



CHRIS STAPLETON: A SONGWRITER FIRST

Chris Stapleton didn't aim to be a star. He wanted to write songs *for* the stars.

Chris was born in 1978 in Lexington, Kentucky, and raised in the small town of Staffordsville, in eastern Kentucky. He grew up singing and began playing guitar around age twelve. He didn't focus on music right away. Instead, he played on school sports teams and performed in musicals in high school.

Stapleton grew up listening to lots of different artists and styles, including country, soul, blues, R&B, and rap, all of which have influenced his music. As an artist, Stapleton has also found inspiration in musicians such as Aerosmith, the Judds, Ricky Skaggs, Snoop Dogg, and Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers.

Stapleton first moved to Nashville in 1996, to attend Vanderbilt University and study engineering, but he quickly found he wasn't excited about the subject. He returned to Kentucky, where he sold cars, drove an ice truck, and worked at a pizzeria while writing songs and playing music.

When Stapleton began working with songwriter Steve Leslie, he realized it was possible to have a career in songwriting. He moved back to Nashville in 2001 and signed with a music-publishing company as a full-time songwriter. Within two years, Stapleton's songs were being recorded and released by major artists like Gary Allan and Patty Loveless. He earned his first *Billboard* #1 hit as a songwriter with Josh Turner's



"Your Man" in 2006 and has written several more #1 hits for himself and others.

Also in 2006, Stapleton joined the bluegrass band the SteelDrivers as lead singer, guitarist, and songwriter. Later that year, his rock band, the Jompson Brothers, released their first and only album. During this time, he also stayed busy recording background vocals for other artists.

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LISTEN

"Traveller," "Cold," "Say Something" (with Justin Timberlake), "On the Run" (by the Jompson Brothers)



CHRIS STAPLETON: A SONGWRITER FIRST (CONTINUED)

After his father’s death in 2013, Stapleton took an eleven-day road trip to Arizona and began looking back to the music and artists he admired. He decided he wanted to make his own kind of music and began writing songs for his first album, *Traveller*.

Stapleton became a star after performing one of his songs from *Traveller* with pop star Justin Timberlake at the 2015 Country Music Association Awards. Stapleton won all three CMA awards for which he was nominated that year, and following the show, his album *Traveller* catapulted to #1 on the country charts.

As of 2022, Stapleton has written more than 170 songs for artists such as Adele, Justin Timberlake, and Darius Rucker, and he remains a top-selling recording artist.



CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What jobs did Stapleton have before becoming a successful songwriter?

2. Circle the word “catapulted” in the eighth paragraph. Underline the clue words and phrases that help you understand the meaning of the word.

3. What character trait most helped Stapleton achieve his goal of becoming a songwriter?

