

= Connie Smith =

Connie Smith ( born Constance June Meador ; August 14 , 1941 ) is an American country music artist . Active since 1964 , Smith is widely considered to be one of the genre 's best female vocalists . She has earned 11 Grammy award nominations , 20 top ten Billboard country singles , and 31 charting albums , three of which have hit number one . On October 21 , 2012 , Smith became the 12th solo female vocalist and 19th woman to be elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame .

Despite her success , Smith is considered by some music critics to be one of the most underrated vocalists in country music history due to the decision not to pursue super stardom with the non @-@ country general media market like such contemporaries as Loretta Lynn , Dolly Parton , and Tammy Wynette . Artists such as Parton , George Jones , and Chely Wright have cited Smith as either one of the best vocalists in the music industry or their favorite female artist . Eddie Stubbs of Nashville radio station WSM and the Grand Ole Opry has dubbed Smith " The Rolls @-@ Royce of Country Singers . " With this being said , Smith has stated on numerous occasions that country legend Loretta Lynn is her favourite country singer ever .

= = Early life = =

Connie Smith was born Constance June Meador on August 14 , 1941 , in Elkhart , Indiana ; the daughter of Wilma and Hobart Meador . Her parents were originally from West Virginia , and when Smith was five months old , the family returned there . They would later move to Dungannon , Ohio . Her father was abusive when she was a child , which would eventually cause her to suffer a mental breakdown when she was a teenager . When she was seven , her mother divorced her father and married Tom Clark . Clark brought 8 children to the new marriage ; Meador brought five , including Smith . The couple would eventually have two more children together , which in total added up to fifteen children . As a child , Smith was surrounded by music . Her stepfather played mandolin , while her brother played fiddle , and her other brother played guitar . On Saturday nights Smith would listen to the Grand Ole Opry radio broadcast . While she was a teenager , she was injured in a lawnmower accident , which nearly cut her leg off . While in the hospital recovering , she was given a guitar and learned how to play different chords . Following the recovery , she began to perform in various local talent contests . In 1959 , Smith graduated from Salem @-@ Liberty High School as the class salutatorian .

In August 1963 , she entered a talent contest at the Frontier Ranch country music park near Columbus , Ohio . Performing Jean Shepard 's " I Thought of You " , Smith won the talent contest and five silver dollars . That day at the park , country artist Bill Anderson heard Smith perform and was impressed by her voice . In January 1964 , Smith ran into Anderson again at a country music package concert , where he invited her to perform with him on Ernest Tubb 's Midnight Jamboree program in Nashville , Tennessee . After performing on the program , Smith returned to Nashville that May to record demos by Anderson that he planned on pitching to other country artists . Anderson 's manager Hubert Long brought the demo recording to RCA Victor Records , where producer Chet Atkins heard it . Also impressed by her vocals , Atkins offered Smith a recording contract , and she eventually signed with the label on June 24 , 1964 .

= = Musical career = =

= = = 1964 ? 1967 : Breakthrough = = =

Because Chet Atkins found himself too busy with other artists , Bob Ferguson acted as Smith 's producer on her first sessions and would continue to work as her producer until her departure from RCA . Smith 's first session took place on July 16 , 1964 , where she recorded four songs , three of which were written by Bill Anderson . One of the four songs recorded during the session entitled " Once a Day " was chosen to be Smith 's debut single . The song was rush @-@ released as a

single on August 1 , 1964 and became Smith 's breakout single , reaching No. 1 on the Billboard Magazine Hot Country Singles chart on November 28 and remained at the number one position for eight weeks .

" Once a Day " became the first debut single by a female country artist to reach number one . For nearly 50 years the single held the record for the most weeks spent at number one on the Billboard country chart by a female artist . RCA Victor released Smith 's self @-@ titled debut album in March 1965 which also reached No. 1 , spending seven weeks at the top of the Billboard Top Country Albums chart , and spending 30 weeks on the chart overall . In addition , the album also peaked at No. 105 on the Billboard 200 albums chart around the same time . Dan Cooper of Allmusic called the production of the album to sound as if she was " a down @-@ home Streisand fronting The Lennon Sisters . " During this time , Anderson wrote a series of singles that would jump @-@ start Smith 's career in the country music industry . Among these songs was Smith 's follow @-@ up single to " Once a Day " released in early 1965 titled " Then and Only Then " . The song peaked at No. 4 on the Billboard country chart . In addition , its B @-@ side , " Tiny Blue Transistor Radio " ( originally intended for Skeeter Davis ) , was also written by Anderson and peaked within the Top 25 on the same singles chart .

In 1965 Smith officially became a member of the Grand Ole Opry radio show in Nashville , Tennessee . It had been a dream of Smith 's to become a member since childhood , remembering saying at the age of five , " Someday I ? m gonna sing on the Grand Ole Opry . " In the mid @-@ 60s Smith was temporarily fired from the Grand Ole Opry for not being on the show for twenty six weeks out of the year , which was the required amount of weeks to stay a member at the time . In the 1970s , Smith was nearly fired from the show for testifying about Jesus Christ .

Bill Anderson wrote her next single with Bette Anderson , which was released in April 1965 called " I Can 't Remember " . The single peaked at No. 9 on the Billboard Magazine Hot Country Singles chart and No. 30 on the Billboard Bubbling Under Hot 100 singles chart . In October 1965 , Smith released her second studio album Cute ' n ' Country . The album featured both cover versions of other country songs and newer songs written by Bill Anderson . It included cover versions of songs by such artists as Jim Reeves , Webb Pierce , and Ray Price . Like her first album , Cute ' n ' Country reached No. 1 on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart and spent thirty weeks on the chart as well . Her next two singles , " If I Talk to Him " and " Nobody But a Fool ( Would Love You ) " , both reached No. 4 on the Hot Country Singles chart and were issued on Smith 's third album , Miss Smith Goes to Nashville ( 1966 ) . The album peaked at No. 2 on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart . With her next few sessions , Smith 's producer Bob Ferguson felt pressured from RCA headquarters in New York City to market Smith 's sound toward more " middle @-@ of @-@ the @-@ road " country pop material . This change of sound was evident on her next two studio albums Born to Sing ( 1966 ) and Downtown Country ( 1967 ) . Both albums featured full orchestras in the background and cover versions of singles by pop artists of the time . Spawned from Born to Sing and Downtown Country were the singles " Ain 't Had No Lovin ' " and " The Hurtin 's All Over " , which both peaked within the Top 5 on the Hot Country Singles chart .

During this time , Smith also appeared in several country music vehicle films , where she performed many of her current hit recordings . In 1966 , she appeared in the films Second Fiddle to a Steel Guitar and The Las Vegas Hillbillies , the latter of which starred Jayne Mansfield . In 1967 , she appeared in The Road to Nashville and Hell on Wheels .

In February 1967 , Smith released an album on RCA Camden entitled Connie in the Country , which mainly featured cover versions of country hits recorded at the time , including songs by Loretta Lynn and Buck Owens . In May 1967 Smith released an album of songs written entirely by Bill Anderson entitled Connie Smith Sings Bill Anderson . Smith later commented that , " ... it was an honor , not a favor " to record an album of all Bill Anderson songs . Included in the album was covers of Anderson 's own hits such as " City Lights " and " That 's What It 's Like to Be Lonesome " . Also featured was Anderson 's " I Love You Drops " , which Smith wanted to release as a single ; however Anderson wanted to release the song as his own single . Smith stated , " We begged him for that song . But I cut 33 of his songs . " It would later become a top ten hit for Anderson . Between 1966 and 1968 , Smith had five top ten singles in a row on the Billboard Hot Country Singles chart :

" I 'll Come Running " ( which Smith wrote herself ) , " Cincinnati , Ohio " , " Burning a Hole in My Mind " , " Baby 's Back Again " , and " Run Away Little Tears " . " Cincinnati , Ohio " would later inspire the city of Cincinnati , Ohio to declare their own " Connie Smith Day " in June 1967 .

= = = 1968 ? 1972 : New directions = = =

By 1968 , Smith began to feel large amounts of pressure from the music business . The stress of touring , recording , promoting , and trying to keep a personal life led Smith to contemplate the possibility of suicide . Although she thought about suicide , Smith later clarified that she never saw the idea as an actual possibility . These pressures eventually led Smith to seek solace in both her family life and religion , becoming a Born Again Christian in the spring of 1968 . Although she did not give up her music career completely , Smith did balance it with a lighter schedule in order to avoid stress . In 1968 and 1969 , Smith also began to record darker songs , including the single " Ribbon of Darkness " , among others . Smith stated that it was reflection on her personal life , after recently divorcing her first husband Jerry Smith . Despite her recent personal troubles , Smith continued to enjoy the same commercial success she had before . In 1969 her next single " You and Your Sweet Love " ( written by Bill Anderson ) reached No. 6 on the Billboard Magazine Hot Country Singles chart . This was followed by another top ten single in 1970 , entitled " I Never Once Stopped Loving You " , which reached No. 5 on the same singles chart . Between 1969 and 1970 , Smith released two collaborative albums with American country artist Nat Stuckey called Young Love and Sunday Morning with Nat Stuckey and Connie Smith , the latter of which was a gospel album .

Between 1970 and 1971 , both the singles " Louisiana Man " and " Where Is My Castle " became top 20 hits on the Billboard Magazine country singles chart . In 1971 Smith 's cover of Don Gibson 's 1960 single " Just One Time " reached No. 2 on the Hot Country Singles chart . An album of the same name was also released , which reached No. 20 on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart . By the early 1970s , Smith started to incorporate more Gospel music into her regular studio albums and touring show . Smith later stated that by incorporating more Gospel music into her secular recording career would make her leap into Christianity " count " . In 1971 , she released her third gospel album , Come Along and Walk with Me , which Smith later stated was her favorite gospel record out of the many she has made .

In 1972 , all three of Smith 's singles reached the top ten on the Billboard Magazine Hot Country Singles chart : " Just for What I Am " ( # 5 ) , " If It Ain 't Love ( Let 's Leave It Alone ) " ( # 7 ) , and " Love Is the Look You 're Looking for " ( # 8 ) . In addition , three albums were also released to accommodate the success of the three singles , including a tribute to songwriter Dallas Frazier named If It Ain 't Love and Other Great Dallas Frazier Songs . In November 1972 , Smith announced she would depart from RCA the same week that country artist Eddy Arnold also announced his temporary departure . Smith later explained in an interview with Razor & Tie that she felt RCA showed a lack of respect for her and she felt she would have been happier recording elsewhere .

= = = 1973 ? 1979 : Later career = = =

After parting ways with RCA , Smith moved to Columbia Records in 1973 . With her new contract , she insisted that she would be able to record one gospel album a year . She released her first gospel album under the her label in November 1973 , entitled God Is Abundant . In addition , the label also gave her the advantage of being able to incorporate more gospel songs into her regular country studio albums . Because of these factors , most of her singles remained out of the top ten , but she did manage to stay in the top 20 most of the decade . That year Smith recorded her first country album for the label entitled A Lady Named Smith with producer George Richey . Smith and Richey co @-@ wrote the album 's lead single , " You 've Got Me ( Right Where You Want Me ) " , which became a minor hit on the Billboard country chart . However Smith was dissatisfied with Richey 's production strategies and replaced him with Ray Baker for her next album , That 's the Way Love Goes ( 1974 ) . Her next single ( released on That 's the Way Love Goes ) was written by Dallas Frazier called " Ain 't Love a Good Thing " , which peaked at No. 10 on the Hot Country

Singles Chart in 1974 .

After signing with Columbia , many music critics considered that Smith lost much of the quality that was found in her earlier records with RCA Victor . When reviewing her compilation from her years at Columbia titled *Connie Smith Sings Her Hits* ( 1997 ) , Thom Jurek of Allmusic commented that Smith lost much of the " grain " in her voice . Jurek went on to write , " It could be said , that regardless of the material , she never made a bad record ; the tunes were carefully chosen it 's true , but she never tried to hide the hardcore twang in her vocal style . " In 1974 Smith released the singles " I Never Knew ( What That Song Meant Before ) " and " I 've Got My Baby on My Mind " , which both reached No. 13 on the Billboard Magazine Hot Country Singles chart . In 1975 , she released her second gospel album with the label , entitled *Connie Smith Sings Hank Williams Gospel* , which was a tribute to the gospel material that Hank Williams recorded . That year , she also released a cover of Williams ' secular " Why Don 't You Love Me ( Like You Used to Do ) " as a single . In 1976 , Smith released two cover versions of previously @-@ made pop hits by The Everly Brothers as singles : " ( Till ) I Kissed You " and " So Sad ( To Watch Good Love Go Bad ) " . After releasing two more studio albums in 1976 , Smith parted ways with Columbia Records the following year .

In 1977 Smith moved to Monument Records . With her new recording contract , she was marketed as country pop artist and was pressured into recording softer material . While reviewing Smith 's 1993 Monument compilation *Greatest Hits on Monument* , Allmusic 's Stephen Thomas Erlewine commented that she not only recorded country @-@ pop material , but also " heavily produced adult contemporary ballads and big , shiny disco @-@ influenced pop numbers . " Meanwhile , both of Smith 's albums under the label stiffed upon release . Her debut 1977 Monument album , *Pure Connie Smith* , only spawned one single , entitled " Coming Around " , which peaked outside the Top 40 . Only one single released on the label became a significant hit , a cover of Andy Gibb 's 1977 pop hit " I Just Want to Be Your Everything " , which peaked at No. 14 on the country singles chart in 1978 . Smith 's next five singles on the label continued to descend into progressively lower positions on the country singles chart and because of poor record sales , Smith decided to go into semi @-@ retirement in 1979 to raise her five children .

= = = 1998 ? present : Comeback and current activities = = =

Smith was encouraged to restart her mainstream career in 1985 with a new recording contract to Epic Records . The label released two singles over the course of two years . The first single , " A Far Cry from You " ( 1985 ) , was written by Alternative country artist Steve Earle and reached No. 71 on the Hot Country Singles chart . The second single did not chart and Epic failed to release any further singles or an album . In 1986 , she made a cameo appearance in Stephen King 's horror film *Maximum Overdrive* as " dead lady in car " .

One day in the mid @-@ 1990s , Smith was at her home talking to one of her daughters on the phone . After telling her mother what she was going to that night , her daughter asked Smith what her plans for that night were . Because she did not have anything fun planned , Smith lied so her daughter wouldn 't have to worry about her . After the conversation ended , Smith realized that she didn 't need her own children worrying about her at the start of their adult lives and decided that it was time to return to her career . With country artist Marty Stuart ( whom she later married in 1997 ) , acting as the album 's main producer , Smith signed a recording contract with Warner Bros. Records in 1996 . Although the label preferred her to record an album of duets , Smith decided to go by her own terms and record a solo studio album . In October 1998 she released her second self @-@ titled studio album . Consisting of ten tracks , nine of them were co @-@ written by both Smith and Stuart . Although the album attracted little attention , it was given high critical praise for its traditional and contemporary style . Kurt Wolff of the book *Country Music : The Rough Guide* commented that the album sounded " far gutsier than anything in the Reba and Garth mainstream " . Thom Jurek of Allmusic gave the release four out of five stars , calling it " a solid effort " , also commenting , " ... it stands head and shoulders over most of the stuff that 's come out of Nash Vegas in over a decade . Even if it doesn 't sell a copy , it 's a triumphant return for Smith . She hasn

't lost a whit of her gift as a singer or as a writer . "

Also in 1998 , Smith made a second cameo appearance in a film , portraying a " Singer at the Rodeo Dance " in The Hi @-@ Lo Country starring Woody Harrelson and Billy Crudup .

In August 2003 , Smith released a collaborative gospel album with country artists Barbara Fairchild and Sharon White called Love Never Fails on Daywind Records . In an interview with Country Stars Central , Smith said that she was ill with the stomach flu while recording the album , but , still enjoyed making the record , Produced by country and bluegrass artist Ricky Skaggs ( White 's husband ) , the album received a nomination from the Dove Awards . The website Slipcue.com reviewed the release and commented that Love Never Fails , " is probably too rowdy for most Southern Gospel fans ( who really like tinkly pianos and less @-@ twangy vocals ) , and while it probably won 't wow many country listeners , for folks who are fans any of these three singers , this is kind of a treat .

In November of 2008 , Smith joined the cast of Marty Stuart 's television series The Marty Stuart Show , which airs on the RFD @-@ TV network every Saturday night . The thirty @-@ minute program features traditional country music performed by both Stuart and Smith , as well as radio personality , Eddie Stubbs . Since 2008 , Smith had been writing new songs for her next album . In August Smith released her first new solo recording in thirteen years , entitled Long Line of Heartaches via Sugar Hill Records . The record was produced by Marty Stuart and includes five songs written by the pair . Harlan Howard , Kostas , Johnny Russell , and Dallas Frazier also wrote songs that were included on the album . In 2012 , Smith was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame .

= = Musical styles and reception = =

Connie Smith 's sound is defined by the Nashville Sound musical style , primarily during her breakthrough years in the 1960s . While most Nashville Sound recordings of the time mainly included full orchestras , Smith 's sound remained more traditional with its use of steel guitar and her twangy vocals , while still featuring some pop @-@ influenced instrumentation to provide urban pop appeal . Critics have largely praised Smith 's use of the steel guitar , which have often been described as " sharp " and " prominent " . Smith 's steel guitar player Weldon Myrick is often credited with creating what Smith has called " The Connie Smith Sound " . In an interview with Colin Escott in his book Born to Sing , Myrick recalls how Smith 's producer ( Bob Ferguson ) wanted the guitar to sound , " He came out and said he wanted a bright sound , and he adjusted my controls . I thought it was an awfully thin sound , but it wound up being very popular . "

Although Smith has never been one of the most commercially successful or career @-@ driven artists , she is one of country music 's most celebrated and respected . Music critics , fans , and counterparts alike have considered Smith to be one of the best and most underrated female vocalists in country music history . Music critics have often compared Smith 's vocals to that of country legend Patsy Cline , due to her emotional delivery and her strong use of diction and phrasing . In his review of Smith 's 1996 compilation The Essential Connie Smith , Jurek explained why Smith 's vocals are usually compared to Cline 's , " Connie Smith is perhaps the only female singer in the history of country music who can truly claim to be the heiress to Patsy Cline 's throne . It 's not that there aren 't many amazing vocalists in the field , and plenty of legends among them . But in terms of the pure gift of interpretation of taking virtually any song and making it a country song of class and distinction , Smith is it . " Many artists in the country music industry have cited Smith as a significant musical influence or one of their favorite musical artists . Chely Wright said that she spent most of her childhood listening to records by Smith . George Jones cited Smith as his favorite female singer in his 1995 autobiography . Elvis Presley had many of Smith 's albums in his record collection at his Graceland home and intended on recording Smith 's version of " The Wonders You Perform " , but never got around to doing so . In a discussion with country songwriter Fred Foster , Dolly Parton famously said , " You know , there 's really only three female singers in the world : Barbra Streisand , Linda Ronstadt , and Connie Smith . The rest of us are only pretending " .

## = = Personal life = =

Smith has been married four times . In 1961 , she married Jerry Smith , a ferroanalyst at the Inter @-@ Lake Iron Corporation in Beverly , Ohio . They had one child together on March 9 , 1963 , named Darren Justin . ( In the late 1970s , Darren went to Europe to become a missionary ; he is currently a psychologist . ) In the mid @-@ 1960s , the couple divorced and Smith married the guitarist in her touring band , Jack Watkins . They had a son , Kerry Watkins , before separating nearly a year after marrying . Shortly afterward , Smith married telephone repairman Marshall Haynes . In the early 1970s , Haynes frequently toured with Connie on her road show . The couple had three daughters : Jeanne , Julie , and Jodi Haynes . After divorcing Haynes in the early 1990s , Smith stated that she would never marry again , but on July 8 , 1997 Smith married country artist Marty Stuart . They met while writing songs for Smith 's 1998 comeback album . Twenty eight years before , Stuart had first encountered her after attending her concert : " I met Connie when I was 12 years old . She came to the Indian reservation in my hometown to work at a fair . She hasn 't changed a bit . She looked great then and she looks great now . " Smith said that they have sustained their marriage by making " ... the Lord the center ... and commit . "

## = = Discography = =

## = = Filmography = =

## = = Awards , nominations , and honors = =

Connie Smith has won two awards from both Billboard Magazine and Cash Box . Besides her nominations from music magazines , Smith has been nominated for eleven Grammy Awards , one award from the Academy of Country Music , and three awards from the Country Music Association , as well as several nominations from the fan @-@ voted Music City News Awards including one win .