

= Joe Diffie =

Joe Logan Diffie (born December 28 , 1958) is an American country music singer . After working as a demo singer in the 1980s , he signed with Epic Records ' Nashville division in 1990 . Between then and 2004 , Diffie charted 35 cuts on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart , including five number one singles : his debut release " Home " , " If the Devil Danced (In Empty Pockets) " , " Third Rock from the Sun " , " Pickup Man " (his longest @-@ lasting number one , at four weeks) and " Bigger Than the Beatles " . In addition to these cuts , he has 12 other top ten singles and ten other top 40 hits on the same chart . He also co @-@ wrote singles for Holly Dunn , Tim McGraw , and Jo Dee Messina , and has recorded with Mary Chapin Carpenter , George Jones , and Marty Stuart .

Diffie released seven studio albums , a Christmas album and a greatest hits package under the Epic label . He also released one studio album each through Monument Records , Broken Bow Records , and Rounder Records . Among his albums , 1993 's Honky Tonk Attitude and 1994 's Third Rock from the Sun are certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ; 1992 's Regular Joe and 1996 's Life 's So Funny are both certified gold . His most recent album , Homecoming : The Bluegrass Album , was released in late 2010 through Rounder . His style is defined by a neotraditionalist country influence with a mix of novelty songs and ballads .

= = Early life = =

Joe Diffie was born into a musical family in Tulsa , Oklahoma , in 1958 . His first musical performance came at age four , when he performed in his aunt 's country music band . Diffie 's father , Joe R. , played guitar and banjo , and his mother sang . Following in his mother 's footsteps , Diffie began to sing at an early age , often listening to the albums in his father 's record collection . Diffie has said that his " Mom and Dad claimed that [he] could sing harmony when [he] was three years old . " His family moved to San Antonio , Texas while he was in the first grade , and subsequently to Washington state where he attended fourth and fifth grades . Later , he moved to Wisconsin for the years he was in sixth grade through his second year of high school , and back to Oklahoma where he attended high school in the town of Velma . In his last two years in high school , Diffie played football , baseball , and golf in addition to running track ; in his senior year he was recognized as Best All @-@ Around Male Athlete .

After graduating , he attended Cameron University in Lawton , Oklahoma . Although he initially earned credits toward medical school , he decided against a medical profession after marrying for the first time in 1977 , and ultimately dropped out before graduation . Diffie first worked in oil fields , then drove a truck that pumped cement out of oil wells in Alice , Texas , before he moved back to Duncan to work in a foundry . During this period , he worked as a musician on the side , first in a gospel group called Higher Purpose , and then in a bluegrass band called Special Edition . Diffie then built a recording studio , began touring with Special Edition in adjacent states , and sent demo recordings to publishers in Nashville . Hank Thompson recorded Diffie 's " Love on the Rocks " , and Randy Travis put one of Diffie 's songs on hold but ultimately did not record it .

After the foundry closed in 1986 , Diffie declared bankruptcy and sold the studio out of financial necessity . He also divorced his wife , who left with their two children . Diffie spent several months in a state of depression before deciding to move to Nashville , Tennessee . There , he took a job at Gibson Guitar Corporation . While at Gibson , he contacted a songwriter and recorded more demos , including songs that would later be recorded by Ricky Van Shelton , Billy Dean , Alabama , and The Forester Sisters . By mid @-@ 1989 , he quit working at the company in order to record demos full @-@ time . Diffie also met Debbie , who would later become his second wife . That same year , Diffie was contacted by Bob Montgomery , a songwriter and record producer known for working with Buddy Holly . Montgomery , who was then the vice president of A & R at Epic Records , said that he wanted to sign Diffie to a contract with the label , but had to put the singer on hold for a year . In the meantime , Holly Dunn released " There Goes My Heart Again " , which Diffie co @-@ wrote and sang the backing vocals . Following this song 's chart success , Diffie signed with Epic in early 1990

= = Professional music career = =

= = = 1990 ? 1991 : A Thousand Winding Roads = = =

The label released Diffie 's debut album , A Thousand Winding Roads , at the end of 1990 , with Montgomery and Johnny Slate as producers . Its first single , " Home " , reached the top of the Billboard Hot Country Songs charts . The song was also rated number one on the country music charts published by Radio & Records and Gavin Report , making him the first country music artist to have a number one debut single on all three charts , as well as the first country music artist to have a debut single spend more than one week in the number one position at the latter two publications . Diffie co @-@ wrote the album 's second and fourth releases , " If You Want Me To " and " New Way (To Light Up an Old Flame) " ; both peaked at number two on Billboard , and the former reached number one on the RPM country music charts in Canada . Between these two songs , " If the Devil Danced (In Empty Pockets) " became Diffie 's second Billboard number one . The album itself peaked at number 23 on Top Country Albums . Diffie also performed his first concerts in late 1990 , touring with George Strait and Steve Wariner . In that same year , Cash Box magazine named him Male Vocalist of the year . In 1991 , Diffie co @-@ wrote the tracks " Livin ' on What 's Left of Your Love " and " Memory Lane " on labelmate Keith Palmer 's debut album .

= = = 1992 : Regular Joe = = =

Diffie 's second album , titled Regular Joe , was released in 1992 and was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America . The first two singles from the album both peaked at number five on Billboard : " Is It Cold in Here " and " Ships That Don 't Come In " , with the latter reaching number one on Radio & Records . The album 's third single , " Next Thing Smokin ' " , made its chart debut one month before " Not Too Much to Ask " , a duet that Diffie recorded with Mary Chapin Carpenter for her album Come On Come On . Both of these songs made the country Top 20 , respectively reaching sixteen and fifteen , and the duet was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Country Collaboration with Vocals at the 35th Grammy Awards in 1993 . The final single from Regular Joe was " Startin ' Over Blues " (originally the B @-@ side to " Ships That Don 't Come In ") , which peaked at number 41 .

Brian Mansfield gave the album a positive review in Allmusic , saying that it " has all the clichés of country music , and all the good stuff too . " Richmond Times @-@ Dispatch reviewer Norman Rowe referred to Diffie as a " pleasant surprise " and called " Is It Cold in Here " " the sort of tear @-@ jerker George Jones has worked wonders with in the past " . Alanna Nash of Entertainment Weekly thought that Diffie " [sang] in his natural voice " , but thought that its material " punches all the predictable thematic buttons . "

= = = 1993 : Honky Tonk Attitude = = =

1993 's Honky Tonk Attitude shipped a million copies in the United States and was certified platinum . The first three singles from the album all reached the Top Ten on the country singles charts : the title track (which Diffie co @-@ wrote) and the Dennis Linde composition " John Deere Green " both peaked at number five , with the number three " Prop Me Up Beside the Jukebox (If I Die) " in between . " John Deere Green " also accounted for Diffie 's first appearance on the Billboard Hot 100 , where it peaked at number 69 . " In My Own Backyard " , the last release from Honky Tonk Attitude , reached number nineteen on the country charts . Diffie told the Fort Worth Star @-@ Telegram that the album was " a little rowdier than the first two . " Nash rated the album more favorably than the ones before it , saying that Diffie " is maturing into a first @-@ rate interpreter of working @-@ class woes . "

Also in 1993 , Diffie was inducted into the Grand Ole Opry . He and several other artists won that year 's Country Music Association award for Vocal Event of the Year , for their guest vocals on George Jones 's " I Don 't Need Your Rockin ' Chair " . Tim McGraw also included two of Diffie 's songs on his 1993 debut album : another version of " Memory Lane " , which he released as a single , and " Tears in the Rain " .

= = = 1994 ? 1996 : Third Rock from the Sun , Mr. Christmas and Life 's So Funny = = =

Third Rock from the Sun was Diffie 's highest @-@ charting Top Country Album (where it reached number six) , as well as his second consecutive platinum album . It was also the first album that he co @-@ produced , doing so with Johnny Slate . The album included two consecutive number one singles in its title track and in " Pickup Man " . The latter of those two songs was Diffie 's longest @-@ lasting number one , at four weeks . Both songs also entered the Hot 100 , respectively peaking at 84 and 60 . In 2005 , " Pickup Man " was repurposed by the Applebee 's restaurant chain for use in its television commercials . The album 's next single , " So Help Me Girl " , peaked at number two on the country charts and 84 on the pop charts , in addition to topping the RPM country charts . The song was covered in 1997 by English singer Gary Barlow . Diffie followed the song with " I 'm in Love with a Capital ' U ' " and " That Road Not Taken " , which respectively reached country peaks of 21 and 40 . Third Rock from the Sun received critical praise for adding more rock and up @-@ tempo material . Thom Owens wrote that he began " adding more rock flourishes " on this album , and Nash said that Diffie " not only understands the blue @-@ collar ethic from the inside out ? he 's also familiar with its humorous underbelly . "

In mid @-@ 1995 , he recorded the title track for Columbia Records 's Runnin ' Wide Open , an album comprising NASCAR @-@ themed songs by various artists . He issued two albums later in the year . The first was a Christmas project titled Mr. Christmas , which comprised covers of traditional Christmas songs as well as newly written songs . One of these original songs , " LeRoy the Redneck Reindeer " , was issued as a Christmas single late in the year , peaking at number 33 upon its initial release and re @-@ entering the country music charts for the next two years based on Christmas airplay . Of this album , Stephen Thomas Erlewine said , " it 's pleasant , but it 's not particularly distinguished . "

His other release that year was the studio album Life 's So Funny . It was led off by " Bigger Than the Beatles " , the last number one single of his career . The album 's other two singles were " C ? O ? U ? N ? T ? R ? Y " and " Whole Lotta Gone " (previously the b @-@ side of " Bigger Than the Beatles ") , both of which peaked at 23 on the country music charts in 1996 . Country Standard Time critic George Hauenstein praised the album for containing " songs that are slightly different from [what] those other artists sing . " Owens thought that it was a " varied collection of ballads and midtempo rockers " , but said that it was not " as consistently engaging " as Third Rock from the Sun . Nash gave " Bigger Than the Beatles " a C @-@ minus rating , calling it " just a lame device to evoke the names of beloved rock heroes . "

= = = 1996 ? 1998 : Twice Upon a Time and Greatest Hits = = =

Twice Upon a Time followed in 1996 . Its singles all failed to make the Top Ten on the country charts , with lead @-@ off " This Is Your Brain " reaching number 25 , followed by " Somethin ' Like This " at number 40 and " The Promised Land " at number 61 , the lowest @-@ peaking single of his career . The album also failed to achieve a gold certification . Doug Virden and Drew Womack , who then recorded on Epic in the band Sons of the Desert , sang backing vocals on it . Also included on the album was " I Got a Feelin ' " , which Tracy Lawrence previously recorded on his 1994 album I See It Now . Jeffrey B. Remz criticized the two novelty songs on Twice Upon a Time for lacking substance , and thought that most of the ballads were well @-@ sung , but that the production " lacks any soul . " Owens said that it " doesn 't offer anything new or especially remarkable from Joe Diffie . "

In mid @-@ 1998 , Epic Records released Diffie 's Greatest Hits package , which featured three

new cuts . Among these were " Texas Size Heartache " , and its b @-@ side , " Poor Me " , which respectively reached numbers four and forty @-@ three on the country charts . At the end of the year , Diffie recorded a cover of Charlie Rich 's " Behind Closed Doors " for the multi @-@ artist album A Tribute to Tradition on Columbia Records . Diffie 's version of the song peaked at number 64 based on unsolicited airplay . He also contributed to another cut on that album , " Same Old Train " , which featured Marty Stuart and eleven other country music singers . This song peaked at 59 on the country charts and won the 1999 Grammy Award for Best Country Collaboration with Vocals for all artists involved .

= = = 1999 ? 2000 : A Night to Remember = = =

His final album for Epic Records , titled A Night to Remember , was released in 1999 . As he did with the new cuts for his Greatest Hits package , Diffie worked with producer Don Cook and producer / session drummer Lonnie Wilson , a friend of Diffie 's who formerly fronted the band Bandana . Its title track spent twenty @-@ nine weeks on the country charts and peaked at number six ; it was his only Top 40 on the Hot 100 , where it reached number 38 . After this song came " The Quittin ' Kind " and " It 's Always Somethin ' " , which respectively reached twenty @-@ one and five on the country charts , and 90 and 57 on the Hot 100 . The latter spent thirty @-@ seven weeks on the country music charts , the longest chart run achieved by any of his singles .

Country Standard Time gave the album a positive review for having " nary a novelty tune in the bunch " , and Nash wrote that it had a " surprising depth of feeling . " Erlewine also noted that the album did not contain any novelty songs , and called it the " purest country album he 's ever made . "

= = = 2001 ? 2004 : In Another World and Tougher Than Nails = = =

In 2001 , Sony Nashville transferred Diffie from its Epic division to the Monument Records division . This move was due to a corporate decision that Epic had too many artists and Monument had too few . Cook and Wilson also produced his only album for Monument , which was titled In Another World . Regarding this album , Diffie told Billboard that its material had a common theme of love , and that he wanted to create a more contemporary sound through the production . The album 's title track peaked at number ten on the country charts and number 66 on the Hot 100 . Only one other single was released from the album : " This Pretender " (co @-@ written by Rascal Flatts lead singer Gary LeVox) , which failed to make the country music Top 40 .

In Another World received mixed reviews . Country Weekly reviewer wrote that Diffie " deals with adult emotions " and described the title track as " a shimmering ballad perfect for his expressive tenor . " William Ruhlmann called the album " sturdy formula country " , and Jeffrey B. Remz of Country Standard Time said that he " easily interpret [s] " the songs but " doesn 't seem to be doing anything too dramatically different . " After Monument closed its Nashville branch , Diffie began touring with Mark Chesnutt and Tracy Lawrence on the Rockin ' Roadhouse Tour , which began in 2002 . That same year , Diffie was inducted into the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame .

Diffie signed to the independent Broken Bow Records in 2003 . His only album for the label was Tougher Than Nails , which he and Wilson produced with Buddy Cannon . It included five songs that Diffie co @-@ wrote , as well as a duet with George Jones entitled " What Would Waylon Do " . Tougher Than Nails produced a Top 20 hit in its title track , followed by " If I Could Only Bring You Back " , which peaked at number 50 and spent only eight weeks on the charts . This latter song was also his last charting single . Erlewine said of the album 's content , " there 's nothing new , but there doesn 't need to be " , and Country Standard Time said that the album " shows that he 's still got the talent that took him to stardom in the first place . "

In 2005 , Jo Dee Messina released " My Give a Damn 's Busted " , which Diffie co @-@ wrote and originally recorded on In Another World . Her version of the song , included on her album Delicious Surprise , was a number one single that year .

== 2004 ? 2013 : The Ultimate Collection and Homecoming ==

After leaving Broken Bow , Diffie continued to tour , primarily playing smaller venues and county fairs . In 2007 , he joined with Lonestar , Charlie Daniels and Craig Morgan to perform a benefit concert for Sgt. Kevin Downs , a soldier who was severely wounded in Iraq . In 2008 , Diffie compiled and released a live album , and he signed to Rounder Records later in that year . Rounder released an album called The Ultimate Collection , which comprised re @-@ recordings of his hits for Epic .

His next project for Rounder , Homecoming : The Bluegrass Album , was released on October 26 , 2010 . It includes collaborations with The Grascals , Rhonda Vincent and other bluegrass artists . Diffie toured at various county fairs in August 2010 in support of it . He co @-@ produced the album with Luke Wooten , and included on it the song " Tennessee Tea " , which Diffie originally recorded while he was in Special Edition . Allmusic reviewer j. poet gave this album a positive review for showing Diffie 's bluegrass influences .

In late 2012 , Jason Aldean recorded the song " 1994 " , co @-@ written by Thomas Rhett , Luke Laird , and Barry Dean . The song , which was released in February 2013 as the third single from Aldean 's album Night Train , name @-@ drops Diffie and incorporates several of his song titles into the lyrics . Upon hearing about the song , Diffie said that " it 's really an honor " to be mentioned in the song , and that it was " flattering " . Later in the year , Diffie collaborated with Aaron Tippin and Sammy Kershaw on the album All in the Same Boat as well as cutting the single " Girl Riding Shotgun " with D Thrash of the Jawga Boyz .

== Musical styles ==

Steve Huey of Allmusic wrote that Diffie " lent his traditional sensibilities to humorous , rock @-@ tinged novelties and plaintive ballads . " His early albums for Epic mostly consisted of ballads , but starting with Honky Tonk Attitude , he began to include more up @-@ tempo and novelty numbers . Starting with A Night to Remember , Diffie returned to a more ballad @-@ oriented sound ; Mike Kraski , then the senior vice president of sales for Sony Music Nashville , thought that the albums before it had over @-@ emphasized his novelty releases .

Alanna Nash regularly compared Diffie 's voice to that of George Jones . In her review of A Thousand Winding Roads , she contrasted the album with Mark Chesnutt 's debut Too Cold at Home by saying , " While Chesnutt merely takes his inspiration from Jones , Diffie mimics Jones ' delivery ... But now that he 's making records himself , [his vocal imitation] drops him to the rear of the pack , as a stylist with little style of his own . " She thought that Diffie began to move away from his George Jones influences on A Night to Remember . William Ruhlmann wrote that Diffie " has put together a decade @-@ plus career in country largely on his ability to succeed " in " scour [ing] Nashville publishers for ten good compositions in the established style " , and that he was an " adequate but undistinguished singer . "

== Personal life ==

Diffie has been married three times . His first wife was Janise Parker , whom he married while in college . The couple had two children , Parker and Kara , then divorced in 1986 . Parker later worked as Diffie 's on @-@ road manager in the mid @-@ 2000s , and in mid @-@ 2010 , he and Kara auditioned for American Idol . Two years after divorcing Janise , Diffie married Debbie Jones , a nurse technician . They had two sons , Drew and Tyler , the latter of whom was born with Down syndrome and nearly died in 1991 following complications from a tonsillectomy . Diffie began an affair with Liz Allison , the widow of NASCAR driver Davey Allison , in 1993 . In 1994 , a judge ordered Diffie to pay Jones \$ 3 @,@ 000 per month towards their pending divorce settlement , and not to allow Drew and Tyler to be in the presence of any girlfriend ; he divorced Jones in 1996 . In 2000 , Diffie married the former Theresa Crump , whom he met at a concert , at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville , Tennessee . They have one daughter , Kylie Tarissa , born in 2004 .

From 1992 to the early 2000s , Diffie held a charity concert and golf tournament benefiting First Steps , a nonprofit organization for the education of mentally and physically impaired children . His contributions to this organization won him a Humanitarian Award from the Country Radio Broadcasters in 1997 .

= = Discography = =

= = = Studio albums = = =

A Thousand Winding Roads (1990)
Regular Joe (1992)
Honky Tonk Attitude (1993)
Third Rock from the Sun (1994)
Life 's So Funny (1996)
Twice Upon a Time (1997)
A Night to Remember (1999)
In Another World (2001)
Tougher Than Nails (2004)
Homecoming : The Bluegrass Album (2010)
All in the Same Boat (2013)

= = = Billboard number @-@ one singles = = =

" Home " (1990)
" If the Devil Danced (In Empty Pockets) " (1991)
" Third Rock from the Sun " (1994)
" Pickup Man " (1994)
" Bigger Than the Beatles " (1995 ? 1996)

= = Awards and nominations = =