

# **DON WILLIAMS**

## *Reflections*

The hat. The voice. The songs. Known the world over and embraced decade after decade for his self-assured ease and signature hits, Don Williams needs little introduction.

Williams, a Country Music Hall of Fame member, dominated for decades as a country hit maker and was dubbed “the Gentle Giant” because of his unique blend of commanding presence and that laid-back, easy style—cutting across national and genre boundaries. Those personal and musical qualities that stood out strongly across the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s, came full circle both in 2012, as Williams delivered the masterful *And So It Goes*, and now, as he releases *Reflections*.

Now, digging deeper into his natural, everyman approachability and revered musical style, Williams delivers a new collection of songs on *Reflections* that are sure to become instant classics. Included are numbers penned by legends Townes Van Zandt, Merle Haggard, Jesse Winchester and others, setting the bar high and requiring the talents of only someone of Williams’ caliber to deliver them as intended.

Against the blurred background of power pop ballads lamenting love gone wrong or red-dirt-road mainstream country anthems dominating the musical landscape of the last year, the songs of *Reflections* are all the more unique. Williams serves up well-worn truth and wisdom about life, love and everything in between with the confidently understated delivery of a man who wrote the book on such things. When Don Williams sings, he *means* it.

*Reflections*, available from Sugar Hill on March 11, yields Williams at his finest, with his classic, often-copied-but-never-duplicated baritone front and center. It’s this style that has made Don a ballad vocal model for performers ranging from Eric Clapton (with whom he’d traded songs—“Tulsa Time,” “Lay Down Sally”) to Keith Urban (who guested on 2012’s *And So It Goes*). With a healthy touring schedule and his second album in two years, Williams works hard to maintain that voice beloved by so many. His days off from a busy touring schedule are spent on his farm, where his voice is rested and his downtime very quietly enjoyed.

This living legend does indeed enjoy the quiet, simple life, but can still fill an auditorium or stadium across the U.S., the U.K., Europe and Africa; his special role as an international ambassador for American country and pop music is ongoing and his musical appeal is about the same from the Central Time Zone to central Africa. With Williams’ undeniable universal appeal, he has accomplished something only a select few artists can claim: His music has carved out a permanent space in the global landscape, as it transcends countless cultures, languages and geographical confines.

Don Williams’ greatest asset has always been his impressive and diverse catalog of songs. The hundreds of memorable tunes in his still-growing repertoire—over 50 of them major

hits—whether contemplative ballads, affecting love songs or change-up rhythm numbers, have always been a core Don Williams strength and focus. Williams and long-time producer Garth Fundis, who returns in that role on *Reflections*, each nod to the other with having contributed to their own song selection and sequencing skills. With Nashville's finest tunesmiths delivering hundreds of songs ripe for the picking when it came time to select the tracks that would make the new album, it was Williams and Fundis' song-picking skills, in tandem, that combined to create the blueprint for *Reflections*.

Included among the tracks are from fellow legends like Townes Van Zandt (the midtempo gem "I'll Be Here In The Morning"), Merle Haggard (the wistfully delivered "Sing Me Back Home") and Jesse Winchester (the understated love ballad "If I Were Free"). Williams delivers the 10 tracks of *Reflections* with an effortless, expressive tone and with a confidence that draws you to the lyrics, characters and stories.

Carefully navigating the sometimes-fuzzy divide between country and pop, and all the more one-of-a-kind for it, Williams developed a unique sound and sensibility that radio audiences and the country charts had never encountered before. It proved a smash. Growing up, Williams avidly listened to country music artists including Johnny Horton, Johnny Cash and Jim Reeves while also appreciating the music of Brook Benton, the Platters and other pop music performers. *Reflections* continues Don's tradition of tearing down genre walls and confines, nodding to both country and pop traditions in only the way Williams can.

Born in Floydada, Texas, in 1939 and growing up near Corpus Christi, Texas, Don was playing guitar by age twelve, taught by his mother, and performed in folk, country and rock bands as a teenager. He first gained musical attention as a member of the pop folk trio The Pozo Seco Singers, which had six pop chart hits in 1966-'67, then was signed as a songwriter by Nashville's Cowboy Jack Clement in 1971—the sort of songwriter whose demos demanded attention. Between 1974 and 1991, Don had at least one major hit every year, including such country standards to be as " Good Ole Boys Like Me," "Till the Rivers All Run Dry," "It Must Be Love," "I'm Just a Country Boy," "Amanda" and "I Believe in You." He also had a hit duet with Emmylou Harris on Townes Van Zandt's "If I Needed You." Don was the CMA Male Vocalist of the Year in 1978; his "Tulsa Time" was the ACM Record of the Year for 1979.

Four years ago, in 2010, Williams received country music's highest honor with his induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Always humble, he is still surprised: "I never really thought that I was viewed in that manner by the powers that be. It's an incredible honor, to be added to the caliber of people that are on that roster. It's pretty overwhelming, actually."

After all, it's that poised humility, hand in hand with his trademark self-assured ease, that earned Williams his famous moniker. His warm, inviting music, resplendent career and endearing nonchalance about how "Giant" he truly is make Williams' superb and legendary shadow grow even taller.