1964.
- "Skid Row Joe" reached number 3 in the 1965 / 1966 timeframe.
- "The Cold Hard Facts of Life" was a number 2 hit in 1967.
- And "The Carroll County Accident" was also a number 2 hit in the 1968 / 1969 timeframe.

And here's a list of successful duets he sang together with Dolly:

- "The Last Thing on My Mind" in 1967.
- "We'll Get Ahead Someday" in 1968.
- "Just Someone I Used to Know" in 1969.
- "Daddy Was An Old Time Preacher Man" in 1970.
- "Better Move it on Home" in 1971.

- "The Right Combination" in 1972.
- "Please Don't Stop Loving Me", a number 1 hit in 1974.
- And "Making Plans", a number 2 hit in 1980.

And on top of his hits, Porter won three "Grammy Awards" for gospel recordings.

Without, Porters and Dolly's collaboration and, later, Dolly's departure from Porter's show and their professional relationship ending, there would have been no "I Will Always Love You".

The second person we want to shine a light on is **Bob Ferguson** who was the producer of Dolly's original record back then:^{67 68}

He was born as Robert Bruce Ferguson in Willow Springs, Missouri, on December 30th, 1927 and he died of cancer at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi on July 22nd, 2001 at the age of 73.

Bob was a legendary record producer and country music songwriter. Without him, Nashville, Tennessee, would not be the country music capital of the world that it is today. He contributed to country music out of Nashville a lot and, undoubtedly, was one of the main people who actively helped the city achieve this status and the Nashville Sound become famous and successful. In addition, Bob produced movies and he also was a Choctaw Indian historian even earning a Master's degree in anthropology from Vanderbilt University. He wrote and produced hits for a string of artists including Porter Wagoner, who helped Dolly Parton become a successful artist, and later also for Dolly herself.

Bob got his start in the music business while producing films for the "Tennessee Game and Fish Commission" and wrote his first big hit in 1958 titled "Wings of a Dove " which was turned into a million-seller by singer Ferlin Husky.

After graduating from college, Bob became the manager of Ferlin Husky and so he moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where he became a senior producer with "RCA Victor" and an executive assistant to legendary musician, occasional vocalist, songwriter, and record producer Chet Atkins helping to create the "Nashville Sound" of the 1950s and 1960s.

At "RCA", Bob focused on producing Porter Wagoner's acts which included – of course – Dolly Parton and so it is no surprise that he ended up producing almost all of Dolly's and Porter's duet albums as well as their solo releases between 1967 and 1975. This all started when Bob was present when Dolly signed her initial recording contract with "RCA" in 1967.

He worked at "RCA Studio B" in Nashville for almost 30 years and produced hundreds of records in this timeframe including Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You".

Neither Nashville would have become what it is today nor Dolly's career would have blossomed the way it has without legendary songwriter and record producer Bob Ferguson behind the scenes.

In addition to Bob's career in the music industry, he volunteered as the Project Director and President of the Southeastern Indian Antiquities Survey, a role in which he oversaw the survey, recovery and preservation of remains and artifacts unearthed during construction in the Nashville area.

⁶⁷ Source 67:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Ferguson_\(musician\)#:~:text=Robert%20Bruce%20Ferguson%20\(December%2030,producer%2C%20and%20Choctaw%20Indian%20historian.\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Ferguson_(musician)#:~:text=Robert%20Bruce%20Ferguson%20(December%2030,producer%2C%20and%20Choctaw%20Indian%20historian.))

⁶⁸ Source 68: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chet_Atkins#Signing_with_RCA_Victor

After Bob had retired from RCA, he and his family moved to live near the reservation of the “Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians” in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where he would help establish the “Museum of the Southern Indian”, also known as the “Choctaw Museum”, among many other things.

Then, we should talk about **Don Warden** a little bit, who was Dolly’s manager at the time:^{19 69 70}

Country musician and manager Don Warden was born in Mountain Grove, Missouri on March 27th, 1929 and he died on March 11th, 2017 at the age of 87. Don was best known for his years on “The Porter Wagoner Show” and as the manager of Porter and Dolly. Don was actually not only Porter’s right-hand man but also his best friend. He was the man in the music business Porter trusted the most. When Don decided to also leave Porter’s show after Dolly left, Porter’s heart was broken. After Don died, Dolly said: “A huge piece of my life is gone. Rest in peace Don and know for sure that I will always love you.” On her website, Dolly added that Don was “like a father, a brother, a partner and one of my best friends.”

Don was a self-taught slide steel guitar player who started his first own band “The Rhythm Rangers” during his high school years. In addition to this, Don had an afternoon radio show on “KWPM-AM” in West Plains, Missouri. The band soon became popular but in 1951, Don joined the US Army for two years. After that, he and the band continued to play until Red Sovine, whom they had been backing, left for Nashville. Don then moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he attended flight school and played local clubs in his spare time. Don met Porter Wagoner at “KWTO-AM” in Springfield, Missouri, while spending some time in West Plains to visit his parents. The two founded the “Porter Wagoner Trio” which also included Speedy Haworth. After local TV appearances and joining the “Grand Ole Opry” together in 1957, 1960 was the year things took off in a major way when “The Porter Wagoner Show” show launched its long and successful run on national TV. Dolly joined the show in 1966 and stayed until 1974 when Don became her full-time manager – a position he held until he died.

Next up, the **musicians** of the **1974** original recording of “I Will Always Love You”. You’ll see shortly that this was a group of the finest country musicians of all time most of which were members of a tight knit Nashville music family and some of them members of a group of the best of the best known as the “A Team” in Nashville.

- We’ll start with **Buck Trent** – lead guitar:^{19 71 72 73 74}
 - Country music instrumentalist Charles Wilburn “Buck” Trent was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, on February 17th, 1938. He plays the electric bass, the guitar, the steel guitar, the mandolin, the five-string banjo and the dobro resonator guitar. And, last but not least, he invented the electric banjo which is an instrument shaped like a steel guitar that features a mobile bridge used to change the pitch.

¹⁹ Source 19: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/dolly-partons-america/episodes/i-will-always-leave-you>

⁶⁹ Source 69: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Warden

⁷⁰ Source 70: <https://www.steveharveyfm.com/content/2017-03-14-dolly-partons-longtime-manager-dies/>

⁷¹ Source 71: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buck_Trent

⁷² Source 72: <https://tidal.com/browse/credits/6038355>

⁷³ Source 73: <https://bucktrent.com/contact/>

⁷⁴ Source 74: https://bransontrilakesnews.com/news_free/article_a4c17e90-e479-11e9-afee-db5bd361a085.html

Buck started to perform on radio shows when he was a kid and arrived in Nashville in 1959 where he played in various shows and bands. One of those bands was Porter Wagoner's "Wagon Masters" which Buck was a member of between 1962 and 1973.

Buck is the one who played the lead guitar on Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" and he also contributed to her classic hit "Jolene".

In addition to the TV shows and other people's records Buck appeared on, he also recorded his own albums; one of those was "Bionic Banjo" in 1976, for example.

Buck recorded on his own Buck Trent label from the 1980s on and, for a very long time, continued to release records and play live gigs with the "Buck Trent Country Music Show" at the "Branson Famous Theatre" in Branson, Missouri as his home base.

Buck, a true music lover, has never been in it for the money as he once explained:

"I've never done this for the money. I've never hit one note for the money. I worked for Porter Wagoner for 12 years and we always just split the money, because that isn't what we were doing it for. I did 650 shows with Porter, and that is just amazing." About stars like Dolly Parton, "Pretty Miss Norma Jean" Beasler and Jeannie Seely that he played with, he said: "I was able to play on a bunch of their hit records, and even a few of Dolly's bigger hits. I played on 'Coat of Many Colors,' 'Jolene' and 'I Will Always Love You.' I get a nice little check every once in a while from that one."

Buck was actually the key musician and band leader in Porter Wagoner's band and he left to work with Roy Clark's show at the same time when Dolly left Porter who was then pretty much capsized after all those years of being the king. His ego was bruised and his heart was broken.

- Next – **Jimmy Colvard**, guitar:^{75 76 77}
 - There's not a whole lot of information online about Jimmy but I'm more than happy to share what I've found to ensure that Jimmy's name and his contribution to one of the most successful songs of all time won't be forgotten.

Jimmy Colvard was born around 1943 in, what it seems like, Minnesota and he sadly took his own life in 1977 in Nisswa, Minneapolis.

As a teenager, he lived in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he was doing package shows as early as 1958. He was considered to be the best player around. Over the years, Jimmy played with different bands and in different shows.

At one point, Jimmy founded his own band, the "Jimmy Colvard Trio" together with Orlo and Marvis Thompson.

From around the mid or late 1960s on and at least into the mid-1970s, he and his wife Laura lived in Hermitage, Tennessee, on the outskirts of Nashville which allowed him to play several sessions a day there and he also continued to go on the road. Jimmy was a busy session guitarist and an innovative musician who played a certain popping sound in the early 1960s that became famous shortly after as a significant element of trucker country music; you can clearly hear that popping guitar sound in the 1963 version of the

⁷⁵ Source 75: <http://hillbillycountry.blogspot.com/2013/02/jimmie-colvard-six-strings-on-road.html>

⁷⁶ Source 76: <https://bb.steelguitarforum.com/viewtopic.php?p=933229>

⁷⁷ Source 77: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ys8cnTARIU>

song "Six Days on the Road" by Dave Dudley, by the way, which he played the lead guitar on and which peaked at number 2 on Billboard's "Hot Country Singles" chart where it stayed for two weeks; also, it reached number 32 on Billboard's "Top 100" chart.

Sadly, Jimmy never got the recognition he would have deserved.

Again, it was hard to put together Jimmy's life path on a very high level based on the limited resources available online and I hope I got more things right than wrong there.

Next – **Chip Young**, guitar:^{78 79}

- Chip Young was a session guitarist, record producer and engineer operating out of Nashville, Tennessee, who was born as Jerry Marvin Stembridge in Atlanta, Georgia on May 19th, 1938 and died on December 20th, 2014 at St. Thomas Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, at the age of 76 almost a month after undergoing triple-bypass surgery. Chip started his career under the wings of country legends Jerry Reed and Chet Atkins. He was famous for his thumb-style guitar picking chops and he can be heard on a lot of recordings he did with famous artists such as Kris Kristofferson, Rita Coolidge, Reba McEntire, Waylon Jennings or Willie Nelson. Chip was one of the busiest and most productive session musicians the country has ever seen. He even worked with Elvis Presley – first in 1956 where he played on the album "Elvis" and then as a member of Elvis' studio band from 1965 to 1977. And as a producer, he also worked with famous folks like Jimmy Buffet, Reba McEntire and others.

In an interview after Chip's death, his son, Bobby Bare Jr., who is a singer-songwriter, said "Just try and imagine Dolly Parton's 'Jolene' without Chip Young's thumb. It's impossible. Chip was one of the best, hardest-working session picker / producer / engineers Nashville has ever seen. But he was even better at being a granddad, family man and a Christian. His family will miss him dearly."

According to guitarist Chris Scruggs, Chip "was a quintessential Nashville Cat and a true southern gentleman" and a "master of his craft yet was without any hint of ego or self-importance, which made him an invaluable asset in the studio, both behind the board and in the band. Younger players could learn a lot from him, both musically and on a personal level, too. His superb musicianship and warm smile be sorely missed."

Cliff was inducted into the "National Thumbpickers Hall of Fame" in 2009 and in 2010, he was honored as part of the "Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's Nashville Cats: A Celebration of Music City Musicians" series.

Chip Young – another gifted musician who not only helped put Nashville on the map but contributed to making country music to what it is today.

⁷⁸ Source 78:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chip_Young#:~:text=Chip%20Young%20\(May%2019%2C%201938,primarily%20out%20of%20Nashville%2C%20Tennessee.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chip_Young#:~:text=Chip%20Young%20(May%2019%2C%201938,primarily%20out%20of%20Nashville%2C%20Tennessee.)

⁷⁹ Source 79:

<https://www.nashvillescene.com/music/article/13057379/chip-young-legendary-nashville-session-guitarist-and-producer-dies-at-76>

Next – **Stu Basore**, pedal steel guitar:⁸⁰

- Stuart H. Basore, known as "Stu", was born at Fort Monroe, Virginia on May 3rd, 1937 and he died on February 05th, 2018 in Nashville at the age of 80 from complications of dementia. During his youth, he travelled the world and the US as an Army brat before he eventually settled in Aurora, Colorado. After his time in the US Air Force between 1956 and 1960, Stu moved to Nashville in 1963 where he would follow his dream and passion of playing music after having started to play the steel guitar at the age of 11. He also played the Dobro, by the way. In addition to his contributions to "I Will Always Love You", Stu also played the steel guitar on Dolly's other megahit "Jolene"; and in addition to Dolly, he worked with many, many great artists over the years such a Tex Ritter, Kitty Wells and Johnny Wright to name a few. Also, he was on the "Porter Wagoner Show" where he worked with both Dolly and Porter. Stu wasn't limited to country music – he made commercial "jingles", movie soundtracks, recorded with the legendary Louis Armstrong and even toured with the alternative rock band "Ween", for example. In 2005, he received the "Reunion of Professional Entertainers (ROPE) Lifetime Achievement Award in Country Music". Stu was a Nashville icon.

● Next – **Bobby Dyson**, bass:^{81 82 83 84}

- Bass player Bobby Dyson was born Robert L. Dyson in Dalhart, Texas, on May 19th, 1934 and he died at Nashville's Baptist Hospital on March 6th, 1997 after a stroke. At some point, Bobby, who also played the steel guitar and sang, moved to Nashville and he can be heard on numerous hits by Dolly, Porter Wagoner, Jerry Reed, Waylon Jennings, Jim Reeves, Kris Kristofferson and many others. For example, he played on the Jerry Reed classic "You got the Goldmine, I got the Shaft". Also, he reportedly was the first musician to play an electric bass at the Grand Ole Opry. Bobby played a flat wound string Jazz bass with a thumb pick and sometimes his fingers. One of his daughters said: "My father loved Jazz but made his living traveling in bands all over, playing Western Swing and Country as they called it back in those days. The two were not linked as they are today. He eventually made his living apart from us in Nashville, Tennessee, as one of the "Super Pickers" of the Nashville studio scene. He played bass on over 400 number one country records. My father, Bobby Dyson, was the father from afar, whom I knew through the hit songs he played on." Then, she lists a few examples and goes on to say "He played on all of Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton records, Mickey Gilley, and of course countless custom sessions. He passed in 1997 but his bass lives on in his legacy."

⁸⁰ Source 80: <https://obits.tennessean.com/obituaries/tennessean/obituary.aspx?n=stuart-h-basore-stu&pid=188106755&fhid=3981>

⁸¹ Source 81: <https://www.rolandnote.com/people/timeline/Bobby+Dyson>

⁸² Source 82: https://rateyourmusic.com/artist/bobby_dyson/credits/

⁸³ Source 83: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/161582946/bobby-dyson>

⁸⁴ Source 84: <https://www.talkbass.com/threads/bobby-dyson.419412/>

Next – **Larrie Londin**, drums:⁸⁵

- Larrie Londin was a stage name and the man behind it was Ralph Gallant who was born in Norfolk, Virginia, on October 15th, 1943 and died in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 24th, 1992 at the young age of 48. Larrie was one of the finest drummers you can imagine and I'm sure you already heard him play on some of the many records he played. You must have as he played on more hits than any other drummer before or after him except for drummer legend Hal Blaine. Larrie, a largely self-taught genius who practiced eight to twelve hours a day, started playing the drums when he was 15. He signed with "Motown" under the "VIP" label and was, together with his brother Eugene, as members of "The Headliners" the first white act signed to Motown. After Motown came Nashville where Larrie became country music's top studio drummer. Larrie couldn't read music or notes and so he developed a system of "stick charts" that he used to remind himself of approaches to certain songs for which he was contracted as a session drummer. Larrie once said that those "stick charts" were common among Nashville session drummers but not widely known or understood otherwise. He eventually acquired a basic knowledge of music theory and music charts but that was it. Remarkable. Here are a few examples of the top artists he worked with during his career – that's mind blowing: Diana Ross, The Supremes, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Smokey Robinson, Wilson Pickett, Lionel Richie, Carpenters, Jerry Lee Lewis, Porter Wagoner, B. B. King, Jerry Reed, Journey and Steve Perry to name a few. Larrie even worked with Elvis Presley and in addition to records, he played the last two concerts Elvis gave before he died – one in Cincinnati and the other one in Indianapolis. Sadly, Larrie suffered a heart attack on April 24th, 1992 and then died after four months in a coma. Larrie Londin, one of the greatest drummers who ever lived and a really, really nice guy on top of that.

● Next – **Bobby Thompson**, banjo:^{86 87 88 89 90 91}

- Born Robert Clark Thompson in Converse, South Carolina, right outside of Spartanburg, South Carolina, on July 5th, 1937, Bobby Thompson was a banjoist and guitarist who recorded songs with many famous artists such as Johnny Cash, Perry Como, Neil Young, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Buffet, Elvis Presley and others during his time as a first class session musician in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. He was a gifted, brilliant and innovative rhythm guitarist and banjo player that isn't really known much beyond the circles of musicians involved in the records he contributed to or the die-hard music lovers who appreciate his craft. In the late 1950s, as a member of the "Jim & Jesse's Virginia Boys" band, Bobby played on the recordings of bluegrass music duo "Jim & Jesse" that they did for the "Starday" record label and which included instrumentals like "Border Ride" that are early examples of

⁸⁵ Source 85: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larrie_Londin

⁸⁶ Source 86: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobby_Thompson_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobby_Thompson_(musician))

⁸⁷ Source 87: <https://www.nashvillescene.com/arts-culture/article/13011840/bobby-thompson-19372005>

⁸⁸ Source 88: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl_Scruggs

⁸⁹ Source 89: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Monroe

⁹⁰ Source 90: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11007763/bobby-thompson>

⁹¹ Source 91: <http://www.cmt.com/news/1484667/tribute-planned-for-hee-haw-banjo-ace-bobby-thompson/>

Bobby's alternative style which was different from the foundational bluegrass banjo style of Earl Scruggs who popularized a three-finger banjo picking style, now called the "Scruggs style". Bobby instead modified the standard three-finger "roll" of the right hand to catch more melody notes. By creating his "melodic" style of 5-string banjo playing, Bobby, didn't have to sacrifice melodic detail in favor of rhythmic drive like Earl was sometimes forced to do. Bobby's style enabled a more precise rendering of fiddle tunes and eventually led to a more intricate and far-reaching playing. Unfortunately, Bobby's technique wouldn't become known as the "Bobby Style" or the "Thompson Style". No, it is today known as the "Keith Style". The reason for that is that Bobby was drafted into military service in the early 1960s and then a guy named Bill Keith arrived on the music scene who would play with mandolinist, singer and songwriter Bill Monroe – known as the "Father of Bluegrass". That Bill Keith played the banjo using Bobby's style and folks who weren't aware of the fact that Bill was using Bobby's style named his technique "Keith Style". Sure, musicians in Nashville knew that it was Bobby who invented that style. Earl Scruggs, for example, said in an interview: "I think Bobby has done a lot for the banjo. He was the first one to play that style of banjo. And there has never been anyone to top him."

Also, Bobby was a cast member of the "Hee Haw" television show where his banjo was a key part of the TV show's theme song and so was his rather stoic demeanor which contrasted his counterpart, Roy Clark. In addition to this, he was a member of "Barefoot Jerry", Bill Monroe's "Bluegrass Boys". But it was Bobby's role as a session musician that introduced him to millions of people without many of those even knowing his name. He played as many as 15 studio sessions a week on both the banjo and the guitar which he added to his repertoire in the late 1960s. Hundreds and hundreds of recordings with his blistering chromatic banjo style are Bobby's legacy. Bobby, a member of the "Country Music Hall of Fame", retired in 1987 due to Multiple Sclerosis and died in Franklin, Tennessee, on May 18th, 2005 at the age of 67.

Next – **Mack Magaha**, fiddle.^{92 93 94 95}

- Bluegrass fiddler Mack Magaha was born in South Carolina on August 1st, 1929 and he died at Nashville's Veterans Hospital on August 15th, 2003 at the age of 74. For nine years, he was a backup player in the bluegrass band "Reno and Smiley" which he joined as a member of the "Reno and Smiley Tennessee Cutups" and in 1964, Mack joined Porter Wagoner's band, the "Porter Wagoner's Wagonmasters". Mack wrote the popular song "I know You're Married But I Love You Still" together with Don Reno which was recorded by "Reno & Smiley" and many others later on. Mack actually wrote one of Porter's and Dolly's first duet hits "We'll Get Ahead Someday" which was a top-ten country single in 1968. After that, in the 1970s and 1980s, he was a regular performer at the "Opryland USA" theme park where he had his own show.

Mack was known as "Nashville's Dancing Fiddle Man" because, just like Curly Ray Cline, he had a fiery stage presence doing dancelike movements while he was fiddling.

⁹² Source 92: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mack_Magaha

⁹³ Source 93: <http://www.cmt.com/news/1476968/funeral-services-held-for-fiddler-mack-magaha/>

⁹⁴ Source 94: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/mack-magaha-mn0000224877/biography>

⁹⁵ Source 95: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/132021085/mack-magaha>

He could often be seen dancing behind Porter Wagoner and / or Dolly Parton on Porter Wagoner's TV show which was quite entertaining. Check it out online – it's really great to watch. Porter Wagoner once described Mack like this: "He was a ball of fire out there. He was a first-class showman." As a longtime member of the Porter Wagoner show, Mack played a big role in helping country music reach mainstream America. At that time, he was probably the most famous fiddler in country music. He was just a joy to watch. Mack retired after a stroke that he suffered in 1986.

Next – **Johnny Gimble**, fiddle:⁹⁶

- The second fiddle was played by John Paul Gimble, better known as Johnny Gimble, who was born in Tyler, Texas, on May 30th, 1926 and died in Dripping Springs, Texas, on May 9th, 2015 at the age of 88. Johnny picked up the fiddle when he was 12 and played in a band with his brothers. After serving in the US Army in World War 2, Johnny made his first recording in 1948 when he played with Robert Bro's "Rhythmairs" in Corpus Christi, Texas. He then joined and toured with "Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys" for a number of years. Johnny got married and settled in Dallas, Texas, in 1949 where he did radio and television shows with Bill and Jim Boyd (of the "Lone Star Cowboys"); there, in the early 1950s, he also performed on "The Big D Jamboree", a weekly variety show broadcast live from the "Dallas Sportatorium". Between 1951 and 1953, Johnny had his own band but he eventually reunited with Bob Wills with whom he remained until the early 1960s. If you happen to hear the 1952 number one hit "I'll Go On Alone" by Marty Robbins, note that Johnny played the fiddle there – and what a fine fiddle it was. He even ran a barber shop at the regional VA Hospital in Waco, Texas, in the mid-1950s. It was never boring with Johnny and so in 1960, he started to host one of the first locally produced television shows on "KWTX" named "Johnny Gimble & the Homefolks". The year was 1968 when Johnny's family and peers encouraged and finally convinced him to move to Nashville, Tennessee, where his long and successful career as a session musician blossomed working with numerous A-list artists in the country music business. He also recorded 10 solo albums over the years and even toured worldwide with Willie Nelson between 1979 and 1981. Johnny remained busy and involved with regard to movie, TV and radio appearances as well as working with bands and solo artists. He even worked with 21st century artists such as Carrie Underwood with whom he performed at the "49th Annual Grammy Awards" in 2007 where she won a "Grammy" in category "Best New Artist". Johnny Gimble – one of the greatest fiddlers of all time.

⁹⁶ Source 96: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Gimble

- Next – **Hargus "Pig" Robbins**, piano:^{97 98 99}

- Hargus Melvin "Pig" Robbins was born in Spring City, Tennessee, on January 18th, 1938 and he's been playing the piano since he was seven years old.

On top of his classical piano lessons while attending the "Tennessee School for the Blind" in Nashville, Hargus taught himself chords and rhythmic styles of Dixieland Jazz, Blues, Boogie Woogie and Country Music by listening to artists such as Ray Charles on the radio and on records. His first major recording session was the one for "White Lightning" by George Jones and many, many more followed over the years especially after he gained the attention of producers Chet Atkins and Owen Bradley who worked with him to have him back singers and performers on countless hit recordings.

Hargus, who is blind since an accident involving his father's knife when he was only four years old, was a member of the "A Team", a group of Nashville studio musicians that has played with all the greats ranging from Kenny Rogers to Bob Dylan, from Loretta Lynn to Mark Knopfler and from Joan Baez to John Denver. In addition to being one of the premier session musicians in the US, he recorded eight studio albums between 1963 and 1979. Hargus was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame on October 21st, 2012.

Some call him the most famous piano player you've never heard of, though you've likely heard his work. That's a very good description. In case you wondered, Hargus received his lifelong nickname "Pig" in school. Once he explained: "I had a supervisor who called me that because I used to sneak in through a fire escape and play when I wasn't supposed to, and I'd get dirty as a pig."

Two things in particular made Hargus such a great pianist: The ability to memorize songs quickly as well as his talent for inventing licks that perfectly suited the song he was playing. He said: "If you're going to be a good player, you have to come up with something that will complement the song and the singer." So true.

Hargus received the "Country Music Association Instrumentalist of the Year Award" in 1976 and in 2000 and he was inducted into the "Country Music Hall of Fame" in 2012.

I always wondered how Hargus lost his eyesight and I just recently discovered an interview where he explained it: He said that he accidentally jabbed his father's knife into an eye. And after the eye was removed by a doctor, "the other one went out from what they call 'sympathetic infection'".

⁹⁷ Source 97: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hargus_%22Pig%22_Robbins

⁹⁸ Source 98: <https://blogs.loc.gov/nls-music-notes/2018/06/nashville-sound-hargus-pig-robbins/>

⁹⁹ Source 99: <https://www.namm.org/library/oral-history/hargus-pig-robbins>

Next – **Dolores Edgin**, background vocals:^{100 101 102 103 104 105 106}

- Dolores Dinning Edgin was a session singer, songwriter and a member of the four-member vocalist group “The Nashville Edition” consisting of two males and two females that she helped form and that worked on almost every country music album in the 1960s and 1970s. Sometimes, the quartet was singing at four recording sessions a day. Those were busy times for them. Dolores sang background on a huge number of songs for stars like Elvis, Hank Snow, Porter Wagoner, George Jones, Waylon Jennings, Jerry Lee Lewis and many more. She was one of nine kids born into a musical family who worked in Kentucky, Kansas and Oklahoma in the 1920s and 1930s and she started out in the music business when she was a teenager; Dolores and some of her siblings got their start on a radio show in Chicago where the family had moved to in 1939. Her sisters Lucille (also known as Lou) and twins Eugenia (also known as Jean) and Virginia (also known as Ginger) formed “The Dinning Sisters” and became members of the cast of the “National Barn Dance” on radio station WLS in Chicago in 1941. In 1945, they began making records for Capitol and when Lou quit the group in 1949, the teenage Dolores became an official member of “The Dinning Sisters”. Dolores then moved to Nashville where the country music industry embraced her wonderful vocals by turning her into one of the most successful studio singers. As part of her session music work, Dolores joined vocal group “The Nashville Edition”, which also was the in-house backup vocalist group for the popular country music TV show “Hee Haw” for 25 years between 1968 and 1993. Dolores actually founded “The Nashville Edition” together with Joe Babcock, Hershel Wiginton and Ricki Page. First, they were the “Town and Country Singers” but they had to change their name due to trademark issues. Also, Dolores filled in as one of the “LaDell Sisters” on the “Grand Ole Opry” during the 1950s. Dolores died on June 17th, 2015 at the age of 86.

¹⁰⁰ Source 100: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/dolores-edgin-obituary?pid=175107506>

¹⁰¹ Source 101: <https://obits.tennessean.com/obituaries/tennessean/obituary.aspx?n=dolores-dinning-edgin&pid=175107506&fhid=14062>

¹⁰² Source 102: https://rateyourmusic.com/artist/dolores_edgin/credits/

¹⁰³ Source 103: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hee_Haw

¹⁰⁴ Source 104: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2017/03/07/nashville-edition-bass-singer-hurshel-wiginton-dies-79/98866328/>

¹⁰⁵ Source 105: <https://iwesternmusic.org/performer-detail.php?901>

¹⁰⁶ Source 106: <https://musicrow.com/2015/06/lifenotes-nashville-edition-founder-delores-dinning/>

Next – **Hershel Wiginton**, background vocals:¹⁰⁷

- Hershel Wayne Wiginton was another member of “The Nashville Edition”. He was born in Hamilton, Alabama, on January 28th or 29th 1938 and he died in Carthage, Tennessee, on March 6th, 2017 at the age of 79. Hershel began singing at the “Poplar Log Free Will Baptist Church”, which was located right next door from where his family lived, at an early age. He graduated from high school in 1956 and then worked in Florence, Alabama, Muscle Shoals, Alabama where, for example, he sang background vocals on Percy Sledge’s classic “When a Man Loves a Woman” as well as Memphis, Tennessee. After moving to Nashville in 1965, the bass singer was a founding member of “The Nashville Edition” and as such also a mainstay at the “Hee Haw” country music TV show and a very busy session musician who played with stars like Elvis, Hank Snow, Porter Wagoner, George Jones, Waylon Jennings, Jerry Lee Lewis and many more. Hershel actually had to convince his fellow vocal group members to do the TV show. He said: “I had to talk them into it because they were afraid they would miss so many sessions. I said, 'I've got a feeling about this show, OK? Let's do it.' And they all agreed. Of course, 25 years later, it turned out to be a pretty good show”. “The Nashville Edition” appeared on an estimated 12,000 recordings between the 1960s and the early 1990s. That’s mind-blowing, isn’t it. They received “Super Pickers Awards” from the “National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences” in 1975, 1977 and 1978. After his death, one of his kids said about Hershel: “People just fell in love with him when they met him. He never met a stranger, even late in his life. It seemed wherever we went in town, somebody knew him. Up until the last three years or so, he was still going out, singing karaoke and just being one of the guys.” And fellow group member Joe Babcock once described Hershel as follows: “Hershel was very creative; he was known as 'Commercial Hershel’”.

¹⁰⁴ Source 104: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2017/03/07/nashville-edition-bass-singer-hurshel-wiginton-dies-79/98866328/>

¹⁰⁷ Source 107: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/177094145/hurshel-wayne-wiginton#:~:text=Singer%2FMusician%2C%20Born%20in%20Hamilton,at%20a%20very%20young%20age>

Next – **Joe Babcock**, background vocals:^{108 109 110 111 112}

- And here's another founding member of "The Nashville Edition": Joe Babcock, who was born in Nebraska and landed, after serving in the US Army and staying in Chicago and the West Coast, in Nashville, Tennessee, working with singer, songwriter, actor, multi-instrumentalist and NASCAR racing driver Marty Robbins as well as country music group "Tompall & The Glaser Brothers".

Joe recorded a number of famous works such as "Devil Woman," "Among My Souvenirs," "El Paso City" and the Western album "Return of the Gunfighter". Joe was also a writer: His song "I Washed My Hands in Muddy Water", for example, that was also recorded by Elvis Presley, was a hit for Stonewall Jackson.

"Cowboy Joe", as he was known, eventually started the vocal group "The Nashville Edition" together with Hershel Wiginton – a group that would be involved in around 180 number one songs, including "If We Make it Through December" by Merle Haggard, "Pure Love" by Ronnie Milsap, "Rose Garden" by Lynn Anderson, "Behind Closed Doors" by Charlie Rich, to name just a few.

As of 2016, Joe and "The Nashville Edition" have worked, collectively or individually, either on records, road shows or TV, with 110 out of the 127 members of the "Country Music Hall of Fame".

Joe provided the vocal backing for "Amazing Grace" by Elvis Presley and he also worked on the soundtrack for the Elvis Presley movie "Tickle Me".

In addition to supporting the "Hee Haw" TV show with "The Nashville Edition", Joe was also a member of the "Hee Haw Gospel Quartet" since Buck Owens left the show and later, he also sang with "The Hee Haw Cowboy Quartet" which was a group that Joe created as a tribute to his idols Roy Rogers and the "Sons of the Pioneers" as well as Gene Autry. In the 1980s, Joe teamed up with his wife Carol and his daughter Lorrie to form "Cowboy Joe and the Babcocks" – a group that would earn numerous country gospel awards as well as record successful cowboy and bluegrass albums.

Joe remained active well into the 2000s and in addition to recording and touring with his band "Trail Jazz", he earned a "Best Pure Country Song" award from the "Academy of Western Artists" in 2007 and a "Western Swing Album" award by the "Roots Music Association" in 2016 for his Western swing album "Trail Jazz".

¹⁰⁵ Source 105: <https://iwesternmusic.org/performer-detail.php?901>

¹⁰⁸ Source 108: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marty_Robbins

¹⁰⁹ Source 109: <https://tonyrollo.com/2018/06/cowboy-joe-babcock-is-alive-and-well-a-legacy-of-the-past-nashville-music-industry/>

¹¹⁰ Source 110: <https://keepinittruecountry.com/cowboy-joe-babcock-swingtown-2018/>

¹¹¹ Source 111: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/joe-babcock-mn0000867929/credits>

¹¹² Source 112: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/322824-Joe-Babcock>

Next – **June Page**, background vocals:^{113 114 115 116}

- And here's the fourth member of "The Nashville Edition" that provided their backup vocals on "I Will Always Love You" by Dolly Parton: June Page who was also known as Ricki Page. And that is Ricki with an "i" at the end and not a "y". June once said that she changed the "y" to a "i" as it seemed more appropriate for her because of her age. She came up with her stage name "Ricki" when she and her sister Sonya began recording. They chose names that would stick out and so they came up with "Ricky and Ronny".

Actually, it was kind of hard to find June's information online as she used many different names over the course of her career – such as Johanna Lee or Laura Jane Webb – and she was also a member of different groups over the years – such as "Beverly and the Motorscooters", "Joanne & The Triangles", "The Majorettes" (that was the group of her three daughters), "June and Joy", "The Page Sisters" (with her sister Sonya), "The Austin Sisters" or "The Rainbow Ship".

She was born June Evelyn Kuykendall in Lindsay, Oklahoma, on November 7th, 1929.

June grew up poor but there was one thing she always knew – that she wanted to sing.

First and foremost, June was a studio session singer – a capacity in which she worked with famous vocal groups like "The Mary John Singers", "The Jordanaires", "The Town And Country Singers", "The Nashville Sounds" and, of course, "The Nashville Edition".

The list of clients June worked with is long and includes many famous artists such as Sonny And Cher, Darlene Love, "The Blossoms" or "Ronnie And The Ronettes", for example. She also did a lot of work for record producer, musician, and songwriter Phil Spector.

One example of a famous song that June can be heard on is Jackie Deshannon's 1965 classic "What The World Needs Now Is Love".

June's career took off when she met her future husband, record producer, songwriter and sound engineer George Motola, after she had moved from Fresno to Hollywood and he invited her to record for the label he was with. Later on, the two also partnered in terms of songwriting.

In the fall of 1965, June and her family moved to Nashville, Tennessee, which made her fall in love with country – a genre that she would be very successful in as one of the most sought-after backup singers. And, to close the loop, this is when June started to work with "The Nashville Edition" which is what ultimately landed her the job of being a part of Dolly Parton's version of "I Will Always Love You".

¹¹³ Source 113: https://www.imdb.com/name/nm11400948/bio?ref =nm_ov_bio_sm

¹¹⁴ Source 114: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/286182-June-Page>

¹¹⁵ Source 115: http://tims.blackcat.nl/messages/ricki_page.htm

¹¹⁶ Source 116: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Motola

And finally: **Dolly Parton**

Singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, record producer, actress, author, businesswoman and humanitarian Dolly Rebecca Parton was born in Pittman Center, Tennessee, on January 19th, 1946.

Dolly is one of the most successful artists in the history of the music business. "I Will Always Love You" is her most successful song but it is just one out of over 3,000 songs she has written during her long career. Listing all her successes and accomplishments in an episode like this would be impossible and, therefore, I'm gonna focus on the big milestones only.

25 songs of Dolly reached the number one position on Billboard's "Hot Country Songs Chart" which is a record for a female artist that she shares with Reba McEntire at the time this episode is recorded.

Dolly had 44 albums in the top 10 country albums chart which is a record for any artist and 110 of her singles found their way into the charts over the past 40 years.

She has received at least one nomination for an "Academy Award", a "Grammy Award", a "Tony Award", and an "Emmy Award". Not many have achieved this.

Dolly won ten "Grammy Awards" and she was nominated 49 times. She won 10 "Country Music Association Awards" including for "Entertainer of the Year" and she's one of only seven female artists to win the "Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year Award". Also, Dolly won 5 "Academy of Country Music Awards" also including for "Entertainer of the Year". And she has 4 "People's Choice Awards" and three "American Music Awards".

Dolly was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1999 and she even starred in a couple of movies which earned her a "Golden Globe" nomination in category "Best Actress".

Some sources say that she is one of the – if not the –wealthiest country-music star with an estimated net worth at around 500 million US Dollars. But keep in mind how inaccurate such net worth estimates can be. But that doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how much money Dolly has as we're more interested in her as an artist and a person. That's what makes us music lovers.

But it was a long way for Dolly to get there. Let's start at the beginning.

Dolly was born in in a one-room cabin on the banks of the Little Pigeon River in Pittman Center, Tennessee, as the fourth of 12 children. Her mother, Avie Lee Caroline Owens Parton, who lived from 1923 until 2003, was a homemaker and her dad Robert Lee Parton Sr., who lived from 1921 until 2000, worked as a sharecropper in the mountains of East Tennessee, later had his own small tobacco farm and he also worked construction jobs. Most of Dolly's childhood memories are from a farm near Locust Ridge where the family moved after she was born and where they lived in a rustic, one-bedroom cabin north of the Greenbrier Valley of the Great Smoky Mountains.¹¹⁷

Dolly always says that their home had "running water, if you were willing to run and get it".¹¹⁸

Her family was poor, really poor. One example Dolly sometimes gives for this is that her father paid the doctor who helped deliver her with a bag of cornmeal. Music has always played an important role in Dolly's life and when she was six, she would make her first public performances in the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee, in which her grandfather, Jake Robert Owens, was the pastor. Dolly picked up a homemade guitar when she was seven and her uncle bought Dolly first real guitar when she was eight.¹

¹¹⁷ Source 117: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly_Partton

¹¹⁸ Source 118: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/arts/music/dolly-parton.html>

Even before Dolly knew how to write, Dolly made up little songs that her mom would write down for her. When Dolly realized she had songwriting talent and a beautiful voice, she knew those assets were her surest ticket out of her hometown.¹¹⁸

Soon enough, Dolly would perform on radio and TV programs in East Tennessee and she recorded her first song on “Goldband Records” when she was 13 – its title was “Puppy Love”; this led to a performance at the “Grand Ole Opry” where she met the legendary Johnny Cash who introduced her on stage and encouraged her to listen to and follow her own instincts regarding a career in music.

Dolly did and so she moved to Nashville the day after she graduated from high school – the first in her family to do so, by the way; the year was 1964.

In Nashville, she immediately started to work as a songwriter and even had a couple of songs reach the charts but things remained challenging over the next three years while she was also trying to do records as a country singer but didn’t find any support initially as her label, “Monument Records”, thought her voice with its strong vibrato was not suited for country.

After her composition "Put It Off Until Tomorrow" performed by Bill Phillips reached number 6 on the country music charts in 1966, the label gave her a chance and so she recorded her first country single, "Dumb Blonde", which strangely enough wasn’t even written by her, by the way, followed by “Something Fishy”. Both reached the charts and landed on positions 24 and 17 respectively.

Dolly continued to offer her songs in Nashville and her life would change in 1967, when Porter Wagoner, a well-known musician and country music entertainer, offered Dolly a regular spot on “The Porter Wagoner Show”, his weekly syndicated TV program, as well as a spot on his road show.¹¹⁷

Dolly took the spot of Norma Jean, known as the “girl singer” on Porter Wagoner’s show, who went back to Oklahoma to get married.

The problem was that the fans of the show didn’t immediately warm up to Dolly. They even nearly booed her off the stage the first time she appeared instead of Norma Jean whom the audience was expecting.

As discussed earlier, the partnership between Dolly and Porter was not always smooth sailing and Dolly eventually left the show in 1974 which led to the very topic of this episode: The song “I Will Always Love You” which launched her career as a solo superstar but also resulted in Porter suing her and talking bad about her in public.¹¹⁸

Over the years together on the show, Dolly and Porter had a series of duet hits but Dolly wasn’t really successful as a solo artist until 1973 when she released the song “Jolene” in late 1973 which then had become a number one country hit by February 1974. This success must have encouraged her to finally leave Porter and his show and her being a part of his enterprise.

The last duet concert took place in April 1974 and she stopped appearing on his TV show in mid-1974. Her solo hit “I Will Always Love You” was released in March 1974 and had climbed the country charts by June 1974. At that point, Dolly knew that she was on the right path.

In 1974 alone, her first solo year, Dolly had three number one solo songs on the country charts: "Jolene", "I Will Always Love You" and "Love Is Like a Butterfly" plus "Please Don't Stop Loving Me" which was a duet with Porter.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Source 117: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly_Partton

¹¹⁸ Source 118: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/arts/music/dolly-parton.html>

Dolly and Porter remained mostly contractually affiliated and so he helped produce Dolly's records through 1975. Their final duet album "Say Forever You'll Be Mine" was released in 1975.¹¹⁷

The following years saw Dolly crossing over into mainstream pop more and more which really started with the Porter Wagoner produced 1976 album "All I Can Do" that Dolly co-produced and that was followed up by the 1977 album "New Harvest...First Gathering" which Dolly produced all by herself.

An important milestone for Dolly was when Sandy Gallin became her personal manager in 1976. Step by step, Dolly put her dream team together that would help her become one of the most iconic pop stars on the planet. Still without major pop success, Dolly lost no time and turned to pop producer Gary Klein who produced the 1977 album "Here You Come Again". This move paid off and Dolly landed her first million-seller that topped the country album charts and reached number 20 on the pop charts. The single "Here You Come Again" was a number one hit on the country singles charts and it landed on the number 3 spot on the pop charts becoming Dolly's first top ten hit on the pop charts. From then on, well into the mid-1980s, during Dolly's first phase of superstardom, Dolly's songs would successfully visit both the country and the pop charts on a regular basis and she was a regular guest in people's homes appearing on numerous TV shows; Dolly even starred in movies.¹¹⁷

The second half of the 1980s remained successful for Dolly and her career got somewhat of a refresher in 1987 when the album titled "Trio", that she recorded together with Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris, spent five weeks at the top of the "Billboard Top Country Albums" chart and also reached the top 10 on the "Billboard 200 Chart" for albums. The album had four top 10 country hits including the number one hit "To Know Him Is to Love Him". The album also won the "Grammy Award" for "Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal" and it was nominated for a "Grammy" in category "Album of the Year". By now, Dolly had proven that she can be successful in both the country and the pop music business and that both audiences (which overlap to some extent, of course) loved her very much.

After the successful 1987 album "Rainbow", Dolly started to focus more on country again. The result was the 1989 album "White Limozeen" which produced two number one hits in "Why'd You Come in Here Lookin' Like That" and "Yellow Roses".¹¹⁷

The 1990s were Dolly's most successful decade thanks to Whitney Houston's cover version of "I Will Always Love You" that came out in 1992. But also otherwise, the 1990s treated Dolly well.

Dolly kicked things off with the 1991 number one hit duet "Rockin' Years" that she recorded with country singer and guitarist Ricky Van Shelton.

1992 was a quick break in terms of charts success as Dolly's soundtrack for the movie "Straight Talk" was not a huge hit. In 1993, Dolly returned to the charts with her album "Slow Dancing with the Moon" peaking at the number four spot on the "Billboard Top Country Albums Chart" and on number 16 on the "Billboard 200 Chart" for albums. Also in 1993, Dolly released the duet "The Day I Fall in Love" together with James Ingram that earned her an "Academy Award" nomination in category "Best Original Song". She didn't have enough yet in 1993 and also released an album titled "Honky Tonk Angels" which was a collaboration of Dolly, Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette which achieved gold status. The next year then, 1994, Dolly recorded and released the single "You Gotta Be My Baby" for the AIDS benefit album "Red Hot + Country" in addition to the live acoustic album "Heartsongs: Live from Home".¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Source 117: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly_Parton

In 1995, Dolly made headlines with the album "Something Special" which included a duet version of "I Will Always Love You" together with Vince Gill which earned her a "Vocal Event of the Year" award by the "Country Music Association".

In 1996, Dolly released her album "Treasures" which included cover versions of hits of the 1960s and the 1970s, in 1998, the country-rock album "Hungry Again" followed and in 1999, Dolly teamed up with Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt again to release the album "Trio II". One of its songs, the remake of the Neil Young song "After the Gold Rush", earned a "Grammy Award" in category "Best Country Collaboration with Vocals".

The 1990s ended as successful as they had started for Dolly when she was inducted into the "Country Music Hall of Fame" in 1999.¹¹⁷

Dolly transitioned from the 1990s to the 2000s with a series of bluegrass-inspired albums of which "The Grass Is Blue" in 1999 was the first one; it earned her a "Grammy Award" in category "Best Bluegrass Album". The album "Little Sparrow" followed in 2001 and one of its songs, namely "Shine", a cover version of a song by "Collective Soul", won a Grammy for the "Best Female Country Vocal Performance". The successful series ended with the album "Halos & Horns" in 2002.¹¹⁷

The album "Those Were The Days", with cover versions of folk-rock era songs of the late 1960s and early 1970s, released in 2005, was next. The same year, the song "Travelin' Thru" from the feature film "Transamerica" earned Dolly her second "Academy Award" nomination in category "Best Original Song". And also in 2005, Dolly landed a number one on the country charts with Brad Paisley titled "When I Get Where I'm Going".¹¹⁷

Then, in 2007, it was time for Dolly to release her first single on her own record label, "Dolly Records", titled, "Better Get to Livin'" which charted but didn't become a huge hit.

One year later, the album "Backwoods Barbie" followed peaking at the number two spot on the country charts and also entering the pop album charts.¹¹⁷

2009 was blessed with Dolly's release of the four-CD box set titled "Dolly" that included 99 songs from her career and her second live DVD and album titled "Live From London".¹¹⁷

One year later, in 2010, she released the album "Brother Clyde" together with Billy Ray Cyrus and in 2011, she both released her album "Better Day" and embarked on a world tour.¹¹⁷

In 2013, Dolly, together with comedian, singer, and author Lulu Roman, released a cover version of her hit "I Will Always Love You" following Whitney Houston's tragic death in 2012. I haven't mentioned this version earlier as it was released in the aftermath of Whitney's death whereas her other releases of the song were standalone releases in a sense not triggered by such a tragic event.

Also, she reunited with Kenny Rogers which resulted in the title song of his album "You Can't Make Old Friends". Needless to say that the two were nominated for a "Grammy" in category "Best Country Duo/Group Performance" at the 2014 ceremony.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Source 117: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly_Parton

The same year, 2014, Dolly's album "Blue Smoke" was released reaching the number two position on the U.S. country charts and she also went on another world tour which included playing Glastonbury in front of more than 180,000 people.¹¹⁷

Dolly's album "Pure & Simple" followed in 2016 and so did a US tour. She also re-released "Jolene" together with the a cappella group Pentatonix.¹¹⁷

More collaborations and recordings followed. Again, my goal here was to list just a couple of big milestones and so I had to leave out a number of things. Dolly has just been too busy and successful. That's a very good thing and I'm very happy for her.¹¹⁷

Fast forward to 2020, a year in which Dolly re-released 93 songs from six of her classic albums in addition to a new song titled "When Life Is Good Again" which was intended to help keep the spirits up of those affected by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

At the time this episode was recorded, a holiday album titled "A Holly Dolly Christmas" was in the works and planned for a release in the fall of 2020.

And also in 2020, Dolly joined social media platforms LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Welcome to social media, Dolly!¹¹⁷

Dolly Parton – what a career.

One of the major take-aways here is that Dolly is not only one of the most successful singers but that she's also a prolific and one of the most successful songwriters, that she once even wrote a musical, that she's a savvy business woman not only with regard to her music business but also with regard to the fact that that she's also running "The Dollywood Company" which operates the theme park "Dollywood", a dinner theater, "Dolly Parton's Stampede", the waterpark "Dollywood's Splash Country", and the "Dream More Resort and Spa", all located in Pigeon Forge, that she owns a film and television production company, that she's an actress, that she gives back whenever she can through her "Dollywood Foundation" and so on and so forth.¹¹⁷

Dolly is married to Carl Thomas Dean who was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on July 20, 1942, and who is rarely seen in public.¹¹⁷

Very few artists have been honored more than Dolly and I'm not sure if there's a country artist that has been honored more. To list all her accomplishments, awards and honors would probably take all day so let me just list a couple of those to give you a sense of how successful Dolly's career has been and how significant her contributions to music and all our lives have been.¹¹⁷

- 25 of her single or album releases went either gold, platinum or multi-platinum
- 26 number 1 songs on the "Billboard Hot Country Songs Chart" which is a record for a female artist

¹¹⁷ Source 117: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly_Parton

- 42 top 10 country albums, a record for any artist
- Over 110 singles that entered the charts
- Over 100 million sold, downloaded or used songs
- 9 “Grammy Awards” (including her 2011 “Lifetime Achievement Grammy”)
- 44 “Grammy Award” nominations, the 2nd most nominations of any female artist
- 3 “American Music Awards” out of 18 nominations
- 10 “Country Music Association Awards” out of 42 nominations
- 7 “Academy of Country Music Awards” out of 39 nominations
- 2 “Academy Award” nominations
- 1 “Tony Award” nomination
- 1 “Emmy Award” nomination
- Dolly is – at the time of this recording – one of only six female artists to win the Country Music Association's highest honor, the “Entertainer of the Year” award which she won in 1978. The other women were Reba McEntire, Barbara Mandrell, Shania Twain, Loretta Lynn, and Taylor Swift.
- Dolly has a star on the “Hollywood Walk of Fame” as well as a star on the “Nashville StarWalk” for Grammy winners.
- Dolly was inducted into the “Grand Ole Opry” in 1969.
- Dolly was named one of “Ms. Magazine's Women of the Year” in 1986.
- Also in 1986, Dolly was inducted into the “Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame”.
- In 1999, Dolly was inducted into the “Country Music Hall of Fame”.
- In 2001, she was inducted into the “National Academy of Popular Music/Songwriters Hall of Fame”.
- And the 2018 edition of the “Guinness World Records” listed Dolly with holding records for the “Most Decades with a Top 20 hit on Billboard's ‘Hot Country Songs Chart’” and “Most Hits on Billboard's ‘Hot Country Songs Chart’ by a Female Artist”.

Again, I had to leave out a fair number of accomplishments, awards and honors to keep the list short as we still have a number of other artists to discuss.¹¹⁷

The net is, Dolly Parton is one of the biggest pop stars on the planet. Her fans love her. And that includes fans of all genders. One interview answer a female fan from Wisconsin gave after a concert in 1979 sums up nicely one of the reasons why Dolly has such a large female fan base, for example: The woman said “I’ll tell you why I love her. Dolly is everything I never dared to be. Sure, she’s outrageous looking. But just once, didn’t you ever want to do something outlandish — without worrying what everyone will say?”¹¹⁸

And Dolly really seems to be a really nice, down-to-earth person. Jane Fonda, for example, whom Dolly starred with in the movie “9 to 5” said in a 1980 interview with the “Rolling Stone” magazine the following explaining why Dolly is such an exciting person: “Very often someone will wow you, but as you get to know them, the mystery wears off. One of the things that just flabbergasts me about Dolly is the amount of mystery she has.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Source 117: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly_Parton

¹¹⁸ Source 118: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/arts/music/dolly-parton.html>

Now it's time to get to know the people behind **Linda Ronstadt's 1975 cover version** of "I Will Always Love You" which will, ultimately, include Linda herself as well.

- We'll start with **Peter Asher** – the producer of the album and the song:¹¹⁹
 - British guitarist, singer, manager and record producer Peter Asher was born in London on June 22nd 1944. Peter has been in the music business since the 1960s when he was a member of the pop music vocal duo "Peter and Gordon". From 1968 on, when Peter became the lead of the A&R department at the Beatles' "Apple Records" label, where he signed a then-unknown James Taylor and agreed to produce the singer-songwriter's first solo album, he has been very successful as a manager and record producer. As a producer, he worked with a lot of successful artists such as Linda Ronstadt, Bonnie Raitt, Cher, Neil Diamond, Olivia Newton-John, Boyzone, Diana Ross, Robin Williams and Kenny Loggins to name just a few. Peter was a Senior Vice-President at Sony Music Entertainment between 1995 and 2002 and he also held other high-profile positions at artist management companies, etc. over the years. He won 3 "Grammy Awards" as a producer one of which was in category "Best Spoken Comedy Album" for Robin Williams' album "Live 2002". Also, Peter was appointed "Commander of the British Empire" in 2015.

- Next – **Val Garay**, the engineer for the album and the song:¹²⁰
 - Val Garay was born in n San Francisco, California on May 9th, 1942. He is a record producer and engineer who has worked with a lot of the big names in the industry. Here are a few examples: James Taylor, Neil Diamond, Ringo Starr, Dolly Parton, Sarah Brightman, Kenny Rogers and Santana.

For his engineering work on the James Taylor album "JT" and Linda Ronstadt's album "Simple Dreams", Val earned a "Grammy" nomination in category "Best Engineered Recording". During his career, he was also nominated in categories "Producer of the Year" and "Album of the Year". And in 1982, he shared a "Grammy Award" with Kim Carnes in category "Record of the Year". Val also earned other nominations and awards in addition to multiple gold and platinum records.

- Next – **Doug Sax**, he mastered the album and the song:^{121 122 123}
 - Doug Sax was one of the best mastering engineers in the world. He was born in Los Angeles on April 26th, 1936 and he died, also in LA, on April 2nd, 2015.

¹¹⁹ Source 119: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Asher

¹²⁰ Source 120: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Val_Garay

¹²¹ Source 121: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug_Sax

¹²² Source 122: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TEC_Awards

¹²³ Source 123: <https://www.grammy.com/grammys/awards/technical-awards>

The instrument of choice during Doug's early years was the trumpet which he played alongside famous trumpeter Herb Alpert and he also played the instrument later at UCLA and then in the Army.

His career path changed from symphonic trumpeter to mastering engineer on December 27th, 1967 when Doug opened "The Mastering Lab" together with his brother and a high school friend. His first project there was the first album of "The Doors".

He then became one of the most sought-after mastering engineers and by 1972, he was mastering a mind-blowing 20% of the songs on the "Billboard Hot 100" chart.

Doug mastered two more Doors albums and also 6 Pink Floyd albums in total including "The Wall". Also, he worked with Ray Charles, Bob Dylan, Barbra Streisand, Leonard Cohen, Frank Zappa and the Eagles, to name just a few.

He won 3 "Grammy Awards" – all of them in early 2005 for his work on "Genius Loves Company" which was the final studio album by the legendary Ray Charles and one in the same year in category "Technical Grammy Award" which is a "Special Merit Grammy Award" presented to individuals and/or companies who have made contributions of outstanding technical significance to the recording field.

Also, Doug won 2 TEC Awards, the annual program recognizing the achievements of audio professionals. Doug Sax – the best of the best.

- Next – **David Campbell**, string arrangements and conductor:¹²⁴
 - David Campbell is an arranger, composer and conductor who was born in Toronto, Canada on February 7th, 1948 and who has worked on over 450 gold and platinum records for artists like Adele, Justin Timberlake, Michael Jackson, Leona Lewis, Aaliyah, Beyoncé and Miley Cyrus. That's quite a list isn't it. In addition to that, he was the arranger, orchestrator, conductor or composer for a lot of successful movie scores.

- Next – **Andrew Gold**, acoustic piano, electric guitar and tambourine:^{125 126}
 - Multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter and record producer Andrew Maurice Gold was born in Burbank, California on August 2nd, 1951 and he died in Los Angeles, California, on June 3rd, 2011 at the age of 59 from kidney cancer. Pop-rock in the 1970s wouldn't have been possible without Andrew. Andrew's career shows that it pays off when you start to write song when you're 13 like he did. One prime example or, should I say proof, I have for this is his 1978 hit "Thank You for Being a Friend" that he wrote and of which he later said that the song was "just this little throwaway thing" that took him "about an hour to write". That comment is funny and scary at the same time. One of Andrew's career cornerstones, among many, was his collaboration with Linda Ronstadt with whom he recorded a couple of very successful records. But also producing, composing, and/or writing songs for films, TV and commercials were part of his repertoire.

¹²⁴ Source 124: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Campbell_\(composer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Campbell_(composer))

¹²⁵ Source 125: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Gold

¹²⁶ Source 126: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thank_You_for_Being_a_Friend

Next – **Dan Dugmore**, steel guitar:^{127 128}

- Dan Dugmore is a very fine session musician who plays the pedal steel guitar – primarily. Other instruments he plays are the Dobro, the electric guitar, the acoustic guitar, the banjo and the mandolin.

Dan was born in Pasadena, California, in 1949 and he played in a number of bands – including Linda Ronstadt’s – and on many, many records over the years. When the steel guitar wasn’t popular any longer in LA’s pop music business, Dan and his family moved to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1991 where his sound and skills were embraced and he became an immensely popular session musician focusing on country music. Famous artists he worked with include James Taylor, Dusty Springfield, Kenny Loggins, Kenny Rogers, Kid Rock, Lionel Richie, Olivia Newton-John, Sheryl Crow, Stevie Nicks, Faith Hill, Billy Ray Cyrus and Tim McGraw.

- Next – **Ed Black**, electric guitar:^{129 130 131}

- Ed Black, for whom I couldn’t find a birthday or a place of birth died in November 1998. He played the pedal steel guitar, the guitar, the dobro and other instruments used for country and western music.

Ed started his career in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1971 in a band named “Goose Creek Symphony”. At some point, they found themselves opening for Linda Ronstadt in Los Angeles. She must have liked what she heard and convinced Ed to join her band with which he stayed until 1975 when he left it to focus on other projects.

Over the years, he worked with many artists, Tracy Chapman being one of them, before he died around the young age of 50.

From what I can tell reading online posts by people who knew Ed, he was a good person, a really fine guy.

- Next – **Russ Kunkel**, drums:¹³²

- Self-taught drummer and producer Russ Kunkel was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on September 27th, 1948. He moved to California at the age of 9 where he joined the orchestra at his elementary school. During his high school time in Long Beach, Russ played for many different bands gaining a lot of early, first-hand experience.

Things really took off after he moved to Los Angeles in 1966 where he even became friends with Jimi Hendrix. Over the years, Russ played with many artists and bands, played

¹²⁷ Source 127: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Dugmore

¹²⁸ Source 128: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/dandugmore-mn0000667587/biography>

¹²⁹ Source 129: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/ed-black-mn0000144322/biography>

¹³⁰ Source 130: <https://steelguitarforum.com/Forum15/HTML/008643.html>

¹³¹ Source 131: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/487451-Ed-Black>

¹³² Source 132: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russ_Kunkel

live gigs as well as a lot of studio sessions. In addition to Linda Ronstadt, he played with artists such as James Taylor, Bob Dylan, Jimmy Buffett, Neil Young, Stevie Nicks, Neil Diamond, Carole King, Jackson Browne, Tracy Chapman, Art Garfunkel, Elton John, Tom Jones, B.B. King, Dolly Parton, Diana Ross and Carly Simon to name just a few. Wow, that's quite a list.

- Next – **Pat Henderson**, background vocals:^{133 134}
 - Soul singer Patricia Henderson was one of the three studio background vocalists on Linda Ronstadt's interpretation of "I Will Always Love You". While I wasn't able to find any detailed information about her online, unfortunately, at least I'm able to provide you with a sample list of well-known artists that she worked with: Paul Anka, Leo Sayer, Randy Crawford, Olivia Newton-John, Barry Manilow, Neil Diamond, Nathalie Cole and Dionne Warwick.

- Next – **Julia Tillman Waters**, background vocals:^{135 136 137}
 - Julia Tillman Waters – another background singer on the track – was one of the most famous backing vocalists in the 1970s and 1980s soul scene. Julia was born Julia Ardelia Waters in Jefferson County, Texas, on June 8th, 1943. She acquired the middle name "Tillman" by marrying her husband David Tillman. Julia is one part of family group "The Waters" consisting of Julia Waters herself, her sister Maxine Waters, who also sang background on this track, and her brothers Luther Waters and Oren Waters. "The Waters" have worked with legends like Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Barbra Streisand, Paul McCartney, Guns N Roses, Robbie Williams, George Harrison, Ringo Starr, Bobby Womack, Julio Iglesias, Donna Summer, Lionel Richie, Rod Stewart, Rick James, Smokey Robinson, Bruce Springsteen, Jon Bon Jovi, The Pet Shop Boys, Billy Preston, David Ruffin, Joe Cocker, Celine Dion, Dolly Parton, Carlos Santana as well as many other legends and famous artists. Also, Julia appeared in a couple of movies.

- Next – **Maxine Willard Waters**, background vocals:^{138 139}
 - Maxine Waters is, as I mentioned just a short while ago, the sister of Julia Waters who was also a background singer on Linda Ronstadt's recording. And just like Julia, she is a member of their family group "The Waters" where she is the anchor alto. Maxine was born in Jefferson County, Texas on July 14th, 1945 as Lorna Maxine Waters. She acquired the middle name "Willard" by marrying her husband Jess Willard.

¹³³ Source 133: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/397058-Pat-Henderson>

¹³⁴ Source 134: https://ru.rateyourmusic.com/artist/pat_henderson/credits/

¹³⁵ Source 135: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/441634-Julia-Tillman-Waters>

¹³⁶ Source 136: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0914026/>

¹³⁷ Source 137: <http://thewatersjuliamaxinelutheroren.com/>

¹³⁸ Source 138: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0914027/>

¹³⁹ Source 139: <http://thewatersjuliamaxinelutheroren.com/>

And just like her sister, Maxine also appeared in a couple of movies.

Next – **Linda Ronstadt**, she sang the lead vocals on her version of “I Will Always Love You”.¹⁴⁰

Singer, songwriter, musician, record producer and actress Linda Ronstadt was born in Tucson, Arizona on July 15th, 1946.

During her career, Linda always embraced different musical genres such as country, rock, pop or latin. She received 10 “Grammy Awards”, 3 “American Music Awards”, 2 “Academy of Country Music Awards”, 1 “Emmy Award” and so on and so forth in addition to multiple gold, platinum and even multiplatinum albums worldwide. She embraced different genres and while I find the lines that she drew a bit weird, I do respect them however. She once said: “I don't record (any type of genre of music) that I didn't hear in my family's living room by the time I was 10. It just is my rule that I don't break because ... I can't do it authentically ... I really think that you're just hard-wiring synapses in your brain up until the age of maybe 12 or 10, and there are certain things you can't learn in an authentic way after that. ”

Linda has released 24 studio albums and 15 compilations or greatest hits albums, she had 38 songs in the “Billboard Hot 100” singles chart and 21 of those songs made it to the top 40, 10 made it to the top 10 and one reached the number one spot – that was “You're No Good”. On the albums side, she reached the “Billboard 200 Chart” with 36 of her albums, the top 10 with 10 of them and the number one spot with three of them.

Linda can be heard on over 120 albums in total and she has sold more than 100 million records which makes her one of the world's best-selling artists of all time.

Linda formed her first group, a folk trio with her brother Peter and sister Gretchen, at the age of 14 and in 1964, when she was 18, she moved to Los Angeles where she formed the trio “The Stone Poneys” with her friends Bobby Kimmel and Kenny Edwards. Together they had the hit “Different Drum” for which Linda is still known today.

In 1969, Linda went solo and released her album “Hand Sown ... Home Grown” which was labelled the first alternative country record by a female recording artist.

Many, many successful recordings and other successes followed and I'll keep her section here a bit short as Linda – and this is not meant to sound negative – merely recorded the version of “I Will Always Love You” that inspired Kevin Costner to use the song in the movie “The Bodyguard” but she didn't write the song. That's why Dolly Parton's section in this episode was a bit longer. I hope that's fine but we have to draw the line somewhere to ensure the episode here is not getting too long.

To close out Linda's section here: Linda Ronstadt retired from signing in 2011 due to be a condition called progressive supranuclear palsy which caused her singing voice to deteriorate.

¹⁴⁰ Source 140: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Ronstadt

And now it's time to get to know the people behind **Whitney Houston's 1992 cover version** of "I Will Always Love You" which will, ultimately, include Whitney herself as well.

We'll start with **Clive Davis** – the founder of Arista Records, the label that released the song and soundtrack:^{42 141}

- With regard to "The Bodyguard" soundtrack, Clive once said in an interview:
"I first got involved after I saw a very early, very rough version of the film. I wrote a letter to both Kevin Costner and [director] Mick Jackson, and I said, "I'm very nervous that you're missing a basic element here, and that you really have given very little music for this film." Well, they did listen and ended up equipping the movie with the most successful movie soundtrack of all time. But now, let's take a quick look at Clive Davis' long and successful life and career. Record producer, A&R executive, music industry executive and lawyer Clive Jay Davis was born in New York City on April 4th, 1932. Clive is one of the titans in the music industry and well-known for signing famous and successful artists such as Janis Joplin, Laura Nyro, Santana, Bruce Springsteen, Chicago, Billy Joel, Aerosmith, Pink Floyd, Earth Wind & Fire, Ray Parker Jr. and Raydio as well as Alicia Keys to name just a few. He was also the driver behind Whitney Houston's and Barry Manilow's successes whom he both signed. He even founded "Bad Boy Records" with Sean "Puffy" Combs, later known as P. Diddy, although he, as he admitted later never quite understood rap music.
Clive was the president of "Columbia Records" from 1967 to 1973 and the founder and then the president of "Arista Records" from 1975 until founding "J Records" in 2000. In the 2000s, he was the chair and CEO of the "RCA Music Group" (which included "RCA Records", "J Records" and "Arista Records" and so on and so forth), the chair and CEO of "J Records", and the chair and CEO of "BMG" North America. And later, he became the chief creative officer of "Sony Music Entertainment".
Clive initially started out as a lawyer for "Columbia Records" where he became the assistant counsel at the young age of 28 and then general counsel one year later. The "Columbia Records Group" was reorganized in 1965 and as part of that, Clive was appointed administrative vice president and general manager. This was his entry into the world of signing superstars. Early acts that he signed were Donovan, Tony Orlando and Barry Manilow. Clive helped give birth to countless hits and he was awarded with 4 regular "Grammys" plus the "Grammy Trustees Award" and the organization's "President's Merit Award". Few other industry execs were as powerful as or more powerful than Clive Davis and he remains an icon to this day.

⁴² Source 42: <https://ew.com/article/2012/12/14/oral-history-whitneys-anthem-i-will-always-love-you/>

¹⁴¹ Source 141: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clive_Davis

Next – **Allen Sides**, the owner of Ocean Way Recording where the song was recorded:^{49 142 143}

Allen is, without a doubt, one of the most respected engineers and producers in the music industry. Allen started out as a bass guitar player who had his own band. In addition to playing, he's been an audio enthusiast since he was a teenager. Therefore, the goal he had with his very first studio was to record music in a way that he wanted to hear the music coming from his loudspeakers. He had a very specific and brilliant sound in mind. The result was impressive and so other people wanted him to record for them which turned Allen into a recording engineer and producer – something that he hadn't intended to become. Originally, he just wanted to design his own speakers that would produce the awesome sound he was looking for.

His recording career really took off when he opened his first professional studio in his garage. That studio was in a street called "Ocean Way" and so this is where the famous name originated. Allen's neighbors weren't thrilled by the loud studio and its customers going in and out which they made clear to him. One thing led to another when Bill Putnam asked Allen to rent out studio B in his studio complex which would later become "Ocean Way Recording" after Allen bought it in 1988.

Speaking of which: We talked about the "Ocean Way Recording" studio complex already and so I don't want to bore you by going through the facts there again.

Allen himself calls 5 "Grammy Awards" his own and he has recorded over 500 albums as an engineer and producer working with artists such as Phil Collins, Eric Clapton, Joni Mitchell, Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Zappa to name just a few.

At the time of this recording, Allen is the CEO of "Ocean Way Audio" which he founded and which sells high-end monitor systems, drum sample libraries, microphones, studio designs, the Allen Sides Microphone Cabinet App, the Ocean Way Studios Plug-In and the Ocean Way Microphone Collection Plug-In.

- Next up the recording engineers – **Bill Schnee**, **Dave Reitzas** who was also the mixing engineer and **Peter J. Yianilos**.

- **Bill Schnee:**¹⁴⁴

- William S. "Bill" Schnee, a musician, music producer, and audio engineer, was born in Phoenix, Arizona on July 4th, 1947.

Bill calls two "Grammy Awards" his own and he was nominated for one 11 times. He also received an "Emmy" for his work on the Natalie Cole special "Unforgettable, With Love". Bill worked on over 135 gold and platinum records and he has recorded and / or mixed over 50 top twenty singles.

⁴⁹ Source 49: <https://www.oceanwayrecording.com/about-allen.php>

¹⁴² Source 142: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jf1_af2GDs0

¹⁴³ Source 143: <https://oceanwayaudio.com/ocean-way-history/>

¹⁴⁴ Source 144: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Schnee

When he was 13, he moved with his family to California where he started his first band, the “LA Teens”, where he, writing songs for the band and playing the organ, was able to make good use of his early musical training in trumpet, saxophone and piano; his band was even signed to a record label – first to “Decca Records” and after they were dropped from the label, they were signed by musician, record company executive, motorsports car owner, and politician Mike Curb and they worked with musician, record producer and songwriter Richie Podolor. He dropped out of university when he was sure that music would be his life and future – and not law which he was studying at the time.

Bill’s big break came when Richie Podolor, who Bill had worked with before as a member of his band the “LA Teens”, hired Bill to be an engineer in his studio.

Later, he played a key role in starting “Sheffield Lab Records” where he produced artists such as Thelma Houston.

Bill opened his own “Schnee Studio” in North Hollywood in 1981 where he and his clients made music history together. Speaking of his clients – the list of artists Bill worked with as a recording slash audio engineer over the years is quite impressive – here are a few examples in addition to Whitney Houston:

Rod Stewart, Barry Manilow, The Jacksons, Marvin Gaye, George Benson, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Chicago, Carly Simon, Natalie Cole and Barbra Streisand.

Bill Schnee – one of the best.

Next up – **Dave Reitzas**:^{145 146}

- Dave is a well-known engineer, mixer, producer, arranger, drummer and editor who started out as an assistant engineer on the 1987 debut studio album by Guns’n’Roses titled "Appetite For Destruction". The songs he worked on over the last 35 or so years (at the time I’m writing this article) earned numerous “Grammy” nominations and he won 7 “Grammy Awards” as well as an “Emmy Award” for Barbra Streisand's “Millennium Concert”.

Dave grew up in Fall River, Massachusetts, where he started to learn to play the piano, the guitar and the trumpet at an early age. Soon enough, he discovered his real passion which was being a drummer.

As a teenager, he played studio gigs for local bands and fell in love with the studio environment. He studied engineering at the “Bristol Community College” and ear training, harmony and percussion at the “Berklee School of Music”. After spending one year at the University of Rhode Island to study music, Dave left for Los Angeles and there, attended the “Institute of Audio Video Engineering” in Hollywood, California. Around this time, Dave decided to become an audio engineer. He started out working smaller jobs at the “Cherokee Studios” in Hollywood and then at the “Sound City Studios” in Van Nuys where he worked on the Guns’n’Roses album I mentioned earlier. After that, Mike Clink, the producer of Guns’n’Roses recommended Dave for the job as an engineer with the famous

¹⁴⁵ Source 145: <https://daveitzas.com/about-me>

¹⁴⁶ Source 146: <http://www.studioexpresso.com/profiles/davidreitzas.htm>

David Foster whom we talked about already in this episode. David hired Dave and the rest is history.

Dave received his first “Grammy” as an engineer and mixer for Natalie Cole's historic 1991 album “Unforgettable: With Love”.

In 1998, he became the first engineer ever to receive an “Engineering Grammy” in the pop album category for Madonna’s album “Ray Of Light”.

Dave worked with the who’s who in the music business. To list all artists would take a while but from the few examples I mentioned already – Whitney Houston, Barbara Streisand, Madonna and Guns’n’Roses – you can already tell that he has been one of the big players in the game.

Next is **Peter J. Yianilos**:¹⁴⁷

- Peter is an engineer and producer who has worked on a number of high-profile projects during his long career. With his South Florida-based company “Artisan Recorders Inc.”, whom he is the founder and owner of, he specializes in remote recording. This means that he and his team, on a regular basis, pack their high-tech equipment to travel to live performances of famous artists to record them live on stage. Also, Peter’s company offers engineering and production services for radio broadcasts as well as music recording and post-production services for major television broadcasts. In addition to Whitney Houston, Peter has worked with The Rolling Stones, the Bee Gees, Prince, The Police, Sheryl Crow, James Brown and Kanye West to name just a very small group of his clients. The list would go on and on. Seriously.
- Next – **Don Grossinger**, he mastered the single.^{148 149 150}
 - When it comes to “I Will Always Love You”, it was Don’s job to help achieve Whitney her vision of her song. So what is Don’s job as a mastering engineer? After the recording engineer and the recording studio have finished their job, Don creatively "polishes" the music to create a production master, or master file, that is true to an artist’s vision so the music can be shared with the world. He’s been mastering for more than 35 years and, according to Don himself, his strength is the ability to hear what a mix needs to come alive. He has won multiple “Grammy” awards, gold and platinum records and he has worked with all the big names. For example, Don worked on 10 albums for “The Rolling Stones” alone. Beyond that, he worked with Maroon 5, Christina Aguilera, Kelly Clarkson, Jay Z, REM, Paul McCartney and Miles Davis to name just a few.
On top of his mastering work, Don was the Executive Producer and on-air host of the "Morning Dew" show on the listener-sponsored Free Speech Radio WBAI 99.5 FM in NY and WBAI.org on the net for more than 35 years between 1983 and 2018.

¹⁴⁷ Source 147: <http://www.artisanmobile.com/>

¹⁴⁸ Source 148: <https://www.dongrossinger.com/>

¹⁴⁹ Source 149: <https://soundbetter.com/profiles/55223-don-grossinger>

¹⁵⁰ Source 150: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dongrossinger>

Next – **Rickey Minor**, Whitney’s musical director and bandleader slash conductor:¹⁵¹

- Rickey is a bass player, music director, composer and music producer. He was the musical director and bandleader on “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno” from 2010 to 2014. He was born on September 6th, 1959 in Monroe, Louisiana but he was raised by his mother, Helen Blevins, in South Central Los Angeles. He’s a largely self-taught musician who has worked as the musical director for tours by artists like Whitney Houston, Christina Aguilera, Ray Charles, Alicia Keys and Beyoncé. His work for TV productions such as the “Grammy Awards”, the “NAACP Image Awards” and the “Super Bowl” earned him four “Emmy” nominations in the musical direction category. He was also the musical director for “American Idol” and the musical director and conductor for both the “91st Academy Awards” and the “92nd Academy Awards”.

• Next – **Kirk Whalum**, saxophone:^{152 153}

- Saxophonist and songwriter Kirk Whalum was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on July 11th, 1958 and his skills have earned him 12 “Grammy” nominations and 1 “Grammy” win in category “Best Gospel Song” for “It’s What I Do”. Not only did Kirk provide the iconic saxophone solo on Whitney’s version of “I Will Always Love You”, he also toured with Whitney for more than seven years. Another top act he collaborated with on a regular basis was the great Luther Vandross. Growing up with Memphis R&B, gospel, rock and jazz, Kirk sang and played music from a young age thanks to his father in whose church choir Kirk sang, his piano teacher grandmother and two of his uncles who played in jazz bands themselves. In addition to Whitney and Luther, Kirk worked with a lot of other famous and talented artists and he was involved in numerous exciting music projects over his career.

• Next – **Ronn Huff**, he arranged the strings:^{154 155}

- Conductor, arranger and composer Ronn Huff was born on March 16th, 1938 and he died in Nashville, Tennessee, on March 18th, 2016 at the age of 80. Ronn wrote a lot of orchestrations for film and TV and also he was the pops conductor for the “Nashville Symphony” from 1994 until 2002 which awarded him the “Golden Baton Award” in 2011. He was actually the first one to score a gold album certification for a Christian music recording – that was the album “Alleluia, A Praise Gathering” that he arranged and produced in 1973. Ronn was inducted into the “Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame” in 2005.

¹⁵¹ Source 151: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rickey_Minor

¹⁵² Source 152: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirk_Whalum

¹⁵³ Source 153: <https://www.bing.com/k/celebrities/kirk-whalum/timeline>

¹⁵⁴ Source 154: <https://peoplepill.com/people/ronn-huff/>

¹⁵⁵ Source 155: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/445417-Ronn-Huff>

Two of Ronn's three sons are also musicians: Dann Huff is a record producer and songwriter focusing on country music and David Lyndon Huff is a drummer, percussionist, songwriter, producer, programmer and engineer.

It is no surprise that the list of artists Ronn worked with is quite impressive – here are a few examples: Celine Dion, Faith Hill, Jewel, Martina McBride, Trisha Yearwood, Keith Urban and George Strait.

Next – **Neil Stubenhaus**, bass:¹⁵⁶

- Bass guitarist Neil Stubenhaus was born on July 18th, 1953 and he's been playing the bass since he was 12 years old.

Neil is a graduate of the "Berklee College of Music" where he met the session drummers Vinnie Colaiuta (who has worked with famous musicians such as Sting, & Frank Zappa) and John Robinson (who has also worked with superstars, including Barbra Streisand, Quincy Jones, Chaka Khan, Michael Jackson).

After college, he played in a band with a guy named Steve Smith, another Berklee student who would later be successful as the drummer of the rock group "Journey" among other things. In 1977, Neil joined "Blood Sweat & Tears" and recorded David Clayton-Thomas' first solo album. One year later, he toured with Larry Carlton which brought him to the West Coast where he met Mike Post and other composers and started doing sessions. Neil has contributed to over 600 albums (of which more than 70 have been nominated for a "Grammy"), to over 20 "Grammy"-winning songs and more than 60 gold and/or platinum records since 1979. On top, he has recorded more than 150 movie soundtracks in addition to numerous jingles and commercials.

He has been Barbra Streisand's and Quincy Jones' main bass player for more than 20 years and has worked with all the big names in the music business. Here are a few examples from the super long list of his collaborators: Elton John, Rod Stewart, Billy Joel, Frank Sinatra, Dolly Parton and Lionel Richie. Nuff said, right? Impressive.

● Next – **Ricky Lawson**, drums:¹⁵⁷

- Ricky Lawson was a very fine drummer and composer who was born in Detroit, Michigan, on November 8th, 1954. He did a lot of work as a session musician playing with Michael Jackson, Phil Collins, Eric Clapton, the Bee Gees, Earth, Wind & Fire, Quincy Jones, George Benson, Lionel Richie and other superstars in addition to Whitney Houston.

Ricky was a co-founder of the jazz-fusion band "Yellowjackets" with which he won a "Grammy Award" in 1987 in category "Best R&B Instrumental Performance" for the song "And You Know That".

Ricky started playing the drums as a teenager and soon enough, he would play in his high school jazz band. He made his first steps onto the big stage in 1969 when he played for "The Sons of Soul" who performed at the 1969 "Michigan State Fair", opening for "The

¹⁵⁶ Source 156: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neil_Stubenhaus

¹⁵⁷ Source 157: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricky_Lawson

Jackson Five". During his first year of college, Stevie Wonder invited him to play the drums and the rest is history.

Of his involvement in Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You", Ricky always said that this was his most favorite solo ever. He only had a one note solo in the song which was to hit the toms before Whitney's dramatic vocal final shout. I saw Ricky perform live on stage in 1988 and in 1992: As the drummer for Michael Jackson's "Bad Tour" in 1988 and for Michael's "Dangerous Tour" in 1992. When I saw him perform his drum solo in Munich, Germany, in 1988, together with my dad, during the instrumental interlude that the musicians squeezed in to give Michael a few minutes to relax, I was stunned. You should check it out online: The song is called "Bad Groove (Interlude)". Ricky was amazing. Speaking of solo, Ricky also released one solo album which was titled "Ricky Lawson and Friends" and came out in 2001. He died from a brain aneurysm at the Long Beach Memorial Medical Center on December 23rd, 2013, at the age of 59. He had been on life support for ten days, which he was removed from on the 23rd of December after having become disoriented while performing at a jazz club in Seal Beach, California, on December 13th, 2013.

Next – **Dean Parks**, guitar:¹⁵⁸

- Waldon Dean Parks is a session guitarist and record producer who was born in Fort Worth, Texas, on December 6th, 1946.

Dean entered the big stage when he started to work with Sonny and Cher in Los Angeles in 1970. In the 1980s and beyond, he worked on albums for Michael Jackson in addition to contributing to music of other artists with his unique skills. Those were artists like Elton John, Barbra Streisand, Madonna, Rod Stewart, Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, Billy Joel, Barry Manilow, Dolly Parton and so on and so forth. Also, he worked a lot with David Foster who produced Whitney Houston's version of "I Will Always Love You" and he played the guitar on a number of movie soundtracks.

● Next – **Michael Landau**, guitar:^{159 160}

- Michael is a musician, audio engineer and record producer from Los Angeles, California, who was born on June 1st, 1958. He plays a whole bunch of instruments including the guitar, the bass guitar, the sitar, the mandolin and the synthesizer.

Michael's career as a session musician started when he was only 10 years old and it really took off in the 1980s after his friend Steve Lukather, founding member of the rock band "Toto", recommended him. Since then, he has worked with musicians such as Michael Jackson, Rod Stewart, Pink Floyd, James Taylor and Phil Collins to name just a few. Take any of the major label releases recorded in Los Angeles in the 1980s and 1990s and it's more than likely that Michael can be heard on it. Michael has been a frequent collaborator

¹⁵⁸ Source 158: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dean_Parks

¹⁵⁹ Source 159: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Landau

¹⁶⁰ Source 160: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/253974-Michael-Landau>

of producer David Foster and in addition to being a very successful session musician, he also led a couple of bands such as the “Raging Honkies” and “Burning Water”.

Next – **Claude Gaudette**, synthesizer and synthesizer programming.^{161 162 163 164 165 166}

- There’s not a whole lot of information online about Claude. Unfortunately. Born in Montréal, Canada, on October 15th, 1959, he was a very talented session musician, songwriter, composer, producer, arranger and programmer who played the piano, synthesizers, drums and percussion as well as other instruments. Moving to Los Angeles in 1983 opened the door for collaborations with stars such as Céline Dion, Barry Manilow, Neil Diamond, the Little River Band, Natalie Cole, Whitesnake, Kylie Minogue, Smokey Robinson and many others. Also, Claude worked with David Foster who arranged and produced Whitney Houston’s rendition of “I Will Always love You”. Sadly, Claude died on January 31st, 1997 of a heart attack at the young age of 37 without having had a chance to meet his son Laurent Claude.

• Next – **Tony Smith**, synthesizer and synthesizer programming.¹⁶⁷

- Tony is a producer, composer and writer who started out in the early 1970s as the lead vocalist, songwriter and keyboardist for his Las Vegas-based band, “Taxi”. After that, he took a quick break from the music business to pursue a flying career and so he moved to Alaska to work as pilot for “KHAR Broadcasting”, flying for “Sourdough Broadcasting” and doing charter work in 1978. Between 1978 and 1980, Tony spent time in Hawaii playing the keyboards and the trumpet as well as singing for the show band “The Society of Seven”. In 1980, he moved back to Las Vegas where he joined the “Jay Ramsey Band” and performed at all the major hotels in Nevada. At that time, Tony also owned a recording studio and did session work both in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Between 1985 and 1990, Tony, together with country music artist Lee Greenwood, performed at every U.S. military base around the world with the “United Service Organizations” and the “Department of Defense” as the musical director, keyboardist and vocalist. In 1990 then, Tony moved to Los Angeles to work as a producer and songwriter which was his career goal. He landed a job with the group Chicago and then worked with David Foster – yep, that David Foster again – as well as producer and mix engineer Humberto Gatica as a programmer and studio musician among other music-related jobs. It was during this phase of Tony’s life that he worked on “I will Always Love You”.

¹⁶¹ Source 161: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0309942/>

¹⁶² Source 162: <https://www.facebook.com/ClaudeGaudetteTributePage/>

¹⁶³ Source 163: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/117689-Claude-Gaudette>

¹⁶⁴ Source 164: <https://secondhandsongs.com/artist/131994>

¹⁶⁵ Source 165: <https://www.ancientfaces.com/person/claude-gaudette-birth-1959-death-1997/84872499>

¹⁶⁶ Source 166: <https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/gaudet/331/>

¹⁶⁷ Source 167: <https://www.floridatoday.com/story/life/style/2015/12/18/local-producer-nationally-accomplished-career/77393486/>

He moved to Nashville, Tennessee, in 2000 where he owned a commercial recording studio and pursued song writing and producing for artists such as Dolly Parton.

After that, Tony moved to Cocoa Beach in Florida with the goal of reconnecting with his pop and pop Latin background roots. He worked with many famous artists beyond Whitney Houston. Here's a quick list of some of them: Barbara Streisand, Dolly Parton, Lionel Richie, Paul Anka, Ricky Martin and Kenny Rogers.

Next – **Bashiri Johnson**, percussion:^{168 169}

- Percussionist, songwriter, producer, programmer, composer, vocalist and educator Bashiri Johnson was born on May 12th, 1955 in Brooklyn, New York.

He is said to be one of the most recorded percussionists in the music business as his work includes not only hundreds of recordings with famous artists such as Madonna, Luther Vandross and Miles Davis, to name just a few here, but also concert performances with stars like Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, Whitney Houston and Sting, to name just a few again, as well as work for commercials, films, TV and videogames.

Bashiri was an easy choice when it came to percussion work for “I Will Always Love You” as he was a member of Whitney Houston’s band back then – a job he held for 20 years.

One of Bashiri’s more recent endeavors was participating in the “The Michael Jackson Immortal World Tour” together with the “Cirque du Soleil” which ran from 2011 until 2014 and included 501 shows. Two great examples of Bashiri’s work – if you like to hear him play – are “Never Too Much” by Luther Vandross and “Holiday” by Madonna – two songs that set his career into overdrive.

Next – **Kevin Costner** – who starred with Whitney Houston in the movie “The Bodyguard” and who suggested “I Will Always Love You” to be used in the movie. We’re taking a quick look at Kevin Costner’s life and career here since there would be no Whitney Houston version of “I Will Always Love You” without him but – similar to our earlier section about Clive Davis, for example – we’ll keep it short as Kevin didn’t actively contribute to the song:^{170 171}

Actor, director, producer and musician Kevin Michael Costner was born in Lynwood, California, on January 18th, 1955. He has received two “Academy Awards”, two “Golden Globe Awards”, a “Primetime Emmy Award” and two “Screen Actors Guild Awards” during his career which he kicked off with taking acting lessons five nights a week while working jobs on fishing boats, as a truck driver and giving tours of stars’ Hollywood homes to support him and his wife financially. A number of movies later, when Kevin had already reached movie star status, the movie “Field of Dreams” came his way which solidified his A-list status in 1989. Next up was “Dances with Wolves” which was a huge success. It was nominated for 12 “Academy Awards” and won seven including two for Kevin personally in categories “Best Picture” and “Best Director”. The movie “The Bodyguard” followed in 1992 which is very relevant with regard to this episode you’re listening to. The movie is a romantic thriller film directed by Mick Jackson and written by Lawrence Kasdan. The movie in which Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston play the main characters

¹⁶⁸ Source 168: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bashiri_Johnson

¹⁶⁹ Source 169: https://duranduran.fandom.com/wiki/Bashiri_Johnson

¹⁷⁰ Source 170: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevin_Costner

¹⁷¹ Source 171: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bodyguard_\(1992_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bodyguard_(1992_film))

marked Whitney's first movie role. The movie follows a former "Secret Service" agent turned bodyguard who is hired to protect a music superstar from an unknown stalker. Kasdan wrote the film in the mid-1970s with Steve McQueen and Diana Ross in mind. The film made 411 million US Dollars worldwide, becoming the second highest-grossing film of 1992 and at the time of its release the tenth highest-grossing film of all-time. Critics weren't really happy with the movie but the soundtrack earned very positive reviews overall and became, as we discussed already, the best-selling soundtrack album of all time, selling more than 45 million copies worldwide and winning a "Grammy Award" for "Album of the Year"; two singles from the soundtrack, "I Have Nothing" and "Run to You", were nominated for an "Academy Award" in category "Best Original Song". We already talked about "I Will Always Love You" which is the very subject of this episode here. If you're up for some good entertainment, why don't you watch or re-watch "The Bodyguard" soon? You'll love it.

In 1995 then, the science fiction-post-apocalyptic movie "Waterworld" came out which was the most expensive film ever made at the time. It wasn't profitable and also received mixed reviews at the time. However, it was nominated for an "Academy Award" in category "Best Sound" at the "68th Academy Awards". Eventually, the movie did become profitable thanks to video and other post-cinema sales. My family and I always liked the movie as well as the "Waterworld" attraction at the "Universal Studios" in Hollywood.

Many more movies followed for Kevin. Beyond Hollywood, he has been busy, too, founding a country rock band named "Kevin Costner & Modern West" and developing oil separation machines to name just two of his many endeavors here.

Next – **David Foster** – who produced / arranged the song and also played the keyboards:^{42 44 172 173 174}

David Walter Foster, is a Canadian musician, composer, arranger, record producer and music executive who was born in Victoria, Canada, on November 1st, 1949. He is one of the most successful players in the music business and has won 16 "Grammy Awards" – including three for Producer of the Year – from 47 nominations. He's been nominated for three "Academy Awards", three "Golden Globe Awards" with one "Golden Globe Award" win and four "Emmy Award" nominations with two "Emmy Award" wins. David directly contributed to 8 number one hits and numerous other top 50 hits.

His career is fascinating and formally got kicked off when he enrolled in the University of Washington music program in Seattle at the young age of 13.

Around two years later, in 1965, David became the bandleader for jazz musician Tommy Banks who played with his band in a nightclub in Edmonton. It was Tommy who taught David all he needed to know in terms of Jazz, producing records and the music business overall. After one year with Tommy and his band, David moved to Toronto to play with Ronnie Hawkins. In 1966, he joined the backup band for Chuck Berry and in 1974, David moved to Los Angeles together with his band Skylark for which he played the keyboards. They just had a top ten hit one year earlier with the song "Wildflower" which marked the beginning of David's chart success – many hit songs would follow. Skylark fell apart but David stayed in Los Angeles and

⁴² Source 42: <https://ew.com/article/2012/12/14/oral-history-whitneys-anthem-i-will-always-love-you/>

⁴⁴ Source 44: <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/david-foster-bodyguard-anthem-love-happen/story?id=15577131>

¹⁷² Source 172: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Foster

¹⁷³ Source 173: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_awards_and_nominations_received_by_David_Foster

¹⁷⁴ Source 174: <https://davidfoster.com/>

formed a new band, Airplay, together with songwriter, recording artist, guitarist, singer, producer, arranger and record engineer Jay Graydon. From then on, David worked as a studio musician, writer and arranger on a regular basis, first working with George Harrison, Ringo Starr, Earth Wind & Fire and others, over the years expanding his list of clients with names like Chicago, Kenny Rogers, Barbra Streisand, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Andrea Bocelli, Michael Bublé, Josh Groban, Celine Dion, Mary J. Blige, Rod Stewart, Stevie Wonder, Natalie Cole, Michael Bolton, Seal, Chaka Khan, Dolly Parton, Hall & Oates, Gloria Estefan and many, many others in addition to music projects for movies, for the Olympic Games and so on and so forth. It would take forever to list all of David's accomplishments but we have to keep it short here to ensure we can explore Whitney Houston's life and career in detail. David Foster – one of the most talented, skilled and successful musical geniuses of our time. He himself sees his career divided up into three stages: His first round was as a studio musician, arranger and recording artist. His second round was becoming one of the most successful songwriters and record producers in history — working on albums that have collectively sold in the hundreds of millions. And currently, at the time of this recording, he's busy with "The David Foster Foundation" and volunteering his time and talent to over 400 charities as well as becoming a household name as a performer throughout Asia where he tours every year on top of working on Broadway projects.

Of his involvement in the soundtrack for the movie "The Bodyguard", David once explained in an interview: "I had met Kevin Costner. He invited my wife and me to the premiere of 'Dances With Wolves'. And then he said, 'I'm doing this next thing. I think you'd be the right guy to do the music for it.'"

David also once said that he first met Whitney at a party thrown for her by Clive Davis when Whitney was 18; he said that she was "glowing". Clive had discovered Whitney when she was singing in her mother's nightclub, signed her to Arista Records in 1983 and remained her mentor. David said "She probably trusted Clive more than anyone else in the world, barring her parents. He was there every step of the way even through the good times and the bad times and he never, never, ever, ever, ever gave up on her."

The last time David and Whitney worked together was her 2009 single "I Didn't Know My Own Strength" which was released before her death.

David once remembered Whitney as follows: "Celine would give me exactly what I asked for, which just thrilled me as an egotistical record producer. Thank you, Celine. When I would ask Whitney to do that, she would give me something different than I asked for. And 99 percent of the time, it would be something better than what I asked for... that was the genius, part of the genius, of Whitney Houston."

Whitney Houston

Now we turn to singer and actress Whitney Elizabeth Houston. She was born in Newark, New Jersey, on August 9th, 1963 and she died in Beverly Hills, California, on February 11th, 2012 at the young age of 48.¹⁷⁵

With over 200 million records sold worldwide, Whitney was one of the best-selling recording artists of all time as well as the most awarded female artist of all time according to "Guinness World Records". Every single one of her seven studio and two soundtrack albums – I'm not counting the compilation albums here – have been certified diamond, multi-platinum, platinum or gold by the Recording Industry Association of America – short RIAA.¹⁷⁵

Along the way, you may notice that I'm focusing mainly on facts that are in some way related to Whitney's artistic career and that I, where possible, refrained from exploring most facts or rumors with regard to her relationships and other personal details.¹⁷⁵

Whitney was married to singer Bobby Brown, whom she had met at the 1989 "Soul Train Music Awards", from 1992 until 2007. Together, they had one daughter Bobbi Kristina Brown, who lived from 1993 until 2015 – another very sad story. But more on that later.¹⁷⁵

Back to the beginnings though. Whitney's dad was John Russell Houston Jr., an ex-Army serviceman and Newark city administrator. Her mother was gospel singer Emily "Cissy" Houston. Her maiden name was Drinkard. Her older brother Michael is a singer, and her older half-brother Gary Garland is a former basketball player. Because Whitney's mom is the aunt of singers Dionne and Dee Dee Warwick, Whitney and both Dionne and Dee Dee are cousins. Singer and actress Darlene Love was Whitney's godmother and singer Aretha Franklin was her honorary aunt whom she met when she was only eight or nine years old when her mother took her to a recording studio. After the 1967 Newark riots, when she was four years old, Whitney and family moved to a middle-class area in East Orange, New Jersey. Her parents later divorced.¹⁷⁵

When Whitney was 11 years old, she started performing as a soloist in the junior gospel choir at the "New Hope Baptist Church" in Newark; here, she also learned to play the piano. Her very first solo performance in the church was "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah".¹⁷⁵

Whitney's mom Cissy, who was a member of the group "The Sweet Inspirations" which also opened for and sang backup for Elvis Presley, taught her how to sing. Whitney spent some time during her teenage years touring nightclubs where her mother was performing; and she would sometimes even get on stage and perform with her mom. When Whitney was 14, that was in 1977, she was a backup singer on the song "Life's a Party" by the "Michael Zager Band". Around one year later, in 1978, Whitney sang background vocals for Lou Rawls and Chaka Khan.¹⁷⁵

She graduated from high school in 1981. One important fact I should mention here is that, while she was a teenager, Whitney met Robyn Crawford, whom she described as the "sister she never had" and who would become Whitney's best friend, roommate and executive assistant.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

Whitney worked as a fashion model in the early 1980s and she even became the first woman of color to appear on the cover of magazine "Seventeen" in addition to appearances in magazines such as "Cosmopolitan" and "Glamour".¹⁷⁵

In 1982, Whitney signed with "Tara Productions" but it was the year 1983 that would decide over her future career when Gerry Griffith, who was an A&R representative from "Arista Records", saw Whitney performing with her mother in the New York nightclub "Bottom Line". He actually convinced Clive Davis, the head of "Arista Records" to take the time to come and see her perform. Needless to say, Clive was really impressed by what he heard and saw and immediately offered Whitney a worldwide recording contract which Whitney signed. Whitney's career was about to take off big time.¹⁷⁵

Her national TV debut came later in 1983 when she performed the song "Home" from the musical "The Wiz" on "The Merv Griffin Show". Working on an album was not immediately next for her though as Clive Davis first wanted to make sure he had the right material and producers for Whitney's first album and also the label wanted to ensure that no other record label would sign her away. Talking about it now, it becomes even more clear to me, what a critical situation that was: There was a young singer who, as Clive knew, had the potential to conquer the music world and now he needed to make sure to provide her with a lucrative and, from his perspective, of course, solid contract so that no other music labels could steal her by offering her a better deal with more money, etc. Elektra were talking to Whitney at the time as well. At the same time, Clive needed to make sure that this amazingly talented singer would be provided with the material and the personnel that would unleash her potential and guarantee charts success. Clive proved to be a master at accomplishing both from a business perspective and Cissy, Whitney's mom, had enough experience in the music business to ensure Clive wouldn't serve Whitney a bad deal.

With the contract signed, the next focus was on the musical side of things.

Can you believe it? There were actually producers who declined to work on Whitney's first album due to prior commitments. Ouch, I'm sure that must have hurt for these people after they saw what a success Whitney's first album became. But if they weren't able to work with Whitney due to contractual reasons, what should they have done. There *is* nothing they could have done differently.¹⁷⁵

Anyway, the first step for Whitney was to record a duet with Teddy Pendergrass titled "Hold Me" which was included on his eighth studio album "Love Language" and which was certified gold. That was a smart move as the single, which was released in 1984 and became a top 5 R&B hit, gave Whitney her first taste of success without having to carry the heavy burden all by herself. The song peaked at number 46 on the "US Billboard Hot 100" chart and it was a top thirty hit in Ireland, the Netherlands and Belgium. Whitney also included the song on her first album in 1985, by the way. "Hold Me" is one of *the* most beautiful 1980s ballads, in my opinion. I can't describe it. It just has this warm 1980s feel to it. Maybe I'm biased because I kind of grew up on this type of sound. The song was written by songwriter, composer and producer Michael Masser and singer-songwriter and lyricist Linda Creed. Michael produced the song based on one of his earlier arrangements he had used for the song "In Your Arms" by Diana Ross which was included on her 1982 album "Silk Electric". You should listen to Diana Ross's song to hear how similar it is. But at the end of the day, I think Teddy's and Whitney's version is much better not only thanks to

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

those two but also thanks to an improved arrangement and production I would say. Michael Masser did a fine, fine job here. But also the musicians are a clear explanation for why this ended up being such a successful, soulful 1980s ballad. Michael himself played the keyboards along with two absolute pros: Ray Parker Jr. who has been successful with his group Radiyo and as a solo performer scoring the 1984 hit “Ghostbusters” and Randy Kerber who has played with all the big stars from Michael Jackson to Frank Sinatra. The bass guitar on the song was played by Nathan East, one of the most recorded bass players ever with contributions to an assumed number of over 2,000 recordings. And the unforgettable session drummer Carlos Vega played the drums on “Hold Me” – also his collaborations with top artists read like the who’s who of music business. The net is, Whitney’s first single was the perfect deal all the way from the song to the musicians involved.^{175 176 177 178 179 180 181}

1985 would be the year Whitney Houston released her first album. Released in February of that year, it was titled “Whitney Houston” and turned into a masterpiece with the support of Michael Masser – who had already produced Whitney’s first single we just talked about – multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter, record producer, artist, composer, author, director and educator Kashif, singer, songwriter, bass guitarist and member of the Jackson family Jermaine Jackson and singer, songwriter, musician and record producer Narada Michael Walden. Clive assembled the right folks who could make a hit record or maybe who could not not make a hit record – they were *that* good.^{175 182 183 184}

The “New York Times” called Whitney’s first album “an impressive, musically conservative showcase for an exceptional vocal talent”. That’s nice. And the “Rolling Stone” magazine called Whitney “one of the most exciting new voices in years”. The net is, the most important critics were impressed by Whitney’s first album. The first US single from the album was “You Give Good Love” which peaked at number 3 on the “US Billboard Hot 100” chart and reached number 1 on the “Hot R&B” chart. While it didn’t sell well outside of the US, the charts success at home was enough to help increase Whitney’s album sales. It was a nice and groovy soul ballad that showcased her voice very well but it wasn’t a truly great and epic song yet. The next single was “Saving All My Love for You” and it became Whitney’s first number 1 single in both the US and the UK. Whitney’s third US single from her debut album, “How Will I Know”, also reached the top of the charts and its video helped introduce her to the young audience of music TV station MTV. Whitney and her record label had already tried to convince MTV to play the video for the album’s first single “You Give Good Love” but they rejected it because it didn’t fit their playlist. That’s what they said. MTV *did* play “Saving All My Love for You” but only after it had become a big crossover hit. Whitney once said that MTV “had no choice but to play the video and I love it when they have no choice.” Whitney’s first album was on top of the “Billboard 200” albums chart one year after its release and it stayed there for an impressive 14 non-consecutive weeks. Its final single, “Greatest Love of All”, which

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

¹⁷⁶ Source 176: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hold_Me_\(Teddy_Pendergrass_and_Whitney_Houston_song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hold_Me_(Teddy_Pendergrass_and_Whitney_Houston_song))

¹⁷⁷ Source 177: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Masser

¹⁷⁸ Source 178: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randy_Kerber

¹⁷⁹ Source 179: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Parker_Jr.

¹⁸⁰ Source 180: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathan_East

¹⁸¹ Source 181: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlos_Vega

¹⁸² Source 182: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashif_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashif_(musician))

¹⁸³ Source 183: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jermaine_Jackson

¹⁸⁴ Source 184: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narada_Michael_Walden

was a cover of George Benson's 1977 song "The Greatest Love of All" was Whitney's biggest hit to date staying on top of the "Billboard Hot 100" chart for three weeks. In case you never heard George Benson's original, I encourage you to check it out online. And if you knew it already, how about another round of this wonderful song? It's so beautiful.¹⁷⁵

The song was written by Michael Masser and Linda Creed – the same dream team that wrote Whitney's first single "Hold Me" – and originally recorded by George Benson for the 1977 Muhammad Ali biopic "The Greatest". Not only Whitney covered it, by the way: Also Welsh singer Shirley Bassey recorded a wonderful rendition of it in 1979 for her album "The Magic is You".¹⁸⁵

It was at that time that Whitney broke her first record as her first album now was the first album by a woman to score three number 1 hits.

1986 was *her* year as she ended it as the number 1 artist of the year having the number 1 album of the year on the Billboard year-end charts – the first woman to accomplish both at the same time, by the way. At the time, her album was also the best-selling first album by a solo artist.

It had become an international success, selling 22 million copies worldwide and it was certified 13 times platinum – which translates to diamond – in the US alone.

Whitney was nominated for three "Grammy Awards" at the 1986 Grammys including "Album of the Year" and she won her first "Grammy Award" in category "Best Pop Vocal Performance, Female" for her song "Saving All My Love for You". Her performance of the song during the Grammy show later also earned her an "Emmy Award" in category "Outstanding Individual Performance in a Variety or Music Program".

In 1986 and 1987, Whitney won seven "American Music Awards" and an "MTV Video Music Award" as a result of her first album. In 1987, "Greatest Love of All" was nominated for a "Grammy Award" in category "Record of the Year". Whitney Houston's first album is part of "Rolling Stone" magazine's "500 Greatest Albums of All Time" and it is also on the "Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's" list of "Definitive 200" albums.

It marked an important milestone in music history and, back then, "USA Today" considered Whitney's entrance into the music industry as one of the top 25 musical milestones of the last 25 years. Whitney was a trailblazer and paved the way for many other African-American women such as Janet Jackson and Anita Baker to find notable success in popular music and on MTV.¹⁷⁵

Whitney's second album titled "Whitney" followed in June of 1987 and, again, it relied on the work by Michael Masser, Kashif, and Narada Michael Walden. Only Jermaine Jackson was replaced with drummer, guitarist, songwriter, DJ, remixer and music producer Jellybean Benitez.^{175 186}

It's clear that the record label bet on the success formula of Whitney's first album. A fact that critics didn't necessarily appreciate because they thought the second album was too similar to the first one. The "Rolling Stone", for example, said, "the narrow channel through which this talent has been directed is frustrating". That, of course, didn't prevent people from buying Whitney's second album and it from being a huge commercial success. Whitney broke another record when the album entered the "Billboard 200" album chart on the top spot as she was the first woman in music history to do so with an album. Also, she was the first artist to enter the album charts at the top spot in both the US and the UK while also reaching the number one spot or at least the top ten in dozens of other countries around the world.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

¹⁸⁵ Source 185: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greatest_Love_of_All

¹⁸⁶ Source 186: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Benitez

"I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me)" was the album's first single and it was a huge, worldwide hit reaching number one on the "Billboard Hot 100" chart and also topping the singles charts in many other countries including the UK, Germany and Australia. Needless to say that the next three singles from the album "Didn't We Almost Have It All", "So Emotional", and "Where Do Broken Hearts Go", all topped the "Billboard Hot 100" chart in the US, which gave Whitney a total of seven consecutive number one hits; this was a new record, the Bee Gees and the Beatles had shared the previous record of six consecutive number one hits, by the way. As you can see, Whitney was in good company now record-wise. She also became the first woman to have four number-one singles from one album.

Whitney's second album has been certified 9 times Platinum in the US where it sold over nine million copies and worldwide, it has sold a total of 20 million copies.

Whitney was nominated for three "Grammy Awards" in 1988 including for "Album of the Year" and she took home her second "Grammy" for the "Best Female Pop Vocal Performance" for her song "I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me)".

She also won two "American Music Awards" in 1988 and 1989 as well as one "Soul Train Music Award".

Also, Whitney recorded the song for NBC's coverage of the 1988 Summer Olympics: "One Moment in Time" was a top 5 hit in the US and a number one hit in both the UK and Germany.

At that point, Whitney had turned into the highest-earning African-American woman overall and the third highest entertainer after Bill Cosby and Eddie Murphy.¹⁷⁵

After some African-American critics had accused Whitney of "selling out" as they felt her singing on record lacked the soul that was present during her live concerts, she had her third album "I'm Your Baby Tonight", which was released in November 1990, go into more of an urban direction.

Whitney mainly relied on L.A. Reid, Babyface, Luther Vandross and Stevie Wonder on the production side of things and also helped produce the album which had a good blend of soulful ballads and up-tempo dance tracks. This time, the critics were undecided: Some, like the "Rolling Stone" were of the opinion that the album was her "best and most integrated album" while others like "Entertainment Weekly" thought that Whitney's shift towards an urban direction was "superficial". While I liked the album for its dance grooves, I'm leaning to agreeing with the latter group of critics who thought it may have been a bit of a superficial album. For example, it didn't have any monster ballad that would live up to the ones included on her first two albums.

Still, "I'm Your Baby Tonight" produced a number of hits for Whitney: The album's first two singles, "I'm Your Baby Tonight" and "All The Man That I Need" reached number one on the "Billboard Hot 100" chart, the song "Miracle" peaked at number nine and "My Name Is Not Susan" reached the top twenty in the US. The song "I Belong to You" even made it to the top ten of the R&B chart in the US and also earned Whitney a "Grammy Award" nomination; the album's sixth single was "We Didn't Know", a duet with Stevie Wonder which made it to the R&B top twenty. The album didn't make it beyond the number three spot on the "Billboard 200" album chart and was certified 4 times platinum in the US while selling 10 million copies worldwide.¹⁷⁵

On January 27th, 1991, Whitney performed the US national anthem at "Super Bowl XXV" which took place at the Tampa Stadium in Florida. A commercial single and video were made out of the performance and the single reached the top 20 on the "US Billboard Hot 100" chart giving Whitney the biggest chart hit for

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

a performance of the national anthem; before her, José Feliciano had managed to enter the charts and reach position 50 with his version in November 1968.¹⁷⁵

In 1992 then, Whitney starred in the movie "The Bodyguard" after she had received offers to work with Robert De Niro, Spike Lee and others as a result of her commercially successful records and her having become a superstar. This time, it felt right to her and so she decided to enter the movie business. The film earned mixed reviews and it seemed like a career as a movie star was not necessarily in the cards after her performance in "The Bodyguard". We already discussed the soundtrack and, of course, the single "I Will Always Love You" from the movie which is the very subject of this episode here.

Whitney spent pretty much most of 1993 and 1994 on the road as she used the movie as a vehicle for a world tour: "The Bodyguard World Tour". She also performed for Nelson Mandela in the White House to name just one of her highlights at the time. The movie, her record sales and her world tour made Whitney the number three highest-earning female entertainer of 1993 and 1994, just behind Oprah Winfrey and Barbra Streisand.¹⁷⁵

Despite the mixed reviews her performance in "The Bodyguard" had earned, Whitney, nevertheless, starred in another movie in 1995: This time in "Waiting to Exhale" alongside Angela Bassett and others. Critics were now more positive and Whitney was nominated for an "NAACP Image Award" for "Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture" but she lost to her co-star Angela Bassett.

Even better reviews followed in 1996 when she starred together with Denzel Washington in the holiday comedy "The Preacher's Wife". Again, she was nominated for an "NAACP Image Award" but this time she won it in category "Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture".

With serial "Grammy" winner Mervyn Warren, Whitney recorded and co-produced the movie's soundtrack which included six gospel songs with the "Georgia Mass Choir" and became the largest selling gospel album of all time. For the soundtrack, Whitney won in the "Favorite Adult Contemporary Artist" category at the 1997 "American Music Awards".

Also in 1997, Whitney co-produced and starred in a TV remake of "Cinderella" which was made by her own production company that by now had expanded into the TV and movie business and earned seven "Emmy" nominations. The year 1997 also saw Whitney receive the "Quincy Jones Award" for outstanding career achievements in the field of entertainment at the 12th "Soul Train Music Awards".¹⁷⁵

In November of 1998, Whitney released her first studio album in eight years which was titled "My Love Is Your Love". It was actually planned to be a greatest hits album with just a few new songs but the 6-weeks-long recording sessions went well and so Whitney was able to deliver a new full-length studio album which included producers Missy Elliott, Rodney Jerkins aka Darkchild and Wyclef Jean.

The album entered the "Billboard 100" album chart at position thirteen and this is also where it would peak. It was funkier and edgier than previous records sound-wise but also featured great ballads.

Thankfully, the new album managed to produce a couple of hits for Whitney such as "When You Believe" which was a duet with Mariah Carey for the 1998 soundtrack of "The Prince of Egypt" movie and which reached number 15 on the US charts, number four in the UK and the top 10 of the charts in a number of other countries; it even won an "Academy Award" in category "Best Original Song".¹⁷⁵

Another hit was "Heartbreak Hotel" which featured Faith Evans and Kelly Price and reached the number two spot of the pop charts in the US, held on to the number one spot on the US R&B chart for seven

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

weeks, made it to position 25 in the UK and received a nomination for "Best R&B Video" at the 1999 MTV VMAs. "It's Not Right but It's Okay" reached number four in the US, number three in the UK and won a "Grammy" for "Best Female R&B Vocal Performance"; this was "Grammy" number six for Whitney. The song "My Love Is Your Love" made it to the number four in the US and to number two in the UK, selling 3 million copies worldwide. And finally, the single "I Learned from the Best" climbed to number 27 in the US and number 19 in the UK. All the singles I just mentioned also charted in other countries beyond the US and the UK as well and became international hits. And all of them – except "When You Believe" – were number one hits on the "Billboard Hot Dance/Club Play" chart. In total, the album "My Love Is Your Love" sold 4 million units in the US, which translates to being certified as 4 times platinum, and worldwide, it sold eleven million units. While it didn't see breathtaking success with major number one hits, the album was a commercial success and also critics were pleased with the result. The "Rolling Stone" magazine said that Whitney was singing "with a bite in her voice" and "The Village Voice" called it "Whitney's sharpest and most satisfying so far". I'm not sure if I agree with the latter but it was a good album nevertheless. Very good but not great, in my opinion. Whitney then went on a very successful tour to share her new album live on stage with fans worldwide.

Whitney was named the "Top-selling R&B Female Artist of the Century" in November of 1999 based on certified US sales of 51 million copies at the time and also the soundtrack for the movie "The Bodyguard" was named the "Top-selling Soundtrack Album of the Century" by the Recording Industry Association of America or short RIAA. On top of that, Whitney won "The Artist of the Decade, Female" award for her extraordinary artistic contributions during the 1990s at the 14th "Soul Train Music Awards" as well as a "MTV Europe Music Award" in category "Best R&B".¹⁷⁵

In May 2000 then, the greatest hits album titled "Whitney: The Greatest Hits" was eventually released worldwide. The double disc set packed with Whitney's greatest successes didn't make it beyond the number five spot in the US but it reached the number one spot in the UK. It was a top 10 hit in a number of other countries as well.

On top of Whitney's famous ballads that she left unchanged for the album, she also added house and club remixes of many up-tempo hits. Also, four new songs were added to the package: "Could I Have This Kiss Forever", a duet with Enrique Iglesias, "Same Script, Different Cast", a duet with Deborah Cox, "If I Told You That", a duet with the legendary George Michael and "Fine". Three hits that had never appeared on any of Whitney's albums were also added: "One Moment in Time", "The Star Spangled Banner", and "If You Say My Eyes Are Beautiful", the latter being a duet with Jermaine Jackson from his 1986 "Precious Moments" album. "Whitney: The Greatest Hits" was certified 3 times platinum in the US and sold 10 million copies worldwide.¹⁷⁵

After that, the trouble began and Whitney's "good girl" image started to change due to her being hours late for interviews, photo shoots and rehearsals, her canceling concerts and talk-show appearances and several reports of erratic behavior. She even unexpectedly failed to perform at Clive Davis' induction to the "Rock and Roll Hall of Fame". At that time, rumors of drug usage by Whitney and her husband kept popping up in the media.¹⁷⁵

One incident that shows how severe the situation was were the "Academy Awards" where Whitney was scheduled to perform but then fired from the event by musical director and her longtime friend Burt

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

Bacharach as “her voice was shaky, she seemed distracted and jittery and her attitude was casual, almost defiant”; she was supposed to sing "Over the Rainbow" at the event but would start singing a different song during rehearsals.

Also in 2000, Whitney’s long-time executive assistant and friend, Robyn Crawford, left Whitney’s management company because the star refused to seek help for her drug dependency. At that point, her mother and others had been trying to convince Whitney to enter rehab for almost a year.¹⁷⁵

All these issues didn’t prevent Whitney from being able to sign one of the biggest record deals in music history with her label Arista in 2001. The contract was worth 100 million US dollars and required her to deliver six new albums on which she would also earn royalties on top of the 100 million. The drug use continued though and included, as she later admitted, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and pills.¹⁷⁵

Whitney’s fifth album “Just Whitney” came out in December 2002 and relied on production from Missy Elliott, Babyface and her then-husband Bobby Brown. This was the first time that Whitney didn’t produce with Clive Davis as he had been released by the top management at BMG which now oversaw Arista.

The album received mixed reviews and entered the “Billboard 200” album chart at number 9.

Four singles were released from the album and they weren’t major success stories on the “Billboard Hot 100” chart. Nevertheless, they became dance chart hits. The album was certified platinum in the US and sold around two million copies worldwide. Given the lack of focus on her music, Clive Davis not being her collaborator for the first time and the album not providing anything groundbreaking or breathtaking musically, it seems this was an expected outcome for the album “Just Whitney”.¹⁷⁵

Whitney’s first Christmas album “One Wish: The Holiday Album”, a collection of traditional holiday songs produced together with Mervyn Warren and Gordon Chambers, kicked off the holiday season in late 2003. Its single "One Wish (for Christmas)" found its way into the top 20 on the “Adult Contemporary” chart and the Christmas album was eventually certified gold in the US.¹⁷⁵

2004 was spent mostly on the road with Whitney performing all over the world. Her troubles with drugs and also with her husband continued and the world would be able to witness the sad shape she and her life were in from early 2004 on when she could be seen on her husband’s own reality TV show, “Being Bobby Brown” – definitely a low point for her. The couple was divorced in April of 2007.¹⁷⁵

By the time Whitney’s next album “I Look to You” was released in August 2009, she was off the drugs – at least based on what she told Oprah Winfrey in a long-awaited and anticipated September 2009 interview. The album entered the “Billboard 200” album chart at number one and provided Whitney with her best opening week with sales of 305,000 copies. “I Look to You” was her first number one album since “The Bodyguard” soundtrack and her first studio album to reach number one since 1987’s album “Whitney”. The album’s first two singles were the album’s title track "I Look to You" and "Million Dollar Bill".

“I Look to You” has been certified platinum in the US for sales of more than one million copies.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

While not unsuccessful, "I Look to You" and its singles didn't catapult Whitney back to superstardom. Also, the following world tour saw negative reviews by both critics and fans, Whitney cancelled shows and so on. She wasn't out of the woods.¹⁷⁵

Whitney was nominated for two "NAACP Image Awards" in January 2010, one in category "Best Female Artist" and one for "Best Music Video". She won in category "Best Music Video" for the single "I Look to You". Also in January 2010, Whitney received the "BET Honors Award" for her lifetime achievements spanning over 25 years in the music industry.

In May of 2011, Whitney enrolled in a rehabilitation center again, citing drug and alcohol problems. A representative for Houston said that the outpatient treatment was a part of Houston's "longstanding recovery process".¹⁷⁵

Whitney starred in one more movie, a remake of the 1976 film "Sparkle", which she also produced. The movie came out in August 2012 and its soundtrack included two songs by Whitney: "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" and "Celebrate" which she performed with R&B and pop singer Jordin Sparks and which would be the last song she ever recorded. The song entered the "Adult R&B Airplay" chart in the US at number 34 and it entered the "Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs" chart at number 84 later peaking at number 54. The whole soundtrack entered the "Billboard 200" album chart at number 26, the "Billboard R&B/Hip-Hop Albums" chart at number 7 and the "Billboard Top Soundtrack Albums" at number 1.¹⁷⁵

On February 11th, 2012, Whitney was found unconscious in suite 434 at "The Beverly Hilton" hotel in Beverly Hills, California, submerged in the bathtub. Paramedics weren't able to save her and she was pronounced dead at 3:55pm Pacific Time.

Two days earlier, on February 9th, 2012, Whitney had made her last public performance when she joined singer Kelly Price on stage in Hollywood, California, singing "Jesus Loves Me" with her.

That day, she also visited singers Brandy and Monica at their rehearsals for Clive Davis' pre-Grammy Awards party at "The Beverly Hilton" hotel.

Based on eyewitness reports, Whitney appeared "disheveled" and "erratic" in the days leading up to her death. On March 22nd, 2012, the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office reported that Whitney's death was caused by drowning and the "effects of atherosclerotic heart disease and cocaine use". They stated that the amount of cocaine found in her body indicated that she used the substance shortly before her death. Toxicology results also revealed additional drugs in her system: Benadryl, Xanax, cannabis and Flexeril. The manner of death was listed as an "accident". So it seems that poor Whitney drowned in her bathtub as a result of her heart disease and all those drugs in her system. So sad.¹⁷⁵

An invitation-only memorial service was held for Whitney on Saturday, February 18th, 2012, at the New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey and she was buried on February 19th, 2012, at the Fairview Cemetery, in Westfield, New Jersey, next to her father, John Russell Houston, who had died in 2003.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

On the day of Whitney's death, February 11th, 2012, she was expected to attend Clive Davis' pre-Grammy party. It went on as scheduled but it was turned into a tribute to Whitney where Clive said the following about her death at the evening's start:

"By now you have all learned of the unspeakably tragic news of our beloved Whitney's passing. I don't have to mask my emotion in front of a room full of so many dear friends. I am personally devastated by the loss of someone who has meant so much to me for so many years. Whitney was so full of life. She was so looking forward to tonight even though she wasn't scheduled to perform. Whitney was a beautiful person and a talent beyond compare. She graced this stage with her regal presence and gave so many memorable performances here over the years. Simply put, Whitney would have wanted the music to go on and her family asked that we carry on."

Singer Tony Bennett sang "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" at the party and said "First, it was Michael Jackson, then Amy Winehouse, now, the magnificent Whitney Houston. When I first heard her, I called Clive Davis and said, 'You finally found the greatest singer I've ever heard in my life.'"

Not everybody was on board with Clive's decision to have the party while a police investigation was being conducted in Whitney's hotel room and her body was still in the building. While Clive said Whitney would have wanted the show to go on, singer Chaka Khan, for example, was sure that Whitney wouldn't have wanted the party to go ahead. While it may not have been the most appropriate move on Clive's side, who, at the end of the day is an ice cold business man and they say there are no friendships in the music business, it still gave a lot of Whitney's friends in the music biz an opportunity to honor her and grief together. That, at least, is my take on this.¹⁷⁵

Whitney Houston, one of the greatest voices and entertainers we ever had. A whirlwind life that ended way too soon at the young age of 48.

The life of her only child, Bobbi Kristina Brown, would sadly end in a very similar way on July 26th, 2015 after nearly six months in a coma after having been found unconscious in a filled bathtub in her home. The medical examiner found the "underlying cause" of death as "immersion associated with drug intoxication" but the exact manner of death could not be ascertained. Their summary statement read the "death was clearly not due to natural causes, but the medical examiner was not able to determine whether death was due to intentional or accidental causes, and therefore classified the manner of death as undetermined." Bobbi Kristina's husband was never charged in the case but later found responsible in a wrongful death lawsuit and ordered to pay 36 million dollars to her estate.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁵ Source 175: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

¹⁸⁷ Source 187: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobbi_Kristina_Brown

The Music

"I Will Always Love You" is in the key of C Major and it has a tempo of 66 beats per minute.¹⁸⁸

In terms of its structure, "I Will Always Love You" resembles a standard where, while its basic chords and structure are in place, the song's arrangements and instrumentation leave room for broad interpretations. Dolly's original version is sparse, and driven by a mournful banjo, a pedal steel guitar and a guitar, as well as whispers of a piano and a fiddle, before a chorus of background harmonies appear near the end, like a ghostly church choir. Whitney's version of the song is also sparse at first, although its production is, of course, more modern and also more sparkling in a sense; when Whitney goes for the high note at the end of the song, one critic once wrote that her stunning octave-jump is pure cathartic anguish.¹³

Dolly managed to write a beautiful melody that is able to carry a lot of emotional weight which allowed her to keep the song pretty straightforward in terms of its structure, chords, etc.

One source I found said that the way the song switches from the gentle verses, with chord changes as bittersweet as the memories the protagonist carries, to the soaring refrains, somehow triumphant and heartbroken all at once, represents with moving accuracy the way a conversation like that would likely transform from calm and collected to having the emotional floodgates blasted wide-open.⁶⁵

Let's now take a look at Whitney Houston's cover version of the song. How about we kick this next section off with David Foster's words? He is the one who wrote the arrangement for Whitney's version and he said: "When you think about how many rules that song broke for radio — it was a ballad, it was an R&B singer doing a country song, it's got that a cappella part, it's long. It was a perfect storm. I don't want to overdramatize but it is the love song of the century."⁴²

David's arrangement is undoubtedly gold and also the mix, that carries Dave Reitzas' signature to a large extent, is as good as it gets. The song clearly has the feel of a 1990s R&B song which is expressed by the electric piano that was used, for example – a fact that some critics didn't like as it, and I have to admit I agree with them, didn't necessarily age well beyond the 1990s. Another part not everyone seems to like is the sax solo: While some love the instrument, others feel like it's a bit too abrasive for the song. I kind of like it, actually.¹⁸⁹

Another sometimes controversial part of the song is its key change at three minutes and ten seconds. Here, the song basically shifts into a new gear moving the chorus up. I think David has done this very well and this is a prime example for a key change done right. The key change here doesn't interrupt the flow of the song and it comes as a bit of a surprise. Actually, it's elements like this key change that make Whitney's version of the song so epic, in my opinion. This is a key change as all-conquering and all-powerful as can be. Before the key change, there is a short pause in the song which creates the space to

¹³ Source 13: <https://theboot.com/dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you-legacy/>

⁴² Source 42: <https://ew.com/article/2012/12/14/oral-history-whitneys-anthem-i-will-always-love-you/>

⁶⁵ Source 65: <https://americansongwriter.com/lyric-of-the-week-dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you/?nab=1>

¹⁸⁸ Source 188: <https://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtd.asp?ppn=MN0015593>

¹⁸⁹ Source 189: <https://www.soundonsound.com/people/mix-review-0518>

lure the listener in as they are wondering what's coming next. And what's coming next is this powerful chorus now moved up a bit on the scale.^{190 191}

I really recommend listening to *this* part of the song: At 3 minutes and 5 seconds, the audience is prepared for the key change and at 3 minutes and 10 seconds, the chorus hits our ears with full force.¹⁹²

There's even a 2017 study you can check out online, mostly by neuroscientists of Georgetown University, that deals with the relationship between harmonic surprise and preference in popular music. Based on this study, which examined 545 top-selling pop songs, a song needs a sudden chord change in order to achieve greatness. The researchers found that the most surprising music was the most pleasurable and that a surprise followed by a predictable outcome was the most pleasurable. These are both criteria that our song here fulfills 100%.^{191 193}

Let's now go through the song from start to finish: The song starts with Whitney's famous but unusual acapella intro which serves as the first verse of the song and lasts a long 45 seconds before any instruments set in for the chorus. Just Whitney's voice – monophonic and unaccompanied – with a decent amount of vibrato in her voice, which highlights her smooth and connected articulation. Whitney's vibrato was oftentimes achieved by her moving her jaw as part of the vibrato motion which is something most singers don't necessarily do. That acapella was quite a challenge for radio stations. Personally, I've never been a fan of the acapella intro but I must say I love the transition from the acapella part to the first instruments getting introduced at the beginning of the first chorus. During that first and quiet chorus, the piano and the violin are added along with a beautiful upward leap in Whitney's voice, which shows off a small piece of the range she uses in the song later. The instruments that are added really set the tone for the whole song from the very beginning on and compliment the lyrics well as they too start out simply. The guitar goes first while Whitney softly begins singing the first chorus. Her singing gets louder along with the music's volume during this first chorus. At the end of the first chorus, 1 minute and 9 seconds into the song, a small bridge is squeezed in which allows for a very elegant and smooth transition to the second verse which starts at 1 minute and 18 seconds and immediately has percussions added to finally add a beat to the song. The second chorus which is louder and more dramatic than the first chorus starts at 1 minute and 47 seconds and then leads into the long saxophone solo which can be heard from the 2 minutes and 9 seconds mark until the 2 minutes and 38 seconds mark. Then, the third verse starts and here, the dynamics build again until we reach the famous four count pause at 3 minutes and 5 seconds which then ends with the famous key change for the third chorus of the song at 3 minutes and 10 seconds. This third and loud chorus is where things are getting really epic. The chorus repeats itself a few times changing from higher octaves back down to lower ones showing off the movement and range in Whitney's voice. Whitney ends the song with a beautiful outro during which just a few instruments are played – there is no more percussion here, by the way – and which starts at 3 minutes and 50 seconds when the dramatic chorus ends. Here, Whitney uses her voice to add scales as she raises her pitch a total two

¹⁹⁰ Source 190: <http://whythissongisgreat.blogspot.com/2015/03/musical-modulations-my-7-favorites.html>

¹⁹¹ Source 191: <https://www.popularmechanics.com/culture/music/a29759728/science-chord-changes/>

¹⁹² Source 192: <http://keychangeblog.blogspot.com/2010/06/i-will-always-love-you.html>

¹⁹³ Source 193: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2017.00263/full>

octaves, holding the last note in each octave so we can hear the distinction. The song ends at 4 minutes and 30 seconds.^{189 194 195}

The structure of David Foster's arrangement is brilliant. The technique of starting the music in the song softly, then reaching a crescendo in the middle, and then dropping off to soft again is similar to riding the roller coaster ride of love. We want the middle part and exhilaration of love to last as long as possible. And if or when it starts to end, hopefully we were happy for that joyful ride while we were on it. The sweet agony of loving and losing is exemplified here as the music has now been used to bring our feelings to the surface. With a tear in our eye, we can feel miserable for Whitney's loss but we're thankful this is not happening to us.¹⁹⁵

On to a couple of things that stick out from a vocal and production or engineering perspective. 12 seconds into the song, Whitney sings "I would" as part of her acapella intro and there's some sort of sound effect on top of the "w" in the word "would" that doesn't belong there. And then again, 35 seconds into the song, Whitney sings "the way" as part of her acapella intro and there's again some sort of sound effect on top of the "w" in the word "way" that doesn't belong there. Also, the way the acapella ends at around 42 seconds with the letter "y" in the word "way" doesn't sound 100% clean to me. But obviously, those are minor flaws that one doesn't really hear when casually listening to the song. And they don't take away anything from the great mixing and engineering done by Dave Reitzas and the rest of the team. But they are noteworthy and so I just wanted to mention them. You gotta think of it this way: If such effects remained in the master version, Dave and the guys had already done an amazing job of improving the raw copy they had to work with and which was probably worse. Their great work also surfaces starting at the 3 minutes and 57 seconds mark when Whitney sings the word "you" which changes after around 3.5 seconds into a different timbral airness indicating that they must have added some sort of crossfade effect from one recorded vocal to the next without it being really noticeable.

Also, 10 seconds into the song, just before "I would only", you can hear what is probably Whitney's mouth closing which could have been removed for a cleaner sound. Then, right after the words "but I know" at 28 seconds, there's another sound that could have been removed. And also right after "but I know", the background noise fades out which is more noticeable than it could have been. And finally, the letter "s" in "so I'll go" at 21 seconds is not entirely clean. I know what you may be thinking now. Gosh, give them a break. I know. Again, this is not to say this was bad mixing and mastering but just to show that even the greatest hits in the world are not perfect – perfection is not necessary – and what a great job Dave and his team must have done to arrive at this result when the raw version must have been of questionable quality. Thinking about it and considering the minor flaws that remained in the song, one wonders if the master was really final before it went out to the record and CD manufacturing plants. I would say that there's reasonable doubt that that was the case but we'll probably never find out the truth.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Source 189: <https://www.soundonsound.com/people/mix-review-0518>

¹⁹⁴ Source 194: <https://elizabethdernihach.wordpress.com/2017/02/07/i-will-always-love-you-musical-analysis/>

¹⁹⁵ Source 195: https://stonybrook.digication.com/terri_squires/Musical_Text_Analysis

The Lyrics

When looking at the lyrics, we have to remember the fact that Dolly Parton wrote the song for her mentor, collaborator and close friend Porter Wagoner. In that sense, "I Will Always Love You" is not a conventional love song.¹²

And while the origins of the song may be specific to Dolly, its sentiment is universal. The woman singing the song knows that a relationship is over but she still values the time she spent with the person she is leaving. She still wants the best for him. These bittersweet lyrical qualities helped turn "I Will Always Love You" into a #1 hit – a song that has often been listed among the best country love songs.¹⁴

"I Will Always Love You" is an example of how a straightforward and direct approach to songwriting can be as successful or even more successful as something more purposely complex. There's no fancy wordplay in Dolly's lyrics, no metaphors or allusions. But her words sound like the conversation a person would have in that situation, or, if the face-to-face would be too difficult, at least, her words sound like a heartfelt farewell letter.⁶⁵

Author Curtis W. Ellison once remarked that the song "speaks about the breakup of a relationship between a man and a woman that does not descend into unremitting domestic turmoil but instead envisions parting with respect – because of the initiative of the woman".¹

And that exactly was Dolly's intention. Even though she was determined to move on, she wanted to convey a message of gratitude in the song. She explained it as follows: "It's saying, 'Just because I'm going doesn't mean I won't love you. I appreciate you and I hope you do great and I appreciate everything you've done but I'm out of here.' That's basically what I was saying."¹¹

The major elements of poetry used in the song include hyperbole and repetition.

One example for the use of hyperbole is when it says, "So I'll go, but I know I'll think of you every step of the way". It is rather unlikely that she will really think of him every step of the way.

Another example is when it says, "Bittersweet memories, that is all I'm taking with me". It is rather unlikely that she is *only* taking bittersweet memories with her. Or maybe she is not taking *any* of those memories with her. It would also be reasonable to question what *exactly* the bittersweet memories are in this context. The repetition element, on the other hand, manifests itself mainly in the repeated use of "I will always love you" which occurs countless times – see, I'm now exaggerating here – in the song and is also sung during the climax of the song.¹⁹⁶

So why do we feel so attracted to the song? Why does it move us that much every time we hear it?

One analyst assumed that it is partly because the song effectively uses a combination of honest lyrics, persuasive instrumental and the unusual strategy of some sort of speaking instead of singing to evoke catharsis in the audience while simultaneously giving them a subtle reminder to cherish the loved ones in

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

¹¹ Source 11: <http://www.cmt.com/news/1657965/dolly-parton-shares-inspiration-of-i-will-always-love-you/>

¹² Source 12: <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/dolly-parton/i-will-always-love-you>

¹⁴ Source 14: <https://www.liveabout.com/i-will-always-love-you-history-931698>

⁶⁵ Source 65: <https://americansongwriter.com/lyric-of-the-week-dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you/?nab=1>

¹⁹⁶ Source 196: <https://prezi.com/smqx5s88vaat/i-will-always-love-you-dolly-parton-whitney-houston/>

their lives. And, indeed, the element of catharsis must not be underestimated here: Greek philosopher Aristotle famously suggested the idea of catharsis by saying that “by overwhelming us with an undesirable emotion, music or drama somehow purges us of it”. It is assumed that when you feel sad for a few moments, where there's no real reason for the emotion, it feels even better when you stop. This is exactly how this song connects to our hearts and brains.¹⁹⁵

Both Dolly's and Whitney's voices are squarely at the forefront of the mix of the song. While occasionally there's a slight tremble to their tone, their delivery overall is strong and forthright as they speak their truths.¹³

From the beginning of the song we are met with compelling, simple, and straightforward lyrics which are used to quickly pull in the audience and keep them listening. The artist is conflicted and wants us to know why. She does not think that she is good enough for her lover as she tells him “If I should stay, I would only be in your way”. So, at first, the singer is overly deferential while asserting her reasons for leaving but her tender confidence soon wins out when she sings “So I'll go, but I know I'll think of you each step of the way.”^{13 195}

Here's **verse 1**:¹⁹⁷

*If I should stay
I would only be in your way
So I'll go but I know
I'll think of you every step of the way*

The first acapella verse is followed by the **first chorus** where, for the first of many times, the song mentions the title “I Will Always Love You”:¹⁹⁷

*And I will always love you
I will always love you*

After the first short chorus, there is the **bridge** that gets us to the second verse:¹⁹⁷

*You
My darling, you*

Then, **verse 2** follows where it becomes clear that the singer now has leverage in this situation when she sings: “Goodbye, please don't cry. We both know that I'm not what you need.” Here's the full verse:¹⁹⁷

*Bittersweet memories
That is all I'm taking with me
So good-bye
Please don't cry
We both know I'm not what you, you need*

¹³ Source 13: <https://theboot.com/dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you-legacy/>

¹⁹⁵ Source 195: https://stonybrook.digication.com/terri_squires/Musical_Text_Analysis

¹⁹⁷ Source 197: <https://genius.com/Whitney-houston-i-will-always-love-you-lyrics>

After that, it's time for the louder **second chorus**:¹⁹⁷

*And I will always love you
I will always love you
You*

In **verse 3**, the female singer wishes him “joy, happiness and above all she wishes him love” even though she is telling him she is leaving. The emotional apex of "I Will Always Love You" uses unadorned and economical language – "I hope life treats you kind and I hope that you have all that you ever dreamed of" – to express parting thanks. Other songwriters might be inclined to overdo the sentiment at this point; however, the straightforward, raw emotion of the song's lyrics underscores Dolly's strength as a songwriter. "I Will Always Love You" might have been written about a specific incident but the feelings she expresses are wholly universal.¹³ Here's the full third verse that follows the saxophone solo:¹⁹⁷

*I hope life treats you kind
And I hope you have all you've dreamed of
And I'm wishing you joy and happiness
But above all this, I wish you love*

After a short pause, the epic **3rd chorus** follows with a shifted key and then a decent amount of repetition:¹⁹⁷

*And I will always love you
I will always love you
I will always love you
I will always love you
I will always love you
I, I will always love you*

Finally, the song closes with the **outro**:¹⁹⁷

*You
Darling, I love you
I'll always
I'll always love you*

The easy to remember lyrics tell the audience the singer's story while conveying her emotional distress at the same time. Even if you have never felt the pain of a breakup, you can understand what the artist is going through and feel the anguish in her words.

We all have loved someone, whether it is a family member, close friend or significant other. And in time, we will lose some of them. Sad songs like “I Will Always Love You” remind us how fragile that love can be. We should cherish the love we have, while we can and for as long as we can. And we can listen to sad songs like this and be appreciative for having them in our lives.¹⁹⁵

¹³ Source 13: <https://theboot.com/dolly-parton-i-will-always-love-you-legacy/>

¹⁹⁵ Source 195: https://stonybrook.digication.com/terri_squires/Musical_Text_Analysis

¹⁹⁷ Source 197: <https://genius.com/Whitney-houston-i-will-always-love-you-lyrics>

The Legacy

Simply put, "I Will Always Love You" is – without any doubt – is not only one of the commercially most successful songs of all time but also one of the best pop songs ever written. And its interpretations by both Dolly Parton and Whitney Houston – supported by world-class musicians – are among the best pop music performances the world has ever seen.

Therefore, it was just a natural consequence that, in 2020, the song was selected by the “Library of Congress” for preservation in the “National Recording Registry” for being "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant".¹

As of this recording, “I Will Always Love You” remains one of Dolly’s signature songs and the closing number of most of her live shows. And up until Whitney’s untimely death, it was also *her* signature song which kind of marked the climax of each of her concerts.¹⁸

An interesting side note is that although Dolly had much success with the song, a lot of people are unaware of its origin. During an interview, Dolly’s manager Danny Nozel said that "one thing we found out from ‘American Idol’ is that most people don't know that Dolly Parton wrote the track". Well, I guess and hope that the show played a big role in clearing up this misunderstanding.¹

In his 1995 book “Country Music Culture: From Hard Times to Heaven”, Curtis W. Ellison wrote: "In the early 1990s, when ambiguity in romantic relationships accompanies changing expectations for both men and women, this song demonstrates Dolly Parton's appeal as a songwriter in the pop music market." And Ken Knight, the author of the 2008 book “The Midnight Show: Late Night Cable-TV ‘Guy-Flicks’ of the '80s” stated that Dolly is the only singer who can sing "I Will Always Love You" and "make it memorable". But there are also voices critical of Dolly. Writer Paul Simpson, for example, criticized her, commenting that the track was only written to "soften the blow" of Dolly Parton’s and Porter Wagoner's split. Well, OK, if that would have been part of her motivation, would that have been *that* bad? I don’t think so.¹

In addition to all the records the song broke in terms of sales, etc., it is noteworthy to mention that it came in at number 1 in a 2011 Valentine's Day poll by “CMT” to find the best love song. This is just one example that shows that the song’s legacy lives on and that “I Will Always Love You” will continue to be loved by many future generations to come. One of the reasons with regard to its lyrics is that the song resonates with listeners because it demonstrates how we’d all like to behave at the end of a loving relationship, with dignity and compassion intact, though few of us are able to reach that high ground at such a low point. Or maybe Porter Wagoner said it best back when the song came out when he said that, no matter who sings it, it is still about the prettiest song you’ll ever hear.^{12 65}

And here’s another important and interesting perspective on the song: Even if it was never intended to do so, Whitney Houston's version of "I Will Always Love You" is symbolic of a change in the American

¹ Source 1: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Will_Always_Love_You

¹² Source 12: <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/dolly-parton/i-will-always-love-you>

¹⁸ Source 18: <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country/flashback-dolly-parton-writes-i-will-always-love-you-for-former-boss-179134/>

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cultural landscape in ways that still reverberate today. Though the song was originally written by Dolly for a country music audience, Whitney's soulful, gospel-infused cover version made it emblematic of something larger than music. As journalist and critic Joe Levy wrote in an analysis of the song for the "Hollywood Reporter", Whitney's version of "I Will Always Love You" shattered expectations of what was possible in music when it came to crossover appeal to different groups. Joe wrote: "Even if you never knew this was a country cover, it still crosswires genres and audiences and upends the notion that black and white music audiences don't talk directly to each other." What I'm reading there is that a good song is a good song and it will be loved by audiences no matter their cultural background, the color of their skin, their hair, their eyes, etc. Music is universal. I think while the US is, unfortunately, far from racial justice, the word "crossover" was an even bigger topic back then than it is now when it comes to pop music specifically. And Whitney played a very important role to break down barriers like MTV, for example, not playing anything that didn't have the famous "crossover appeal" they were looking for.⁶¹

Before we end this episode of "The Greatest Hits Explained", let's take a quick look at the other cover versions of "I Will Always Love You" beyond Dolly Parton's own versions, Linda Ronstadt's version and Whitney Houston's million seller which we already discussed in this episode.

A number of other artists have tried their luck at their own versions of this wonderful ballad including country singers LeAnn Rimes and Melissa Etheridge, disco queen Gloria Gaynor and even superstar Beyoncé.⁶¹

Not counting the versions in other languages, I counted over one hundred cover versions of the song and over fifty instrumental versions of the song. Wow. Dolly Parton's bank account must be very happy.¹⁹⁸ While I haven't listened to *all* cover versions of the song, I must say that at least the ones by the more famous artists I just mentioned don't come *anywhere* close to Dolly's or Whitney's interpretations of the song.

The song also appeared in movies. In addition to the 1982 re-recording for "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" soundtrack album, Dolly's original 1974 recording of the song also appeared in Martin Scorsese's 1974 film "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore" and in the 1996 film "It's My Party".¹

"I Will Always Love You" – one of the most beautiful and most successful pop songs of all time.

⁶¹ Source 61: <https://www.nickiswift.com/211533/the-real-reason-whitney-houston-covered-i-will-always-love-you-by-dolly-parton/>

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The Good-Bye

That was it. What a journey. Another episode of “The Greatest Hits Explained” with me, Michael Winter, your host and editor of the show comes to an end.

Please note that you can find a link to the sources I used for this show in the show description. Also, I’m mentioning all the sources I used at the very end of this show. As I explained during the intro, this show is based on my personal research of sources I found online and otherwise. Therefore, I owe a lot of thanks to the authors of these original sources. I have used both paraphrased and literal content and quotes from these sources without declaring them during the show as it would have taken away from the flow. In no way was this intended to claim that I came up with all the original content. I see my job as putting together and processing the content from a variety of different sources in a way that it creates a new and exciting narrative that wouldn’t necessarily be possible and available using the single sources alone in an unprocessed way.

And if there’s anything that I pronounced incorrectly, please forgive me. I did my best.

I hope you enjoyed this musical journey during which we explored many interesting facts about the wonderful song “I Will Always Love You” by Dolly Parton most famously recorded by Whitney Houston which included lots of information about Dolly Parton and Whitney Houston as well as the people involved in making this song such a success and classic.

If so, if you enjoyed this musical journey, please subscribe and make sure to also check out and tune in to other episodes of “The Greatest Hits Explained”.

Until then, stay safe, have music in your heart and always remember that music is one of the major positive forces that connects us all as it doesn’t know any borders.

Outro

If you like this show, please subscribe, leave a review, a like, a comment – whatever applies to the specific platform on which you’re listening to this. Also, I really appreciate donations. You can find the link on my website or YouTube channel. Those donations help me cover my expenses for this show such as hosting fees, equipment cost, etc. I’m doing all of this to entertain *you* based on *my* endless love for music and since there is no big network pumping dollars into this show, I’m the one who has to pay for all related expenses. Therefore, a small donation would already be amazing.

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