

## AN OUTLAW WHO WORE MANY HATS

Though he didn't achieve the recording success of Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, Tompall Glaser is considered a central figure in the Outlaw movement for his behind-the-scenes work as a publisher and studio owner. He also possessed a rebel spirit that helped define the musical era.

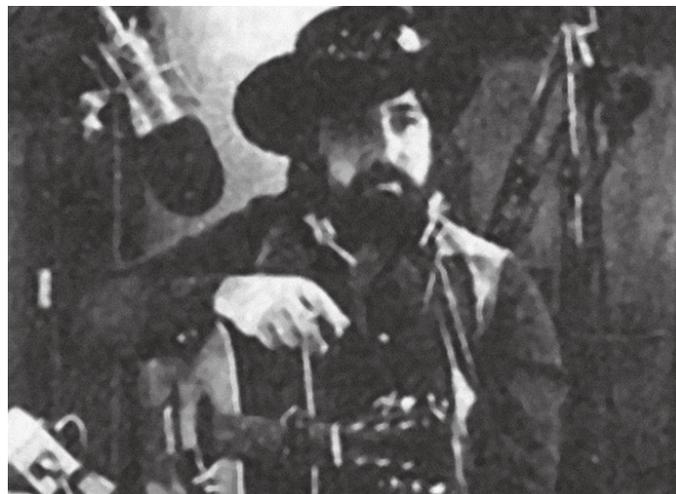
"Tompall was way ahead of the game in terms of artist rights and taking control of the creative process and encouraging people to do what was in their heart and soul," Nashville producer Kyle Lehning said.

Born Thomas Paul Glaser on September 3, 1933, in Spalding, Nebraska, he was raised on a farm, the fourth of six children. As a youngster, he began singing with younger brothers Chuck and Jim on local radio and at local events. In 1957, the trio made their national network TV debut on *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*, a popular variety show. Two years later, country star Marty Robbins lured the brothers to Nashville to sing smooth backup vocals at his concerts and on recordings.

As Tompall & The Glaser Brothers, the Glasers also recorded their own music, produced by "Cowboy" Jack Clement, and they formed their own publishing company. In 1966, Glaser and Harlan Howard wrote "Streets of Baltimore," a major hit for Bobby Bare. Clement and Bare would also go on to be influential in Nashville's Outlaw movement.

Money earned from publishing allowed the three brothers in 1970 to open Glaser Sound Studios, which came to be known as "Hillbilly Central." That same year the trio won the Country Music Association award for Top Vocal Group. Three years later, the brothers went their separate ways, and Tompall Glaser began a solo career.

Almost immediately, the Glasers' independent studio drew in artists and songwriters who were struggling with the creative controls of the major record labels. Soon it turned into a gathering place for late-night parties and the starting point for legendary expeditions to nearby pinball machines. Glaser became close friends with Waylon Jennings, who set up an office at the studio as his relationship with his label, RCA, soured. Jennings's *Dreaming My Dreams*, produced by Clement, was among the groundbreaking albums created at the studio.



"Before Waylon and Tompall got together, they didn't know there was anybody else like them," studio secretary Hazel Smith said. "I think both of them secretly thought they might be crazy. They'd both been going their own way alone for so long, it never even entered their minds that somebody else might feel the same way about country music and Nashville."

In 1973, Glaser and Jennings co-produced Jennings's *Honky Tonk Heroes*, a landmark album that featured nine songs written by Billy Joe Shaver. Three years later, Glaser and Jennings joined Jennings's wife, Jessi Colter, and Willie Nelson on a compilation album, *Wanted! The Outlaws*. It became the first country album to be certified platinum, with more than one million sales, and it cemented the Outlaw image of all four artists in the public's mind.

Among the cuts on the album was Glaser's most successful solo single, "Put Another Log on the Fire," written by Shel Silverstein; it reached #24 on the country chart in 1975.

Glaser and Jennings ultimately ended their friendship over a publishing dispute. In the early 1980s, the Glaser Brothers briefly reunited, earning a #2 hit with Kris Kristofferson's "Lovin' Her Was Easier (Than Anything I'll Ever Do Again)."

Glaser recorded his final solo album in 1986. He died at age seventy-nine on August 12, 2013, in Nashville after a lengthy illness.

## SOURCES

*Outlaw: Waylon, Willie, Kris, and the Renegades of Nashville* by Michael Streissguth; *The Story of the Glaser Brothers: From Nebraska Ranchers to Nashville Rebels* documentary (as quoted in *The New York Times*); *USA Today*

## LISTEN

"Put Another Log on the Fire"  
(written by Shel Silverstein)