



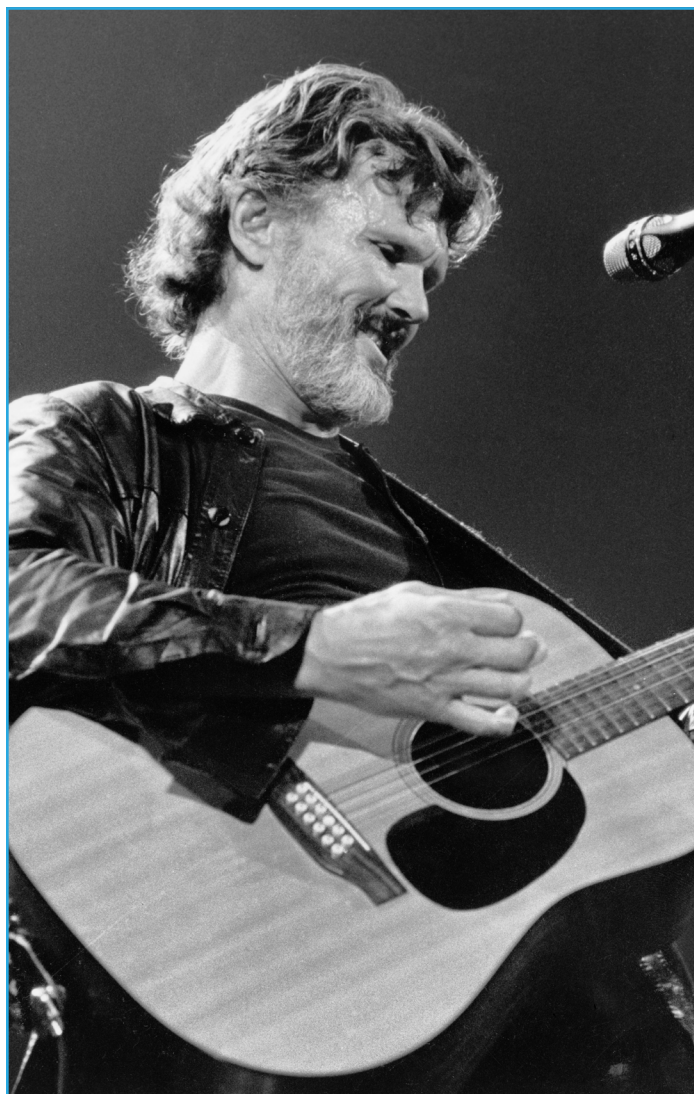
## KRIS KRISTOFFERSON: MUSICAL REBEL

For Kris Kristofferson, the fastest road to Nashville was a series of detours. He did well in college in literature. He joined the U.S. Army, learned to fly a helicopter, and rose to the rank of captain. He accepted a job teaching literature at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. And then, against his family's wishes, he instead pursued his dream of becoming a songwriter.

“To me, writing songs, I feel, saved my life,” he said. “If you want to be a songwriter . . . then do it.”

Following his passion, Kristofferson became one of country music's most respected songwriters, expanding the definition of a country song. Born in 1936 in Brownsville, Texas, Kristofferson grew up in a military family and did well in school and sports. He also listened to the Grand Ole Opry on the radio, admired Hank Williams, and started writing songs. Still, music took a back seat until 1965 when, just before he was to start at West Point, he traveled to Nashville, which changed his plans. Kristofferson decided he couldn't resist the opportunity to become a songwriter and soon moved there.

His parents were unhappy about that, but Kristofferson was determined to have a music career. To earn money, he worked a series of jobs as a janitor, bartender, and carpenter's assistant. By 1969, he was a leader among a new type of songwriters who went against traditional styles, explored new topics with honesty, and found inspiration in poetry.



In 1970, Kristofferson won Song of the Year honors from both the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music—for two

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### LISTEN

“Why Me,” “Nobody Wins,” “One More Time with Feeling”

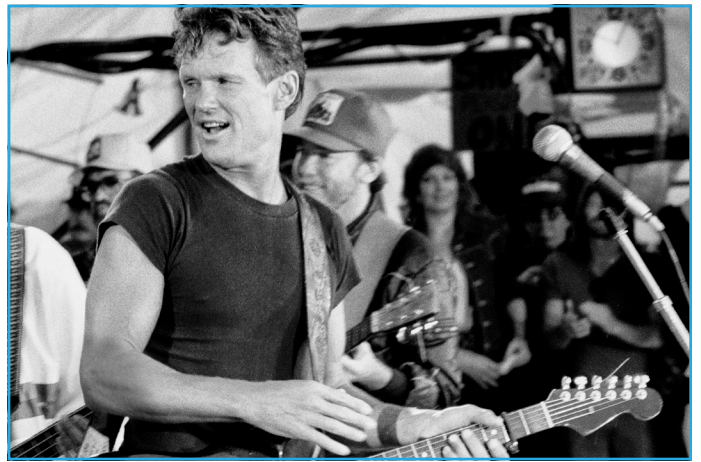


## KRIS KRISTOFFERSON: MUSICAL REBEL (CONTINUED)

different songs. The next year, his songs were three of the five Grammy nominees for Best Country Song; he won for “Help Me Make It Through the Night.”

The success encouraged Kristofferson to start his own recording career, and his unique voice has served his songs well. Inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2004, he has also stayed busy as a film and television actor in between writing, recording, and performing.

“I recommend following your heart,” Kristofferson says of the path he chose. “You just have to do what you feel like you were set down here to do.”



### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What job did Kristofferson give up when he decided to move to Nashville?

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2. Circle the word “detour” in the first paragraph. Underline the clue words and phrases that help you understand its meaning.

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3. Why do you think this essay is titled “Musical Rebel”? Explain your answer.

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