

= Yesterday 's Wine =

Yesterday 's Wine is a 1971 concept album by country singer Willie Nelson . In the early stages of his contract with RCA Victor , Nelson had no significant hits . By 1970 , his recordings had reached mid @-@ chart positions . Nelson lost the money from his song @-@ writing royalties by financing unsuccessful tours that did not generate significant profits . In addition to the problems with his career , Nelson had problems in his personal life . He had divorced his wife , Shirley Collie , and his ranch in Tennessee burned down .

After moving to a new ranch in Bandera , Texas , Nelson was called by producer Felton Jarvis about the upcoming scheduled recording sessions . At the time , Nelson had not written any new material . He returned to Nashville , where he wrote new songs to use with others from his old repertoire . These new concept songs were recorded in two days .

The concept of the album is the story of the " Imperfect Man " , from the moment he is born to the day of his death . RCA originally released the singles " Yesterday 's Wine " and " Me and Paul " . The former peaked at number 62 in Billboard 's Hot Country Singles . The full release failed to reach the charts , and Nelson , frustrated by the failure , decided to retire from music without having been released from his contract with RCA . Later with his musical style revitalized , he returned to music in 1972 .

= = Background and recording = =

By the fall of 1964 , Nelson had moved from Monument Records to RCA Victor , under the leadership of Chet Atkins , signing a contract for US \$ 10 @,@ 000 per year . During his first few years at RCA Victor , Nelson had no significant hits , but from November 1966 through March 1969 his singles reached the top 25 consistently : " One In a Row " ( number 19 , 1966 ) , " The Party 's Over " ( number 24 during a 16 @-@ week chart run in 1967 ) , and his cover of Morecambe & Wise 's " Bring Me Sunshine " ( number 13 , March 1969 ) .

Up to 1970 , Nelson had no major success . His royalties were invested in tours that did not produce significant profits . In addition to the problems in his career , Nelson divorced Shirley Collie in 1970 . In December , his ranch in Ridgetop , Tennessee burned down . He interpreted the incident as a signal for a change . He moved to a ranch near Bandera , Texas and married Connie Koepke .

In early 1971 his single " I 'm a Memory " reached the top 30 . Felton Jarvis contacted Nelson for the recording of his next album . Nelson had not written any material for the sessions by the time he arrived in Nashville in April 1971 . While living in the new ranch , Nelson read the Bible , Kahlil Gibran 's The Prophet , the works of Edgar Cayce and Episcopal priest A.A Taliaferro 's work . Inspired by his readings , Nelson decided to work in new material . On May 1 ? 2 , he wrote nine songs , combining new ones with previous material from his repertoire , such as " Family Bible " , to create the concept for the album . He recorded Yesterday 's Wine in four sessions , backed by David Zettner and the studio session players , beginning with two sessions on May 3 and finishing with the last two on May 4 .

= = Concept = =

The album describes the life of a man , called " The Imperfect Man " , from the beginning to the day of his death .

The story begins with a dialog between two characters . The first asks the other " You do know why you 're here ? " , and the second replies : " Yes , there 's great confusion on earth , and the power that is has concluded the following : Perfect man has visited earth already and His voice was heard ; The voice of imperfect man must now be made manifest ; and I have been selected as the most likely candidate . " This statement is followed by " Where 's the Show " and " Let Me Be a Man " . In the medley , Nelson depicts the birth of the character , who implores God to become a man . The song is followed by " In God 's Eyes " , depicting the character learning to act as a good Samaritan .

In " Family Bible " , the character describes his memories of and nostalgia for his childhood , the times with his family and the reading of the family Bible . " It 's Not for Me to Understand " depicts the character praying , after watching a blind child listening to other children playing and finding himself unable to understand why God allowed that to happen . God replies to the Imperfect Man , " It 's not for you to reason why , you too are blind without my eyes , so question not what I command " . In the last stanza , the character now expresses his fear of the Lord and his reluctance to question the unfairness of the world again . The medley " These Are Difficult Times / Remember the Good Times " , describes the character 's bad times and his recovery by remembering the good times .

" Summer of Roses " depicts the character falling in love and in the prime of his life . It is followed by the anticipation of the beginning of the end in " December Day " , as the character announces " This looks like a December day . It looks like we 've come to the end of the way " . " Yesterday 's Wine " finds the character drinking in a bar , talking to the regulars about his life , and reflecting on aging . In " Me and Paul " , the Imperfect Man remembers the circumstances in which he lived with a friend in past times . The album ends with " Goin ' Home " , as the character watches his own funeral .

= = Release and reception = =

RCA released the songs " Yesterday 's Wine " and " Me and Paul " as singles . The song " Yesterday 's Wine " peaked at number 62 in Billboard 's Country Singles . The promotion of the album was complicated for RCA 's marketing department by the changes of Imperfect Man between spirituality and mundane behavior . The album did not appear on any chart , failing to satisfy RCA 's expectations . Although his contract was not over , Nelson decided to retire because of the number of failures he had had . Nelson later wrote in his autobiography , " I think it 's one of my best albums , but Yesterday 's Wine was regarded by RCA as way too spooky and far out to waste promotion money on . " Nelson returned to music in the following year , as his style was influenced in the Armadillo World Headquarters .

Music critic Robert Christgau wrote : " The great Nashville songsmith has never bowled anyone over with his singing , and here he finds the concept to match . Most of these songs ? though not the two best , " Yesterday 's Wine " and " Me and Paul " are on religious themes , which tends to limit their general relevance . "

Nathan Bush wrote for Allmusic : " ' Summer of Roses ' , ' December Day ' , and the title track ? songs that detail a sense of longing and loss with the changing seasons mirroring the narrator 's own life ... many of the numbers stand on their own , outside the album context . ' Family Bible ' , ' Me and Paul ' , and the title track are all particularly fine examples of Nelson 's songcraft . As a whole , Yesterday 's Wine provides further insight into the development of his art during this prolific period . "

The New York Times later described Yesterday 's Wine as " the last and best of [ Nelson 's ] Nashville albums " , saying that it was " Organized in the manner of an epic poem , each cut a metaphor in the journey through life ... it was Nashville 's first fully conceived concept album , and nobody knew what to make of it . It soon disappeared quietly and utterly . " Rolling Stone wrote : " [ Yesterdays Wine ] is the first of his bold , conceptual departures from country 's hits @-@ plus @-@ filler norm . Rather than tack rock guitar riffs onto modern honky @-@ tonk sagas , Nelson absorbed the innovations of Bob Dylan and the singer @-@ songwriters into his own distinct style . Even if the narrative concepts don 't always hold together , Willie hangs his most ambitious albums on some of his catchiest tunes . "

Robert Oermann and Douglas B. Green , in their book The Listener 's Guide to Country Music , compared the album with Nelson 's later recordings for Columbia Records : " All of those are beautiful records . They 're all on Columbia and are made just the way Willie wanted them . It was not always so at his previous record label , RCA . Nevertheless , he made a few landmark recordings while he was with that company ... Few of the songs on Yesterday 's Wine are well @-@ known Nelson compositions , but all are minor masterpieces " .

= = Track listing = =

All tracks were composed by Willie Nelson .

= = Personnel = =

= = Chart positions = =

= = = Singles = = =