

## = Shotgun Willie =

Shotgun Willie is a 1973 album by Willie Nelson . The recording marks a change of style for Nelson , who later stated that the album " cleared his throat " . When Nelson refused to sign an early extension of his contract with RCA in 1972 , the label decided not to release any further recordings . Nelson hired Neil Reshen as his manager , and while Reshen negotiated with RCA , Nelson moved to Austin , Texas , where the ongoing hippie music scene at the Armadillo World Headquarters renewed his musical style . In Nashville , Nelson met producer Jerry Wexler , vice president of Atlantic Records , who was interested in his music . Reshen solved the problems with RCA and signed Nelson with Atlantic Records as their first country music artist .

The album was recorded in the Atlantic Records studio in New York City in February 1973 . Nelson and his backup musicians were joined by Doug Sahm and his band . After recording several tracks , Nelson was still not inspired . Following a recording session , he wrote " Shotgun Willie " ? the song that would become the title track of the album ? on the empty packaging of a sanitary napkin while in the bathroom of his hotel room . The album , produced mostly by Arif Mardin , included covers of two Bob Wills songs ? " Stay All Night ( Stay a Little Longer ) " and " Bubbles in My Beer " ? that were co @-@ produced by Wexler . Waylon Jennings and Jessi Colter collaborated on the album , providing vocals and guitar .

Shotgun Willie was released in June 1973 . In spite of poor sales , the album received good reviews and gained Nelson major recognition with younger audiences . The recording was one of the first albums of outlaw country ? a new subgenre of country music and an alternative to the conservative restrictions of the Nashville sound , the dominant style in the genre at the time .

## = = Background = =

In April 1972 , after Nelson recorded " Mountain Dew " , his final RCA single , the label requested that he renew his contract ahead of schedule , with the implication that RCA would not release any further recordings if he did not sign . Neil Reshen , who Nelson hired as his manager to negotiate with the label , got RCA to agree to end the contract upon repayment of US \$ 1 @,@ 400 that Nelson had been overpaid . At the same time , Nelson had moved to Austin , Texas , to take a short break . Austin 's burgeoning hippie music scene at venues like Armadillo World Headquarters rejuvenated the singer . His popularity in Austin soared as he played his own brand of music that was a blend of country , folk , and jazz influences .

During a trip to Nashville , Tennessee , Nelson attended a party in Harlan Howard 's house , where he sang the songs that he had written for the album Phases and Stages . Another guest was Atlantic Records vice @-@ president Jerry Wexler , who previously had produced works for artists such as Ray Charles and Aretha Franklin . Wexler was interested in Nelson 's music , so when Atlantic opened a country music division of their label , he offered Nelson a contract that gave him more creative control than his deal with RCA . When Nelson was released from his RCA contract , he signed with Atlantic for US \$ 25 @,@ 000 per year , becoming the label 's first country artist .

## = = Recording = =

The recording sessions took place in February 1973 , Wexler provided Nelson and his band with a studio in New York City , where most of the recordings were produced . Doug Sahm and his band were also invited to the sessions . During the first session , Nelson recorded the songs for The Troublemaker . Later , he proceeded with Shotgun Willie . Wexler had encouraged Nelson after singing the gospel album to start with the new one , to couple old material with new , and covers . He initially recorded twenty @-@ three tracks along with his and Sahm 's band , but Nelson still was not inspired . He wrote the title song after one of the sessions . Pacing in his hotel room , he went to the bathroom , where he sat on the toilet and took the empty envelope from a sanitary napkin from the sink , and penned the song on that . The title of the song refers to the nickname Nelson received after his daughter , Susie , warned him of the domestic abuse suffered by her sister Lana . Nelson

drove to Lana 's house , where he fought with her husband Steve Warren , and threatened to kill him if he repeated the assault . Soon after Nelson returned home , Warren arrived in his truck with his brothers . The men shot at the house with .22 caliber rifles . In response , Nelson and Paul English shot at the aggressors that retreated . When they returned later , Nelson took English 's M1 Garand and shot the truck , causing them to surrender . He completed the rest of the song with a reference to John T. Floore , owner of the honky @-@ tonk Floore 's Country Store . After hearing the completed song , Wexler decided that the album was to be named after it .

Most of the tracks were produced by Arif Mardin , with the exception of the two Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys covers , " Stay All Night ( Stay a Little Longer ) " and " Bubbles in My Beer , " which were produced by Mardin and Jerry Wexler . The album also included Johnny Bush 's " Whiskey River " . During the recording , there were rumors that there would be appearances by George Jones , Leon Russell , and Kris Kristofferson that ultimately did not happen . Waylon Jennings joined the backing band playing guitar , and provided backing vocals for " Stay All Night ( Stay a Little Longer ) " , along with Jessi Colter and Doug Sahm . Parts of the album were recorded in the Quadraphonic studios in Nashville , as well as in the Sam Phillips Recording studio in Memphis .

= = Release and reception = =

The album was released in June 1973 . Although it received good reviews , it did not sell well , except in Austin , where it sold more copies than earlier records by Nelson did nationwide . The recording led Nelson to a new style ; he later stated regarding his new musical identity that Shotgun Willie had " cleared his throat . " It became his breakthrough record , and one of the first of the outlaw movement , music created without the influence of the conservative Nashville Sound . The album ? the first to feature Nelson with long hair and a beard on the cover ? gained him the interest of younger audiences . It peaked at number 41 on Billboard 's album chart and the songs " Shotgun Willie " and " Stay All Night ( Stay A Little Longer ) " peaked at number 60 and 22 on Billboard Hot 100 respectively .

Rolling Stone wrote : " With this flawless album , Willie Nelson finally demonstrates why he has for so long been regarded as a Country & Western singer @-@ songwriter 's singer @-@ songwriter ... At the age of 39 , Nelson finally seems destined for the stardom he deserves " . Robert Christgau wrote : " This attempt to turn Nelson into a star runs into trouble when it induces him to outshout Memphis horns or Western swing . "

Billboard wrote : " This is Willie Nelson at his narrative best . He writes and sings with the love and the hurt and the down @-@ to @-@ earth things he feels , and he has a few peers . " Texas Monthly praised Nelson and Wexler regarding the change in musical style : " They 've switched his arrangements from Ray Price to Ray Charles ? the result : a revitalized music . He 's the same old Willie , but veteran producer Jerry Wexler finally captured on wax the energy Nelson projects in person " . School Library Journal wrote : " Willie Nelson differs ( from ) rock artists framing their music with a country & western facade ? in that he appears a honky @-@ tonk stardust cowboy to the core . This album abounds in unabashed sentimentalism , nasal singing , lyrics preoccupied with booze , religion , and love gone bad , and stereotyped Nashville instrumentation ( twangy steel guitars , fiddles , and a clean rhythm section characterized by the minimal use of bass drum and cymbals , both of which gain heavy mileage with rock performers ) .

Stephen Thomas Erlewine wrote in his review for Allmusic : " Willie Nelson offered his finest record to date for his debut ? possibly his finest album ever . Shotgun Willie encapsulates Willie 's world view and music , finding him at a peak as a composer , interpreter , and performer . This is laid @-@ back , deceptively complex music , equal parts country , rock attitude , jazz musicianship , and troubadour storytelling " .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Willie Nelson , except where noted .

= = Personnel = =

= = Chart positions = =

= = = Album = = =

= = = Singles = = =