

= Cowboys Are Frequently , Secretly Fond of Each Other =

" Cowboys Are Frequently , Secretly Fond of Each Other " (1981) is a song by Latin country musician Ned Sublette , whose music , according to Howard Cohen , features a " lilting West Texas waltz (3 / 4 time at about 60 ? 90 beats per minute) feel " . It is , according to Gene Tyranny , " the famous gay cowboy song " . The lyrics satirize the stereotypes associated with cowboys and gay men , such as in the lyrics relating western wear to the leather subculture with the line : " What did you think all them saddles and boots was about ? "

Country musician Willie Nelson 's cover (iTunes single 14 February 2006) is the first LGBT @-@ themed mainstream country song by a major artist . The song has been recorded and released by Sublette (GPS : Life is a Killer 1982) , Canadian alternative country band Lost Dakotas (Cargo : Sun Machine , 1993) , and queercore band Pansy Division (Lookout : Pile Up 1995) .

= = Original version = =

Sublette stated that the song is based on his experiences growing up in Portales , N.M. : " I sat down at the piano and ? remembered what it felt like to feel different as a teenager , and the culture at that time , and I started to put those two things together and the song wrote itself " . The song was written during the Urban Cowboy fad while living with his wife in Manhattan next to a gay country bar on Christopher Street called Boots and Saddles . He explains , " Gay life in 1981 was very vibrant in those days . It was part of the culture of the city and cowboy imagery is a part of gay iconography . " He wrote the song with Nelson 's voice in mind : " I was at the beginning of my songwriting career ? and used to like writing songs for my favorite voices . I 've been a Willie fan since the ' 60s . "

In 2006 , Ann Northrop of Gay USA described the lyrics as " the language of thirty years ago . " David Nahmod , however , stated that he felt the lyrics maintain currency and say " a lot about gender identity and heterosexual elitism " ; " The song aims to show Mr. Nelson 's support for gays , particularly to conservative country @-@ music fans , " and suggests that , in addition to other causes , he supports gay rights .

The reception of Sublette 's recording is hard to determine as the song was originally only available through the Dial @-@ A @-@ Poem , through which one could literally dial up a poem and listen on the phone . However , AllMusicGuide gave the album on which the song eventually appeared 4 ½ out of 5 stars .

= = Willie Nelson 's version = =

Nelson received a tape of the song from Saturday Night Live Band bassist Tony Garnier after performing on the show in the mid to late 1980s . According to Sublette , " Willie took it from there " though Nelson recently found that demo in a drawer among a stack of his own while recording unreleased songs for iTunes at his Spicewood , Texas home studio . Nelson says , " I thought it was the funniest goddamn song I 'd ever heard . I had it on the bus for 20 years , and people would come in and I 'd play it . When Brokeback Mountain come out , it just seemed like a good time to kick it out of the closet " .

There were plans to release the song on a future album and filming for the video featuring Broken Lizard Comedy Troupe occurred at Dallas ' gay cowboy bar , the Round Up Saloon (in Oak Lawn) , in February 2006 . Nelson 's publicist describes the release of the song , which debuted on Howard Stern 's satellite radio show : " Since everyone is talking about the acclaimed film Brokeback Mountain and its Academy Award nominations , Valentine 's Day seemed like the right time to let [the song] be heard . " Nelson appeared on the movie 's soundtrack with the traditional " He Was a Friend of Mine " which made the US charts at number 54 .

Nelson himself described the release in a prepared statement to Dallas Morning News : " The song 's been in the closet for 20 years . The timing 's right for it to come out . I 'm just opening the door . " The song 's release was encouraged by the coming out of his friend and tour manager of thirty years , David Anderson , two years ago . Says Anderson : " This song obviously has special meaning to

me in more ways than one . I want people to know more than anything ? gay , straight , whatever ? just how cool Willie is and ? his way of thinking , his tolerance , everything about him . "

= = = Reception = = =

Nelson 's version of the song is his highest charting solo single since his 1984 duet with Julio Iglesias " To All the Girls I 've Loved Before " (number 5) , debuting at number 52 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart , which Nelson last appeared on with the Toby Keith duet " Beer for My Horses " . The song has also been well received by critics . Pitchfork Media 's Stephen M. Deusner rated the song four out of four stars despite calling it , " even more of a stunt than his reggae album " (2005 's Countryman) . Saying that the song sounds written by Nelson , and that his performance raises the piece above the level of a cheap gag , he felt that it adds , " a whole new level of complexity to the outlaw mythology Willie helped to cultivate in the 70s . "

Nelson also says that he has received very few negative reactions : " Every now and then somebody might get a little offended . It 's got bad language in it , so I just don 't do it in my shows . Anybody wants to hear it can hear it on iTunes . But you know people are listenin ' to it , likin ' it . Every now and then somebody don 't like it , but that 's okay . Similar to years ago , when the hippie thing come out and I started growin ' my hair and puttin ' the earring in , I got a little flak here and there . "

However , some sources speculate about the potential success and reception of the song . Nelson explains that he didn 't think , " it took a lot of balls to put the song out " saying , " first of all , I didn 't think anybody would play it . I didn 't think it would get on the air , but sure enough it did " though not on country stations : " Oh no , they 're not gonna play it " .

WXXB , a country station in Johnson City , Tenn . , devoted one morning show to a listener discussion of Nelson 's release , concluding that , " the audience was disappointed in [Nelson] " and , as Nelson thought , that they " probably wouldn 't be interested in much airplay " . PlanetOut offered the opinion that Nelson 's fan base is secure and broad enough (including " hippies , rednecks and outlaws young and old ") to take risks with LGBT @-@ themed songs and soundtracks , while the WXXB station manager pointed out that Nelson has not been a mainstream country star for a while . Nelson 's broad audience , and part of the appeal of the song , may be that , " Willie speaks his mind about any subject ... That 's one of those things that has made him so endearing to so many generations of fans " .

The song has been described variously as " deadpan " , " straight @-@ faced " , and " pointedly poignant " . Sublette , as expected , approves of Nelson 's performance and its potential impact , saying , " It 's supposed to be funny , that 's what gets people 's attention , but to get people to listen to it a second time [you] have to have something going on , and Willie beautifully brought out the tenderness there ? [It 's] nice to have a funny song out there ? it is challenging people to laugh . Everybody is so angry now . " Sublette speculated about the song 's reception : " Willie 's smart . We talked about recording it in the ' 90s but we needed some kind of context . It wouldn 't make sense to just put this on some normal Willie album ? The movie provided the context . I don 't know if the public is any more or less ready than they were but I think the media is more ready . "

The song was featured in a Boondocks comic strip on 27 and 28 February and mentioned until March 2006 . According to Sublette , " the Monday and Tuesday strip consisted of my lyrics and dramatizing listeners ' response to my lyrics . What a compliment ! "

The reception of Nelson 's song may be compared to that of Garth Brooks ' 1992 single " We Shall Be Free " . The song 's line , " when we 're free to love anyone we choose " caused some radio stations to refuse to play the song , contributing to its peak at number 12 on Billboard 's country singles chart and marking the end of Brooks ' string of top ten hits . Nelson 's song has been lumped together with contemporaneous LGBT friendly country releases : his and Emmylou Harris 's appearance on the Brokeback Mountain soundtrack and the Dolly Parton 's song " Travelin ' Thru " appearing on the Transamerica soundtrack , for which she received an Oscar nomination .

When the song appeared as the penultimate track on Nelson 's 2009 compilation Lost Highway , it was followed by a previously unreleased version of Willie singing Ben Hayslip 's Ain 't Goin ' Down

On Brokeback Mountain , which includes the lyric , " ... that shit ain 't right . "