

Crystal Gayle ...

On May 2, 2014 the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville opened an exhibit on the life and career of Crystal that will run through November 3rd. The exhibit is a fitting tribute to Crystal who has been a favorite of audiences of country and popular music since attaining national prominence with her first chart records in the mid-seventies.

Crystal encapsulates everything the dazzling qualities of her name imply — although that name came to her in quite an unusual fashion. “Crystal” was suggested by Brenda Gail Webb’s older sister, Loretta Lynn. Knowing there was already a ‘Brenda Lee’ currently successful in the music industry, Loretta selected the name ‘Crystal’ for her younger sibling when she began recording.

Once re-named, Crystal’s musical boundaries have since been seemingly limitless, as proven by her recent project “All My Tomorrows,” a mood influenced collection of American standards. Songs such as “Cry Me a River,” “Sentimental Journey,” “It Had to Be You,” and “Smile” somehow reach the heights their songwriters’ must have dreamed of when piped through the beautiful chords of Crystal Gayle. “These are songs any artist loves to sing,” said Crystal in a recent interview. “They’ve endured to become timeless classics.”

Strange to think of anyone as young and vibrant as the artist in question as a “timeless classic,” but that indeed describes the course Crystal Gayle’s career has taken.

Her earliest roots in country music led to what was at that time in the industry an unusual turn of events: Crystal’s success wave engineered a seamless crossover to mainstream, following the footsteps of Eddy Arnold, Patsy Cline, Ray Price and so many more of her musical heroes and continuing the path for other great artists such as Shania Twain and Faith Hill.

In the late ‘70’s, Crystal was the star of her own one hour prime time specials on CBS television — specials that earned the praise of audience viewers and critics alike. The years that followed saw Crystal host a concert special on HBO, a Christmas special from Sweden, and a variety special taped in Finland. Chic, hip, and cool with a romantic mane of hair, Crystal’s television specials and myriad guest appearances on specials and talk shows solidified her stardom.

Drop dead beautiful and dressed in designer threads, Crystal took country music to town on her arm in the ‘70’s and helped introduce it to mainstream audiences. The result was a career of music and performances that appealed to Crystal’s country audiences and beyond.

But in the beginning...

Country, folk, pop, rock 'n roll, Broadway show tunes, gospel...all found an equal place in her heart when growing up as the youngest of eight children. As her beloved sister Loretta so aptly put it, Crystal too was a "coal miners daughter" before she was a platinum selling singer and a world class entertainer.

While still in school, she signed her first recording contract. Her debut single, "I've Cried the Blue Right out of My Eyes," was written by Loretta and reached the Top 25 on the national country music charts. Three more singles were released over the next three years, all making an impact with radio and listeners.

What next emerged was uniquely Crystal. Her warm, resonant vocal styling, unique as a fingerprint, captured the imagination and attention of audiences not usually tuned in and turned on by country music. There was an undeniable sophistication and a beguiling charm about her look and her voice that was a memorable imprint on every audience, and on every listener.

Her first album project began a roll out of smash singles to come. "Wrong Road Again," (her first of many hit singles with producer Allen Reynolds) became her debut Top 10 record. "I'll Get Over You," became her first #1 single. By her fourth album, "We Must Believe in Magic," Crystal Gayle became the first female artist in country music history to achieve platinum album sales. Driving the engine of the album was the song that was to become her enduring career signature song: "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue."

"Brown Eyes" opened the world's eyes to Crystal Gayle. She became a familiar name in households, grand and small, from Louisville to Leningrad. The glamour and the mystique of the Crystal Gayle phenomena made her an instantly "in demand" artist. From symphony halls to Carnegie Hall, from the best kept stages in Las Vegas to the prestige of the London Palladium, one word — "Crystal" — crossed musical genres and oceans.

Crystal globe hopped and was seen in all the best camera lenses. Her CBS prime time specials were followed by an equally groundbreaking HBO concert special viewed by millions. She appeared in Bob Hope's historic NBC-TV Special "On the Road to China." She was seen hosting the "American Music Awards," the "Academy Of Country Music Awards," and her special "A Crystal Christmas from Sweden." She swept through tours — and repeat tours — of the U.S. Japan, England, Canada, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Holland, Australia and the Far East.

In the wake, her hit list of platinum and gold was to be matched only by her awards and accolades. CMA's "Female Vocalist of the Year," for two consecutive years, she became a Grammy Award Winner for "Best Female Vocal Performance," thanks to her beloved "Brown Eyes" — a song that she today admits she has never grown tired of singing. Crystal swept the Academy Of Country Music Awards for

three of their "Top Female Vocalist" statuettes. As her music and her career path widened to mainstream audiences, so did her accolades. She is the recipient of three "American Music Awards," voted by the nation as America's "Favorite Female Artist."

Breaking through the unusual genre boundaries faced by most artists has allowed Crystal Gayle a beautiful advantage: doing projects close to her heart just for the sheer love of the music in question. One of the most meaningful was "Crystal Gayle Sings the Heart & Soul of Hoagy Carmichael," a stunning, critically acclaimed collection of 15 of the great composer's favorite classics. "One of my personal career highlights was getting to meet and sing with Hoagy on a television special," Crystal recalls. Crystal not only breathed new life into the Carmichael classics, but produced the "must have" album of her career that included such immortals as "Stardust" and "Two Sleepy People."

Crystal also found great personal satisfaction in recording two inspirational albums. The Grammy nominated "Someday" was comprised of mostly original spiritual songs and "He Is Beautiful" contains mostly traditional hymns. These efforts led to Crystal's 2009 induction into the Christian Music Hall of Fame.

With the advent of the new millennium, Crystal's "In My Arms," an enduring collection of children's lullabies, was an outgrowth of her love for the littlest of listeners and of her visit to "Sesame Street" to sing with Big Bird to a new generation of fans. Crystal also contributed her performance of "Did You Know" to "Songs from the Neighborhood," the tribute album to Mr. Rogers that won a Grammy in 2006.

Always gracious and generous with her time and talents, Crystal has been awarded the coveted "Celebration of Light Award" in recognition of her myriad humanitarian efforts, among them the Make-A-Wish Foundation for whom she has recorded the official theme song, and the Arthritis Foundation for whom she has served as telethon co-host for three years. Fittingly, the "Celebration of Light Award" was Waterford Crystal.

At home in Nashville when not touring, Crystal continues to make the world a little more beautiful just by her presence. Her two children, Catherine and Christos, her toddler grandson, Elijah, and her husband, Bill Gatzimos, are her admitted heartbeat.

Perhaps nothing sums up Crystal's career achievements as well as being awarded with a star on the fabled Hollywood Walk of Fame in October 2009.

Like fine wine...time has been nothing but kind to Crystal Gayle.