

Bobby Braddock: A Lifetime of Hitmaking

Songwriters who want long careers have to keep up with changes in musical taste. It's a difficult thing to do, and no one has done it better than Bobby Braddock. The Country Music Hall of Fame member has written #1 songs in five different decades.

"When you've been around as long as I have, I think people expect you to burn out or get too old to do it," Braddock said of his fifty-plus years in music.

His success has more to do with discipline than with inspiration. "You can make yourself write stuff," he said. "You keep doing it and keep doing it, and, eventually, the good stuff will come, and you will become inspired."

Braddock was born August 5, 1940, in Lakeland, Florida, and he grew up in nearby Auburndale. He started taking piano lessons at age seven and spent "six years of little old ladies trying to teach me to read music." He finally discovered "I could learn more piano listening carefully to our records than from the conventional, by-the-book music teachers." The boy's musical interests ranged from bluegrass to barbershop quartets, but he became increasingly drawn to country and rock & roll.

He spent his late teens and early twenties playing keyboards in local rock bands, then he moved to Nashville in 1964. After finding work as the piano player in Marty Robbins's touring band, Braddock also began pitching songs to Robbins, who was a country star. Robbins recorded some of Bobby's songs, and within two years, Braddock signed a contract to write songs for Tree Publishing Company.

Over the years, he has turned out witty novelty songs and heartbreaking ballads. His most famous ballad is "He Stopped



Loving Her Today." Co-written with Curly Putman, and released in 1980 by George Jones, it is considered by many to be the greatest country song of all time.

Braddock has kept his country sound fresh by paying attention to new music in all popular genres, including hard rock and rap. "I think staying hip to what everybody's doing helps you in country music," he says, "since country music is not always all that country anyway."

Still, Braddock also knows how lucky he has been. "You can do everything right," he says. "You can have the right attitude and be totally dedicated, writing great songs, all of that. If the stars aren't right, sometimes it just won't happen."

Bobby Braddock was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2011.

Sources: *American Songwriter*, *Encyclopedia of Country Music*,
Down in Orburndale: A Songwriter's Youth in Old Florida by Bobby Braddock, *Songwriter Magazine*

LISTEN:

Some of Bobby Braddock's songs made popular by other artists:

"D-I-V-O-R-C-E" (Tammy Wynette)

"Golden Ring" (George Jones, Tammy Wynette)

"He Stopped Loving Her Today" (George Jones)

"Something to Brag About" (Charlie Louvin, Melba Montgomery)

"Would You Catch a Falling Star" (John Anderson)