

= Your Cheatin ' Heart =

" Your Cheatin ' Heart " is a song written and recorded by country music singer @-@ songwriter Hank Williams in 1952 , regarded as one of country 's most important standards . Country music historian Colin Escott writes that " the song - for all intents and purposes - defines country music . " He was inspired to write the song while driving with his fiancée from Nashville , Tennessee to Shreveport , Louisiana . After describing his first wife Audrey Sheppard as a " Cheatin ' Heart " , he dictated in minutes the lyrics to Billie Jean Jones . Produced by Fred Rose , Williams recorded the song on his last session at Castle Records in Nashville , Tennessee , on September 23 .

" Your Cheatin ' Heart " was released in January 1953 . Propelled by Williams ' recent death during a trip to a New Year 's concert in Canton , Ohio , the song became an instant success . It topped Billboard 's Country & Western chart for six weeks , while over a million units were sold . The success of the song continued . Joni James ' version reached number two on Billboard 's Most Played in Jukeboxes the same year , while Ray Charles ' 1962 version reached number 29 on the Billboard Hot 100 and 13 on the UK Singles Chart . The song ranked at 217 on Rolling Stone 's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time , and was ranked number 5 on Country Music Television 's 100 Greatest Songs in Country Music .

= = Background = =

By 1952 , Williams was enjoying a successful streak , releasing multiple hits , including " Honky Tonk Blues " , " Half as Much " , " Settin ' the Woods on Fire " , " Jambalaya ( On the Bayou ) " and " You Win Again " . While his career was soaring , his marriage to Audrey Sheppard became turbulent . He developed serious problems with alcohol , morphine and painkillers prescribed to ease his severe back pain caused by spina bifida . The couple divorced on May 29 , and Williams moved in with his mother . Soon after , Williams met Billie Jean Jones backstage at the Ryman Auditorium , a native of Shreveport , Louisiana , " who was , at the time , dating Faron Young . Williams started dating Jones , upon the end of her relationship with Young and soon began to plan their marriage . While driving from Nashville , Tennessee to Shreveport to announce the wedding to her parents , Williams talked to her about his previous marriage and described Audrey Sheppard as a " cheatin ' heart " , adding that one day she would " have to pay " . Inspired by his line , he instructed Jones to take his notebook and write down the lyrics of the song that he quickly dictated to her . The finished composition included the line " You 'll walk the floor , the way I do " , which evoked Ernest Tubb 's hit " Walking the Floor Over You " .

= = Recording and release = =

Williams recorded the song on September 23 at the Castle Studios in Nashville . The session , which became Williams ' last , also produced the A @-@ side " Kaw @-@ Liga " , as well as the songs " I Could Never Be Ashamed of You " and " Take These Chains from My Heart " . It was produced by Williams ' publisher Fred Rose , who made minor arrangements of the lyrics of " Your Cheatin ' Heart " . Williams described the song to his friend , Braxton Schuffert , as he was about to play it , as " the best heart song ( he ) ever wrote " . Williams is backed on the session by Tommy Jackson ( fiddle ) , Don Helms ( steel guitar ) , Chet Atkins ( lead guitar ) , Jack Shook ( rhythm guitar ) , and Floyd " Lighnin ' " Chance ( bass ) .

While traveling to a scheduled New Year 's show in Canton , Ohio , the driver found Williams dead on the backseat of the car during a stop in Oak Hill , West Virginia . " Your Cheatin ' Heart " was released at the end of January 1953 . Propelled by Williams ' death , the song and the A @-@ side " Kaw @-@ Liga " became a hit , selling over a million records . Billboard initially described the songs as " superlative tunes and performances " , emphasizing the sales potential . Within a short time from its release , the song reached number one on Billboard 's Top C & W Records , where it remained for six weeks .

A demo version of Williams singing " Your Cheatin ' Heart " with just his guitar , likely recorded in

1951 , is also available .

= = Legacy = =

Released in the wake of his passing , the song became synonymous with the myth of Hank Williams as a haunted , lonely figure who expressed pain with an authenticity that became the standard for country music . The name of the song was used as the title of Hank Williams ' 1964 biopic . " Your Cheatin ' Heart " , as well as other songs by Williams were performed on the movie , with George Hamilton dubbing the soundtrack album recorded by Williams ' son , Hank Williams , Jr . In the 2003 documentary series Lost Highway , country music historian Ronnie Pugh comments , " It 's Hank 's anthem , it 's his musical last will and testament . It 's searing , it 's powerful , it 's gripping . If you want to say this is his last and best work , I wouldn 't argue with that . " AllMusic described the track as the " signature song " of Hank Williams , and an " unofficial anthem " of country music . Rolling Stone called it " one of the greatest country standards of all time " , ranking it at number 217 on their list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time . The song ranked at number 5 in Country Music Television 's 100 Greatest Songs in Country Music in 2003 @, @

Two Pepsi Super Bowl commercials featured the song , one aired during Super Bowl XXX , featured Williams ' recording while a Coca @-@ Cola deliveryman grabbed a Pepsi . The second one , aired during Super Bowl XLVI , featured the same situation , but with the song covered by Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland . The song forms the title of the 1990 TV drama ' Your Cheatin ' Heart ' by John Byrne .

= = Cover versions = =

A version of the song by Joni James , released in 1953 , reached number 2 on Billboard 's Most Played in Jukeboxes . James later declared that she did not hear Williams ' original version of the song , but decided to record it after reading the lyrics .

In 1953 Frankie Laine 's version reached number 18 on the Most Played in Jukeboxes chart .

Louis Armstrong recorded it for Decca Records .

Dean Martin sang the song on the Colgate Comedy Hour in 1953 .

Gene Vincent recorded a version on December 6 , 1957 at the Capitol Tower in Hollywood .

The song appears on Elvis Presley 's 1965 LP Elvis for Everyone .

In 1962 , a version by Ray Charles reached number 29 on the Billboard Hot 100 and 23 on the R & B chart , while it also charted at number 13 on the UK Singles Chart .

Nat King Cole recorded it for his 1962 album Ramblin ' Rose .

George Jones included the song on his 1962 LP My Favorites of Hank Williams .

King Curtis cut the song for his 1962 LP Country Soul .

Patsy Cline recorded it for her 1962 album Sentimentally Yours .

Del Shannon chose to record the song for his 1964 LP Del Shannon Sings Hank Williams .

Fats Domino released it as a single in February 1964 and it appears on his album Let the Four Winds Blow .

Jerry Lee Lewis recorded the song during his tenure at Sun Records and it also appears on his 1964 album Live at the Star Club , Hamburg .

Ernest Tubb included it on his 1968 LP Ernest Tubb Sings Hank Williams .

Loretta Lynn included it on her 1966 album " I Like ' Em Country " .

Stonewall Jackson included the song on his 1969 LP A Tribute to Hank Williams .

James Brown recorded a funky version of the song for his 1969 album Soul on Top .

The song appears on the 1973 Glen Campbell LP Glen Travis Campbell .

Mick Jagger references the song in the lyrics to the Rolling Stones 1974 single " It 's Only Rock ' n ' Roll ( But I Like It ) . "

Moe Bandy recorded the song for his 1983 tribute Sings the Songs of Hank Williams .

The The recorded the song for their 1995 tribute album Hanky Panky .

LeAnn Rimes recorded the song for her 1999 self @-@ titled album .

Beck recorded the song for the 2001 tribute album Timeless : Hank Williams Tribute .  
Frantic Flintstones recorded their cover of the song in 2002 for their album " Rock it Boy " .  
Van Morrison covered the song on his 2006 album Pay the Devil .  
Kelly Clarkson included the song on her 2012 EP The Smoakstack Sessions Vol . 2

= = Chart performance = =

= = = Hank Williams = = =

= = = Cover versions = = =