



Presents

SAW THE LIGHT

Written and Directed by Marc Abraham

*Based on the book "Hank Williams: The Biography"
By Colin Escott with George Merritt and William Macewen*

**Official Selection
Toronto International Film Festival 2015**

I SAW THE LIGHT tells the story of Hank Williams, the iconic, influential country singer and songwriter of the 1940's and early 50's whose meteoric rise and fall, including his death at age 29, has become part of American folklore. Writer-director Marc Abraham has created a compelling, historically accurate narrative of Hank's career that examines his tormented creative genius and the turbulent domestic life that inspired him to write some of his best-known songs. By literally going back in time, you see Hank as he was, living his life on his terms, battling his demons and ultimately creating music for the ages.

"I am so proud of this film of my granddaddy's life. *Director* Marc Abraham, lead actor Tom Hiddleston and everyone involved with the film brought an incredible passion to their work, and a commitment to show Hank in all of his grit and glory and genius..."

-Holly Williams, granddaughter of Hank Williams

123 min

Distribution



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CAST

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Hank Williams | Tom Hiddleston |
| Audrey Williams | Elizabeth Olsen |
| Fred Rose | Bradley Whitford |
| Lillie Williams | Cherry Jones |
| Billie Jean Jones | Maddie Hasson |
| Bobbi Jett | Wrenn Schmidt |

CREW

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY

Marc Abraham

BASED ON THE BOOK

“Hank Williams: The Biography”

By Colin Escott with George Merritt and William Macewen

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Patty Long, Jason Cloth, John Raymonds, James Packer

PRODUCERS

Brett Ratner, p.g.a., Aaron L. Gilbert, p.g.a.
Marc Abraham, p.g.a., G. Marq Roswell, p.g.a.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Dante Spinotti, ASC AIC

EDITED BY

Alan Heim, ACE

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Merideth Boswell

COSTUME DESIGNER

Lahly Poore-Ericson

EXECUTIVE MUSIC PRODUCER

Rodney Crowell

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Carter Little

MUSIC BY

Aaron Zigman

SHORT SYNOPSIS

I SAW THE LIGHT tells the story of the iconic, tormented singer-songwriter Hank Williams who revolutionized country music with his raw charisma, haunting voice and original songs, most of which are considered American standards today and have been recorded many times over by pop, rock and country artists alike.

Hank Williams (Tom Hiddleston) emerged from the local Alabama music scene after World War II. Wife Audrey (Elizabeth Olsen) was desperate to sing by his side despite being of lesser talent, which fueled an extremely turbulent home life. But Williams' ability to write songs covering a wide range of emotions, using his own personal troubles as inspiration, became the essence of country music. In the end, he realized his dreams: hit records, a place on Nashville's prestigious stage and radio show the Grand Ole Opry and even guest spots on the then-new medium of TV.

Refusing to hide his longtime alcoholism and dependency on painkillers behind the wholesome facade Nashville and the Opry expect of its stars, Hank remained prolific and immensely popular until the very end of his life. Like Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and Kurt Cobain, Hank's star burned brightly, but briefly over the six years before he died on New Year's Day of 1953. HE WAS 29.

Today, country is the most popular music in America, and Hank Williams had much to do with that. His enduring qualities explain his inductions into the Country Music Hall of Fame (1961), the Songwriters Hall of Fame (1970) and the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame (1987). Williams had 33 hit country singles during his life. 30 reached the Top Ten; eight hit Number One. Seven more Top Tens came after his death with three going to Number One.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I have been a fan of country music since I was an eight- year old kid growing up in Kentucky. When I was a college student I wrote a paper about the influence of the genre on American culture. It focused on Hank Williams, a man many have called one of this country's greatest poets as well as the first "rock star"; even to the point of living hard and dying young. His indelible imprint on today's music world has not diminished in over 60 years.

When I decided to make a film about his Hank's life, I was intent on telling the story through the window of his relationships with powerful women, his physical pain and his most human flaws; to show the passion and always-chaotic emotional life behind the curtain. I feel it's only by exposing his inner turmoil that you can truly understand what drove his lyrics, music and explosive performances. The truth is, Hank William's downfalls were his inspirations.

Cold Cold Heart isn't a song written on a scrap of paper by a man looking for a hit. It is a song lived by a man whose wife had an abortion without telling him and then blamed him for it. One of Hank's last recordings was "Your Cheatin' Heart". This was shortly after his second divorce from Audrey was final. It is a brilliant example of how Williams used his personal experience to relate to every man and woman.

In my own way, I wanted to make a film that felt like a song. I studied just about every movie ever made about musicians. The ones that resonated emotionally and cinematically stayed away from psychological examination. I had no interest in trying to analyze Hank Williams through his drinking or his childhood. To me that would be like trying to explain how Bob Zimmerman from Hibbing Minnesota, whose father ran a furniture store, became Bob Dylan.

I SAW THE LIGHT tells William's story as truthfully and accurately as possible. It doesn't manipulate events or make up scenes to illustrate his talent. It delves into the people, the actual places, and the simple everyday moments that made him who he was. Then came the music. The leap from the one to the other is for me, where all the power lies.

Marc Abraham

FROM DIRECTOR MARC ABRAHAM...

"Hank was in some ways probably the first *rock star*. It's hard to question that," says Marc Abraham, *I SAW THE LIGHT'S* writer and director. "I'm not sure how many people truly understand how influential (he was). Certainly Dylan understands it. Springsteen understands it. Neil Young understands it."

"Hank William's life was not only extraordinary even in terms of what a young man goes through in a brief time, but he was a brilliant artist who not only changed contemporary music, but had an impact on literature. Men in the 1940's weren't singing songs like "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." Bing Crosby wasn't talking about crying."

Abraham fully recognized Hank's tragic side, fraught with demons and the substance abuse that prematurely ended his life at age 29. Other music giants, he adds, suffered similar fates. "Hank crashed before (doomed jazzman) Charlie Parker. There were some old blues guys (who died similarly), but not somebody at the lofty peak Hank was at, no one in that spot had gone down with that kind of ferocity."

He embraced this project with both the skills of a respected filmmaker and the passion of a lifelong country fan.

"I grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. That's about three hours north of Nashville. I went to sleep each and every night listening to the radio. In fact, my father at the time worked for a radio station. I wasn't of Hank's vintage, (but) you start listening to WSM beaming to you from down there and it gets into your spirit. From then on I just was a country music fan. It was romantic, it was storytelling to me. Whether it was Tennessee Ernie Ford's "Sixteen Tons" or the first record I ever bought, Marty Robbins' "El Paso." It was my first real introduction to poetry.

I grew to love George Jones and Merle, and Kristofferson, but not an hour on a station went by without "Jambalaya" or "Hey Good Lookin'." I loved "Cold, Cold Heart", I wanted to go "Honky Tonkin'."

Though Abraham felt he had a deep understanding of William's music and had done extensive research into his entire life, he deliberately avoided the cradle-to-grave approach followed by many musical and non-musical biopics. "To be frank I was never very interested in the early years of Hank's life, I felt we had many times been shown, young artists (and remember this is a movie about really young people) being taught their craft by older black musicians, or poor hillbilly's, nothing wrong with that but it wasn't my focus. I really cared about being supremely accurate and authentic, but I was dedicated to a different style of film. My influences had been Bob Fosse or what Scorsese did with *Raging Bull*. I'm not comparing myself to those masters, but I loved the way they rendered their biographical films."

"And then if you can sweep the audience into the *world*, really immerse them with truth and the smell and the number on the thermometer, then maybe you just might move them."

Of star Tom Hiddleston, who actually sings every note in the film, Abraham says, "He's an

amazing actor and truly I cannot imagine anyone, anywhere more dedicated. For me, I just cast the guy I thought could do it. I never imagined honestly, Tom could bring to life what he did in the way he did." He also singles out Elizabeth Olsen, who portrays Hank's musically challenged wife Audrey, calling her portrayal amazing, adding, "Even though her character of Audrey wasn't really much of a vocalist, Elizabeth's actually quite a good singer. And she had to work hard to not sound great."

The director came up with the idea of having the character of Fred Rose, Hank's producer, song publisher and surrogate father, portrayed by Bradley Whitford, as "a narrator, which allowed me to indulge in more realistic dialogue and avoid exposition," adding, "at the same time he occupies a real space in the movie as a patron and father figure."

Abraham is equally effusive about the portrayal of Hank's band the Drifting Cowboys, noting, "Every one of those boys are musicians. Everyone who's playin' in there is actually playing. I don't have to cut away. For the most part they're not even actors except for Casey (Jerry Rivers) and Josh (Sammy Pruett) a little bit. Wes, who plays Don Helms, works in a guitar store."

He was impressed by the film's Executive Music Producer Rodney Crowell, who produced the sharp, accurate re-recordings of Hank's recording. A veteran Nashville singer, songwriter and producer, Crowell grew up surrounded by traditional country music in his native Texas. He became a major artist and vital part of country's 1980's New Traditionalist movement, racking up five # 1 singles late in that decade. He shared Abraham's passion for doing it right.

"Rodney does not suffer any fools," Abraham says. "He's an incredibly smart, erudite guy who has even had a book on the New York Time best seller list." Noting Crowell's authenticity, he adds, "We recorded on old instruments. We recorded this stuff in the round. We used (old-time tube) amplifiers. You can't get more real than our tracks."

That passion extends to the film's aesthetic. "If you look at Meredith Boswell's production design, it's not trying to draw attention to itself, and it's so subtly accurate," Abraham explains. "That's the fabric that weaves the soul into film as well. Color home movies of Hank's actual 1953 funeral end the film. "It's incredible footage," Abraham enthuses. "We got it from the grandson of the guy who shot it. His granddaddy was a policeman."

"I've often been aware that when some people think of country music and the Opry, and they think these people are a bunch of hicks. They're not. They're polite and courtly, but they didn't fall off a turnip truck. Just because they talk with an accent doesn't mean they don't know what time it is. And look at the plethora of songs that the genre has given us, the sheer artistic might of country. And I wanted people to realize that Hank's influence was beyond Nashville, or Montgomery, Dallas or Macon; it wasn't just something that took place out on a farm. That's why it was so important to me to show Hank in Hollywood, and in Germany on tour. He played five TV shows in New York. This isn't *Hee-Haw*."

In the end, Abraham says, the film ultimately remains true to his own approach to filmmaking. "I always try to remain subtle. Sometimes too much so, but when it came to Hank, I just wanted to do him true and right."

FROM ACTOR TOM HIDDLESTON...

"He was such an extraordinary man", Tom Hiddleston says of Hank Williams. "In my mind, I always think of him like a firework, a firework that was burning brightly, made people gasp in awe, and gave people delight, but then blazed and burned out very fast".

Of his decision to accept the role and sing Hank's songs in the film, he explains, "It's hard to say why I choose to do the films that I do. It's hard to say why I play the characters I choose to play. But it's always something instinctive. It's a pure gut feeling. "

"There was something in Marc Abraham's script, which I read for the first time four years ago, in March 2012, which seemed incredibly authentic, which I really connected to. Marc had written Hank Williams with such compassion and lack of judgment. He'd taken this very famous man – an icon of American music, a legend in songwriting, folk and blues – and he'd written the man behind the icon. He had somehow tapped into the heartbeat of a legend, with all of his vulnerabilities and fallibilities, his weakness, pain and grief, and at the same time, his joy and playfulness, mischief and energy, and white-hot talent."

Hiddleston has a deep passion for music. "I have such respect and admiration for musicians, and they've inspired me to do some of the work that I've done, or just live the life that I have lived. I think a musician or a singer, as an artist, has nothing to hide behind. There is a raw vulnerability in singing, and especially singing your own songs. It's expressive of a kind of immediate personal truth."

He applied that passion to studying Hank. "Hank's truth changed the landscape of American music. He sang what he knew about. And what he knew about was going out and meeting girls, getting into trouble, falling in love and falling out of love, loss and loneliness—'lonesomeness,' as he would have it. And it was so simple. His songs were so simple, but they were so true. And I think what people connected to in his music was the authenticity of it."

"If you think about where Hank sits in the development of 20th Century music, and it was really an education for me in many respects, the more research I did. Hank took the blues and infused folk music with this blues rhythm. When I hear the chorus of "Move It On Over", I can hear "Rock Around The Clock" coming round the corner. Hiddleston notes that they had "the same melody and the same chord progression," calling it "formative rock and roll."

"When you read interviews with Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen and Keith Richards, they all talk about the influence of Hank Williams; that Hank was the first guy – the first guy doing a particular kind of thing. And so you realize he's this link in a chain, this crucial link: a cornerstone in music history. If he hadn't done what he'd done and written those songs, then the history of contemporary music and rock 'n' roll would be completely different. "All of those songs that the greatest singers in other genres covered. Ray Charles sang "Your Cheatin' Heart" and Tony Bennett sang "Cold, Cold Heart" and everybody sang "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry."

Hiddleston shared Abraham's belief that Hank's music and personal life—the ups and downs--were deeply intertwined. "It was very important to tell the truth. I felt, and I know Marc felt, a

great responsibility to Hank Williams, to the legacy of Hank Williams, to the idea of Hank Williams and to his family: simply to tell the truth. We didn't want to edit his life story in any way. We didn't want to lionize him too much, but we also didn't want just to tell the sad story."

Hank's interactions with the women in his life and his producer-mentor, songwriter Fred Rose, himself a recovering alcoholic, also fascinated Hiddleston. "Hank was surrounded by very strong women," he declares, "by his first wife Audrey and his mother Lillie and later by Billie Jean, all these women fighting for his fortune and his success. Very, very few men he would listen to. His father clearly wasn't a major figure in his life, and I think he respected Fred Rose as a songwriter and as a producer. If he were going to take constructive criticism, he would take it from Fred. Fred had been down that road himself. It was really important to have him in the film because there was nobody else to temper that direction."

Preparation for the role took time, Hiddleston explains. "Before I started, I filled myself up with everything I could find about Hank Williams: his circumstances, his rise and fall, what his hits were, how he wrote those hits. And it just goes to show there are no hard and fast rules in show business, in entertainment or in making art, and it's sometimes the things that the experts don't think is going to work. It catches fire and spreads across a nation."

The actor also feels the film reveals details about the man not widely known. "I think there are many people are familiar with his music, and perhaps fewer people are familiar with the circumstances from which his music arose. People maybe knew he drank, but didn't know he had *Spina bifida occulta*. They knew he wrote great songs, songs that you'd tap your feet to, but they didn't know that he died at the age of 29. They may not have known he was married twice."

"I think people perhaps don't know his struggle, a huge struggle within himself between art and commerce. And as soon as he became a star, it's almost as if the engine behind his stardom started to eat him up from the inside. He didn't know how to stay true to himself, while also becoming commercially successful."

"I put a huge amount of pressure on myself as an actor with everything I do. I knew that we had an extraordinary crew: Dante Spinotti, a truly amazing cinematographer, whom I have respected all my life; Merideth Boswell, a great production designer, who was already building incredible sets. I'd already met Lahly Poore-Ericson, our costume designer, who was making Nudie suits for me to wear. But I knew there was one man who was going to have to sing these songs and that was me. I just had to dig in and do the work. I had to give myself a little talking to, and say: 'Are you going to do this, or not?'"

"It was a very handmade film. It was just a couple of us, really – a couple of us who felt it was worth doing, and we put our best foot forward and we did it. It really felt like that – felt like a small family, which is why it's amazing to me that it's having this extraordinary release by Sony Classics."

"I think the influence of Hank Williams is too great on American culture, so to misrepresent him in any way – I didn't feel we had the right to do that. I felt a personal duty and a responsibility to play him honestly; to commit myself to looking like him, to sounding like him, to playing like

him, to feeling what he felt, and putting myself through the paces that he put himself through. He brought so much joy to so many people from so much pain."

"I SAW THE LIGHT is how that cost him his life in the end."

HIDDLESTON SINGS HANK

While it surprised some that Tom Hiddleston not only portrayed Hank but did his own singing in I SAW THE LIGHT, he was firmly committed to the idea. He didn't face them alone. His musical coach was the film's Executive Music Director: veteran country singer and songwriter Rodney Crowell. A hit recording artist in his own right, Crowell has five # 1 country singles under his belt and a deep passion for the music's heritage and for Hank Williams.

Hiddleston has fond memories of the learning process, the challenges and triumphs.

"We started shooting the film on October 18, 2014, and I went to Nashville on September 3 and I stayed with Rodney for five weeks. He was my tutor in the ways of the blues – my coach in every respect. He just guided me through everything in a way." His goal, he says, "was simply to sing the songs and play the songs. I read the script, did my own research, and then literally we shut ourselves in, in his house in Tennessee, and we'd just live and breathe Hank Williams, and the tradition of folk music."

"It was just a simple matter of practicing and immersion. I was completely immersed in Hank's music for five weeks straight. I'd do covers of "Ramblin' Man" and "I Can't Help It If I'm Still In Love With You" and "You Win Again" and "Settin' The Woods On Fire", songs that actually aren't in the film, but we just sang Hank."

He is quick to note that his own musical exposure was far from the sounds of Hank. "The way folk music is handed down to children in the UK when I was growing up has a very Celtic inheritance, and rhythmically it's much more on the beat. There's no sense of dropping off the beat or singing behind the beat. It's not blues. I had to really just dig into the blues and swim around it a bit. I had to loosen up my natural rhythm. It sounds technical, but in the end you just have to feel it out instinctively."

"It was pure dig your heels in: practice, practice, practice. Hank's tone is not an easy one to emulate, And I had to refine my yodel and inflect my vowel sounds. Rodney was sweet about it, but he wasn't going to let anything past him. He'd say, 'Tommy boy, I can hear your English choirboy comin' out now. You been singin' too many hymns at those English schools. You're right on top of the beat. You gotta hang back off it. Just glide behind it.' It was an education in the blues. Sometimes we'd just sing the blues all day."

We had some hilarious days. We'd just sing for eight hours straight, until I couldn't see. Sometimes I would hit the wall in exhaustion and we'd keep going and somehow out of the exhaustion, I would just get it right and make a breakthrough, and he'd say, 'you got it man! You got it! Keep singin'!"

"The thing I worked on with Rodney, the thing we worked most of all, was Rodney's instruction simply to feel the songs myself. He insisted that that is the central cornerstone of American folk music: to sing these songs you have to feel them, you have to commit to the meaning of the words. So when you sing, '*The silence of a falling star lights up a purple sky/And as I wonder where you are/I'm so lonesome I could cry.*'" You can't just say it. You can't just sing the notes. You can't even just sing the words. You have to *feel* it. You have to *know* what that means to say that."

"In order to sing that song, and for it to have the impact that Hank had, you have to connect to it with your whole soul. You have to just get yourself behind it and mean it and express yourself through it. That was really the key to playing the part."

"We recorded some of the music before we started shooting, so it was difficult to predict exactly what Marc was going to need and I was very keen to give Marc more music than he would ever use. I always wanted him to have more rather than less, because he knew to have too much music would imbalance the drama. It was a question of what songs were going to slide into which scenes in the appropriate way.

Hiddleston recalls recording the music at a Nashville studio, again, with authenticity in mind.

"We recorded with the same microphones and the band would all be arranged around one microphone. We'd all be basically playing and singing into one microphone, which is pretty wild. But I think that's why the music sounds authentic. We worked so hard on it."

"It's so important to Rodney, too. He saw Hank Sr. play (sitting) on his own father's shoulders when he was two years old. He wanted to do it right. None of us wanted to make any shortcuts. We knew we had to go the whole way."

FROM ACTRESS ELIZABETH OLSEN...

"They're two difficult people that have a hard time communicating and getting alone, but they love each other deeply. I thought that would be a very fun thing and a very honest thing to try and create," Elizabeth Olsen says of the complex relationship between Hank Williams and his wife, Audrey.

She notes the film captures Hank's and Audrey's youth and the fact neither were prepared for fame. "I think she supported his ambitions and she was in awe of him as well. And they were really young and then they were going through all of these huge life changes, with success and what that means."

Olsen sensed the dynamics of the couple when reading writer-director Marc Abraham's script. "I could tell in Marc's writing that she was a woman that was kind of manipulative and controlling and selfish, and I saw what parts of this story that she served. But I also had a lot of compassion for her, and I thought I could defend her case, and I felt sorry for her."

"Also, I loved the way Marc wrote their relationship knowing they're not pretending it's this perfect marriage at any point. Initially, a lot of times when I see characters that are supposed to be disliked in a way, I'm kind of drawn to them because I feel like certain people may see our faults more than we can see them ourselves. So I want to find the humanity and pain behind her and defend her story, really."

Despite her major vocal weaknesses, Audrey aspired to become a singer like Hank and, says Olsen, pushed for a place at the table. "She always managed to get a duet in on all the radio shows, but I do think that there is a selfish incentive possibly for herself in knowing that Hank had a lot of talent and had more of a draw. But at the same time anytime you see photos of him and the Drifting Cowboys, she's right in there with them. So I think she thought of it as the two of them."

An accomplished singer, Olsen worked to recreate Audrey's flawed vocalizing. "My dialect coach and I, we started with as many recordings as we had of her speaking on radio shows, or anything we had of her singing. There had to have been some connection to how she sang and how she spoke. I did try as much as I could to mimic her faults. She sings flat, and then (her voice) cracks. You can't ever make your voice sound the same as someone else. You can try and mimic the cadence, or what made them not a great singer. For me, it was just to try and pick and choose what works for the character and what worked for the performance."

At the same time, she admitted she grew to find Audrey's vocals "really endearing. When you listen to her singing, eventually you kind of grow to like it in a way. She couldn't have been so horrible that it made Hank look like a complete idiot, or even made her look like a complete idiot. But (in re-creating her), you had to be bad enough that people who have a musical ear can realize, 'that's not great!'"

As for research, she explains, "There was plenty of stuff we were able to find and listen to, and the book (*Hank Williams: The Biography*) that Marc used, we all read. There are two

documentaries that we watched. And it was mainly from that and discussion, because obviously Marc knew more than I did. But I tried to get as much information as possible from the documentaries and the book and the recordings. That was really the base for all of it."

A visit to the Country Music Hall of Fame proved revelatory in probing Audrey's personality and idiosyncrasies. She arrived when they'd finished a major exhibit on Hank's life and found, "hilarious, sweet photos of them as a family that are candid, where Hank is taking a picture in a mirror, (with the nanny) Miss Ragland and (Audrey's daughter) Lycrecia, Audrey and Hank, Jr. And they look so happy. So that kind of joy you want to remember as well, when you do something about dysfunction."

Other photos revealed Audrey's obsession with monograms. "All of her dresses had a huge "A" on them." Audrey's western boots also had her name inlaid in white leather. "That was one thing I just begged Lahly (Poore-Erickson), our costume designer, was please just give me 'Audrey boots.'"

"I think one of my favorite facts that we learned is she had an affinity for Asian design, so their house in Nashville, when you look at home photos, everything's Oriental. Things hanging on the wall and on bedposts or lamps, everything was in Oriental design. That was very flashy at the time, for someone in Nashville. And we do this in the set design, if you're paying attention."

That attention to detail, she explains, also extended to Executive Music Producer Rodney Crowell's faithful re-creation of Hank's recording sessions, which took place in an era when a singer and band were often captured with just one microphone. "The thing that I loved about the way they recorded in the studio is that those (musicians) weren't miked in the background. In a film, you might try and make them sound equal to Hank on the mike, but they kept it as it would have been recorded. No one else is miked but him and everyone else sounds very distant from the mike. I loved little details like that."

Olsen expresses pride in *I SAW THE LIGHT'S* deftly-mixed blend of triumph and tragedy as it applies to both Hank and Audrey. "I think we try and take care of them as much as possible. I think there's a really interesting modern day commentary on what happens when two people who are in love and are trying to create a family stumble on fame and the pressures of it."

As to the characters and their dynamics, she says, "I think it was important to Marc, capturing all those relationships that mattered the most to Hank in his personal life as accurately as possible. You can fiddle around with someone's life and try and fit it into the arc for a film, but Marc cared more about staying true to Hank's story from a personal standpoint, and I think we all stand behind that."

She sees the film as highly relevant to fame in the age of Twitter. "In a time where everyone's opinion matters and everyone comments on all these weird blogs, and people think that they're intimately involved in everyone's affairs, it shows even in a time way before all of that, there still was the noise and there still was the pressure and it's just two people who are trying to figure it all out and couldn't."

"I think we try as best we can to show who Hank was in his life, and the reasons why the songs were written. And if you are a fan of Hank's, you know all the music. We're showing you what actually happened in his life that affected every choice he made and every song he wrote and every place he moved to and why. I think it's just showing the humanity behind an icon which we all forget."

The film's balance, with moments of happiness amid the pain, Olsen also finds highly satisfying. "We were all so happy with how much joy there is in it. There is joy and there is humor and it's funny and I think there's so many sweet moments in it as well. If you just see it on your own, you end up being really moved and touched by it. You just kind of get taken away back into a different time and I think it's so authentic to the time and the place and I do think it's a transportive film in that way."

"You don't always get to be proud of the films that you're a part of as an actor. And I'm really proud of this one and I'm really excited for it to be out there and for people to see it."

CHARACTER BIOS

Hiram King "Hank" Williams (1923-1953)



NASHVILLE - CIRCA 1948: Country singer Hank Williams poses for a portrait circa 1948 in Nashville Tennessee. (Photo by Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images)

The Hank Williams saga began in rural Mt. Olive, Alabama, where he born September 17, 1923. He was the second child of Alonzo Williams, or "Lon" and his wife Lillie. Their daughter Irene arrived a year earlier. Hank was born with Spina Bifida, a defect in his spinal cord that played a huge role in the back problems he'd suffer throughout his life.

Lon, a former engineer on a logging train, and Lillie separated when physical problems Lon suffered during Army service sent him to a Veterans' hospital for ten years. Hank, Irene and Lillie lived with relatives for a time and Hank sold peanuts on the streets of Georgiana, Alabama to make money, Lillie took various jobs to feed her children. Noting her son's interest in music, around 1931, she bought him a guitar for \$ 3.50. His first musical hero was Jimmie Rodgers, country music's first major star. He also picked up guitar licks from relatives and from Rufus Payne, a black blues musician in Georgiana.

The family moved to the state capital of Montgomery in 1937 where Lillie opened a boarding house and Hank began writing songs. A heavy drinker in his teens, he sang occasionally on WSFA radio. Increasingly inspired by the raw, emotional singing style of new Grand Ole Opry star Roy Acuff, he and amateur musicians started working Alabama roadhouses, bars and occasionally dancehalls. Lillie handled his bookings and management.

Rejected for World War II Army service due to his back problems, Hank worked on and off in Oregon and Alabama shipyards before returning to Montgomery in 1943. He was performing with a medicine show in Banks, Alabama when he met Audrey Sheppard Guy, a mother of one, separated from her husband. He re-organized the Drifting Cowboys in 1944. Given the violence in the rural joints they played, he bought the band blackjacks for self-defense.

With Audrey's divorce final, the couple married December 15, 1944. She became a part of the band despite lacking any vocal skills. By then Hank was becoming a regional star, though drinking caused him to occasionally miss bookings or his daily WSFA radio show? Pushed by Lillie and Audrey, he became obsessed with making it to the Opry, the recognized pinnacle of country stardom. Opry officials knew his talents, but were aware of his unreliability.

Hank's first visit to Nashville was unproductive, but a second trip connected him with Acuff-Rose song publishing. Fred Rose, who owned the company with Roy Acuff, became his entree to

another level of the music business. Rose, convinced of his talents, signed him to a songwriting contract and got him a record deal with a small company. Those records led to a contract with the much larger MGM Records. His first hit single, "Move It On Over," came in 1947.

Audrey, fed up with her husband's drinking and violent temper, filed for divorce in 1948. After a time, the couple reconciled and moved to Shreveport, Louisiana where Hank joined KWKH radio's new weekly *Louisiana Hayride* program. Audrey was pregnant and in the spring of 1949, gave birth to a son, Randall Hank Williams (the future Hank Williams, Jr.)

"Lovesick Blues," a 1920's pop tune that Hank didn't write, became his first # 1 single, leading to an Opry guest appearance on June 11, 1949. The audience's explosive enthusiasm for "Lovesick" brought Hank his coveted Opry membership. He moved Audrey and his son to Nashville and toured the nation, piling up hits like "Mind Your Own Business," "Long Gone Lonesome Blues," "Moanin' The Blues," "Cold, Cold Heart" and "Hey, Good Lookin'."

On tours, he could be sober and in command. At other times, he performed drunk or as before, was sometimes too drunk to appear. He had women everywhere. He never tried to hide his bad behavior behind the wholesome rural image the *Opry* expected all its artists to maintain.

1951 brought continued success. In a time few country stars were booked on network TV shows, Hank and the Drifting Cowboys appeared on CBS's *Perry Como Show*. For a time, Hank and his band performed alongside Bob Hope, Milton Berle and Jack Benny as part of a national touring show called the Hadacol Caravan. But his back problems worsened. After falling during a hunting trip, Hank underwent back surgery at Vanderbilt University Hospital in Nashville in December.

Both Hank and Audrey drank and partied heavily, and given Hank's ability to turn violent, their marriage collapsed. She insisted he move out and filed for divorce in early 1952; it became final in April. Hank, who'd moved in with singer Ray Price, his friend and protégé, partied there and met a new woman, Bobbie Jett. His growing unreliability put his *Opry* status in jeopardy. Management issued an ultimatum that August: appear at his next scheduled *Opry* appearance and at an *Opry*-sponsored concert a day later—or else. He missed both. The *Opry* fired him August 11.

Fred Rose got him back on the *Hayride* and Hank returned to Shreveport. He'd met Billie Jean Jones Eshliman, a Louisiana divorcee, at the Opry before his firing. They married in October. By then his health was failing, the result of his alcoholism and abuse of chloral hydrate, a dangerous tranquilizer prescribed by bogus "physician" and ex-convict Toby Marshall.

Booked to perform in Charleston, West Virginia on December 31, 1952 and in Canton, Ohio on New Year's Day, 1953, he traveled north from Montgomery in the back seat of his Cadillac, driven by a Montgomery college student. Along the way, he drank and used drugs. When winter weather kept them from getting to Charleston, Carr pressed on toward Canton. Hank remained quiet in the back. During a stop in Oak Hill, West Virginia to check on his passenger, the young driver found Hank dead.

At the New Year's Day show in Canton, after the promoter announced Hank's death, the grief-stricken cast sang "I Saw The Light." A few days later, an elaborate funeral took place at Montgomery's Municipal Auditorium. Many of Hank's Opry friends were present to sing at the service. In 1961, just eight years after his death, Hank Williams became one of the first three members of the Country Music Hall of Fame with Fred Rose and Jimmie Rodgers. He entered the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987 in the Early Influence category.

Jessie Lillybelle Skipper "Lillie" Williams Stone (1898-1955)

Hank's mother, early manager and muse

Assertive and at times overbearing, Alabama-born Jessie Lillybelle Skipper married Lon Williams in 1916 before he entered the U.S. Army, where injuries in a fight led to his later physical problems. After he returned home, the couple farmed before Lon went to the railroads. A church organist, Lillie's playing and singing exposed Hank to music early on. Lon's declining health put him in a Veterans' hospital for an extended period (he and Lillie divorced in 1942). Never afraid of hard work, she labored as a practical nurse in Georgiana, Alabama and took other jobs including running a boarding house. Encouraging Hank's musical interests, she bought him his first guitar when he was eight. After the family settled in Montgomery in 1937, she opened a larger boardinghouse and became her son's de facto manager, encouraging and cajoling him constantly. After Hank married Audrey, Lillie and her new daughter-in-law often clashed. In 1947 Lillie married Bill Stone, who'd lived at her boarding house. Even with Hank's fame, Lillie remained a touchstone in his life. After Hank's death and the birth of his daughter to Bobbie Jett, Lillie took over care of the child, per Hank's and Bobbie's wishes. She divorced Bill Stone in 1954, the year before her death. She was buried near her son in Montgomery.

Audrey Sheppard Williams (1923-1975)

Hank's first wife, mother of Hank Williams, Jr.



Left: UNITED STATES - CIRCA 1957: Audrey Williams, in western outfit, with dog (Collie), c. 1957. (Photo by Elmer Williams/Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum/Getty Images) Right: NASHVILLE - CIRCA 1948: Hank Williams and Audrey Williams pose for a portrait circa 1949 in Nashville Tennessee. (Photo by Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images)

Beautiful but troubled, Audrey Sheppard was willful even in her teens. She had a daughter, Lycrecia, the product of a brief fling with a boyfriend, and lived with her parents in Banks, Alabama. She met Hank there in 1943 when he appeared at a medicine show in town. He was beguiled by her good looks and her interest in him. Audrey dreamed of a musical career, despite her inability to stay on pitch, phrase or inject emotion into her singing, and she saw Hank as her entree to performing. After their 1944 marriage, they lived at Lillie's Montgomery boarding house. Audrey began performing with Hank though her lack of talent was clear to all who heard her. Despite the tensions between them, both Lillie and Audrey pushed Hank's career. When

their relationship grew strained, Audrey filed for divorce in 1948 but the reunited before Hank joined the *Louisiana Hayride*. When Hank joined the Opry in 1949, the couple bought a large home on Franklin Road in Nashville and in 1951 opened Hank & Audrey's Corral, a Nashville western clothing store. Hank's fame gave Audrey a chance to make some painfully bad recordings for Decca Records. Her skills at partying and drinking equaled her husband's. She filed for divorce in early 1952, retaining custody of Hank, Jr. The divorce was granted in April. Despite their divorce, after Hank's death, Audrey presented herself as his official "widow." Later, she pushed Hank, Jr.'s musical career and promoted herself around Nashville as a "star-maker," abused alcohol and drugs all the while. As her son began finding success as a singer, she insisted he stick to his dad's songs or tunes in that mode. As an adult, Hank Jr. split with Audrey. In the 1970's he embraced a Southern Rock form of country that brought him massive fame with younger audiences. . Audrey died November 4, 1975. She's buried next to Hank in Montgomery.

Fred Rose (1898-1954)

Songwriter, publisher, Hank's record producer



CIRCA 1970: Photo of Fred Rose Photo by Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

Known as a country songwriter and half of Acuff-Rose, the Nashville song publishing company he and Opry star Roy Acuff co-founded in 1942, Fred Rose began his career as pop singer-composer "Freddie Rose." In the 1920's he composed the tune "Red Hot Mama" for pop singer Sophie Tucker. Two other Rose originals, "Honest And Truly" and "Deed I Do" became pop standards. He teamed with singer Elmo Tanner to form a duo known as the Tune Peddlers. Rose also hosted a CBS radio program. Years of battling alcoholism ended in the mid 1930's when he became a Christian Scientist, a religion favoring prayer over doctors. Rose hosted "Fred Rose's Song Shop" at Nashville's WSM, home of the Grand Ole Opry; he also wrote western songs in Hollywood with Gene Autry. Initially skeptical of country music, seeing and hearing Roy Acuff's emotional singing impressed Rose and led to the formation of Acuff-Rose. Rose wrote the country standards "Be Honest With Me" (Gene Autry) "Roly Poly" (Bob Wills), "Fireball Mail," "Pins And Needles (In My Heart)" and "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain" (Acuff) plus "Texarkana Baby" (Eddy Arnold). "Blue Eyes" became Willie Nelson's first # 1 record in 1975. Rose suffered a fatal heart attack less than a year after Hank died. Under the leadership of his son Wesley Rose, Acuff-Rose, who published Hank's songs and country and pop standards like "Bye Bye Love," "Wake Up Little Suzie," "Blue Bayou" "Rocky Top" and "Oh Lonesome Me," became a major American publisher. Rose, along with Hank, was another of the original three Country Music Hall of Fame inductees in 1961.

The Drifting Cowboys Hank's backup band



NASHVILLE - CIRCA 1950: Hank Williams and the Drifting Cowboys (L-R Don Helms, Bob McNett, Hank Williams, Jerry Rivers and Hillous Buttrum) pose for a promotional photo at the studios of WSM Radio circa 1950 in Nashville Tennessee. (Photo by Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images)

Hank organized his original Drifting Cowboys in Montgomery in 1938. He'd use the name throughout his career, though the band's membership frequently changed. Key members included steel guitarist **Don Helms**, ("Shag") who joined in 1944. **Sammy Pruett** was the original electric guitarist. Among the bass players: **Lum York**, **Hillous Buttrum** and **Howard Watts** (aka "Cedric Rainwater"). Hank used some different musicians in Shreveport. When Hank moved to Nashville, Helms rejoined the band. Hank also hired fiddler **Jerry Rivers** ("Burr-head," in honor of his haircut). **Bob McNett**, who played electric guitar with Hank in Shreveport, came to Nashville until Sammy Pruett rejoined. Hank recorded with studio musicians until in 1950 when Fred Rose began using the Cowboys on his records. The high pitched licks Helms created and Rivers' aggressive fiddling became instrumental trademarks of the Hank Williams "sound" on records and onstage. The band stayed in Nashville after the Opry fired Hank in 1952. After his death, they recorded blazing instrumentals for MGM and accompanied other singers on records. When the group dissolved, Helms became a freelance musician and booking agent. Rivers left music for a while but returned as an artist manager and agent. The band reactivated in 1969 for a time to record and perform with Hank, Jr. 20 years later they began accompanying singer Jett Williams, daughter of Hank and Bobbie Jett, in 1989. Pruett died in 1988, McNett in 1995, Rivers in 1996, Buttrum in 2002 and Helms in 2008.

Jim Denny (1911-1963) Grand Ole Opry Executive

Tennessee native Denny worked his way up through the ranks at Nashville's National Life and Accident Insurance Company, which owned WSM Radio and the Grand Ole Opry. Denny found himself increasingly interested in the Opry and using the business skills learned at National Life, he headed up the Opry Artists Service, which booked Opry performers for shows around the country. Denny also became a successful Nashville music businessman when in 1953 he and Opry star Webb Pierce formed Cedarwood, another early Nashville song publisher. Denny also became infamous for telling an unknown Elvis Presley to go back to driving a truck after his 1954 Opry guest appearance. Denny's outside business interests eventually put him at odds with the Opry, who, citing conflicts of interest, fired him in 1956. Launching his own booking agency, he continued working with Opry acts and other top country stars. He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1966.

Frank B. Walker (1889-1963).**President: MGM Records**

Frank B. Walker began his career in banking before moving into music in the 1920's. As an A&R man (or producer), he supervised field recordings of many early rural country and blues artists. Walker later served in executive capacities at both Columbia Records. At RCA Victor Records, he headed their Bluebird label, which specialized in jazz, blues and country. Loew's, the parent company of MGM, hired him to form MGM Records, which began operations in 1947 with Hank one of its early country acts. Walker, who considered himself a friend and admirer of Hank's, remained in charge of MGM until 1956, and served as a Vice President of Loew's until his death in 1963 at age 72.

Ray Price (1926-2014)**Hank friend, protégé and country music legend**

After World War II service in the Marines, Texas-born Price returned home to study veterinary medicine, but casual singing in clubs led him to turn professional, based in Dallas. Troy Martin, a Nashville music publisher, heard Price in Texas and brought him to Nashville, where Columbia Records signed him. Price met Hank at the WSM studios in 1951. They became fast friends. Hank gave Price a couple of his songs to record, got him a guest spot on the Opry and hired him to open his shows. Price sometimes rescued shows when Hank was late due to drunkenness. Hank moved into Price's rented Nashville home after he left Audrey in 1952 until the wild partying drove Price away. When the Opry fired Hank that year, Price toured and recorded with the Drifting Cowboys. After Hank's death, Price vowed to develop his own sound. His # 1 single "Crazy Arms" (1956), introduced his distinct "shuffle" rhythm. His band the Cherokee Cowboys became a training ground for young artists. Its alumni included legends Roger Miller, Johnny Paycheck and Willie Nelson. Price stuck with hard country until 1966, when he began recording and performing with orchestral accompaniment, ignoring criticism from longtime fans. "For The Good Times" (1970), a country and easy-listening pop success, validated his vision. Over the years, he often paid homage to Hank at concerts by singing one of his songs. Inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1996, Price performed until shortly before his 2014 death from pancreatic cancer.

Bobbie Jett (1922-1974)**Girlfriend, mother of Hank's daughter Jett Williams**

Bobbie Jett was a Nashville native doing secretarial work when Hank first met her in 1952 at the home where Hank lived with Ray Price after he separated from Audrey. After the Opry fired him, Hank and Bobbie traveled together for a time. She was pregnant with Hank's child by late summer. He signed papers agreeing to support both her and the child (to be cared for by Hank's mother). On January 6, 1953, Cathy Yvonne Stone was born. After Lillie's death in 1955, the child was put up for a second adoption. Bobbie Jett died in California in 1974. Her daughter eventually discovered her lineage and launched her own singing career under the name Jett Williams.

Dore Schary (1905-1980)**MGM Studios President**

Schary, a onetime film director and producer, was running MGM and in 1951, working with Fred

Rose, agreed to give Hank a movie contract. In 1952, Hank, drinking heavily at the time, traveled to Hollywood for a meeting with MGM. Schary had sent him a script for an upcoming musical picture, *Small Town Girl*, starring Farley Granger, Jane Powell and Ann Miller. Hank's arrogant, uncooperative attitude at the meeting led to MGM quickly terminating the studio contract.

Faron Young (1932-1996)

Louisiana Hayride and Grand Ole Opry Star

Born in Shreveport, Young became a star of the *Louisiana Hayride* after Hank left the show. Young, who appeared on the Opry as a guest in 1952, was dating Billie Jean Jones Eshliman and brought her to the show. She met Hank backstage. When Young, a Hank admirer, saw his interest in her, he graciously bowed out. Young's early recordings reflected a strong Hank influence, especially "Goin' Steady" (1952). Later dubbed "The Singing Sheriff" (he played a sheriff in a B-movie) Young made his mark with hit singles like "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young" (1955), "Alone With You" (1958), the Willie Nelson tune "Hello Walls" (1961) and "It's Four In The Morning" (1971). A Nashville businessman and developer, Young founded the country fan publication *Music City News* in 1963. Like Hank, he earned a reputation for his hard-drinking, aggressive and blunt personality on and off stage. Depressed by fading stardom and pain from chronic health problems, he fatally shot himself in 1996. Young was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000.

Billie Jean Jones Eshliman (1933-)

Hank's second wife



OCTOBER 18: (AUSTRALIA OUT) Photo of Hank Williams and Billie Jean Williams (nee Billie Jean Jones Eshlimar) on their wedding day October 18 1952 (Photo by GAB Archive/Redferns)

Billie Jean Jones lived not far from Shreveport. She was the daughter of a Bossier City, Louisiana police officer. Already divorced, she was dating *Louisiana Hayride* singer Faron Young in 1952, when Hank fell for her when they met at the Opry. Fired by the Opry in August, 1952, Hank returned to Shreveport and the *Hayride*. He also married Billie Jean. She traveled to Montgomery with him in late 1952 and last saw him as he left for the concert in Canton he'd never reach. Soon after his death, she married *Hayride* star Johnny Horton, who later achieved national stardom with hits like "Honky Tonk Man" and "The Battle Of New Orleans." They remained together until Horton died in a 1961 car accident. She had a brief affair with Horton's best friend, Johnny Cash, but later married Kent Berlin, an insurance executive she eventually divorced.

"BARN DANCE" RADIO SHOWS:

The advent of commercial radio in the 1920's allowed for all types of live musical programs, some broadcast over powerful transmitters with 50,000 watts or more able to cover most of the Continental US. Chicago radio station WLS launched the *WLS National Barn Dance* in April, 1924. A weekly live Saturday night stage show featuring rural music, it became an immediate success.

The Grand Ole Opry

National Barn Dance announcer George Dewey Hay (known as "The Solemn Ole Judge") left Chicago to join Nashville station WSM. He created the *WSM Barn Dance*. This Saturday night program, which featured rural stringbands from Middle Tennessee, premiered November 28, 1925. As he began a 1927 broadcast, Hay, referring to a previous program presenting grand opera, offhandedly described the *Barn Dance* as "Grand Ole Opry." The name stuck. The *Opry* made national stars of like Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe, Ernest Tubb and Minnie Pearl and developed a coast to coast following. For decades, membership in the show's all-star cast became the ultimate goal of many country singers. The *Opry's* musical and cultural conservatism became a sticking point for some, including Hank. In its early decades, management banned mentions of alcohol in songs sung on the air. When Hank sang his hit "My Bucket's Got A Hole In It," with the line, "I can't buy no beer," he paused at the "beer" moment and yelled "MILK!" which amused the audience. Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, a former gospel tabernacle, was the "classic" Opry location from 1943 until it moved to the larger Opry House in Opryland Park in 1974. While the Opry remains there today, the restored Ryman, where Hank and many other legends performed, remains a historical landmark and a major Nashville music venue.

The Louisiana Hayride

50,000 watt KWKH in Shreveport also began broadcasting in 1925. After World War II, the station hired hiring country performers who became the seed of the *Louisiana Hayride*, an *Opry*-like Saturday night program that launched in April, 1948. Hank, who joined the cast in August, remained until leaving for the Opry in the summer of 1949. Eventually, the *Hayride* became a "farm club" for the *Opry*. Among the *Hayride* performers who moved on to the Opry and greater fame were Webb Pierce, Faron Young, Jim Reeves, Red Sovine, Johnnie and Jack, Floyd Cramer and Kitty Wells. The show also launched Elvis Presley, Slim Whitman and Johnny Horton. Hank returned in the fall of 1952 after the Opry fired him. The *Hayride* ended as a weekly program in August, 1960.

HANK: HE CHANGED THE GAME FOR COUNTRY MUSIC

In 2010, the Pulitzer Prize committee awarded *"a posthumous special citation to Hank Williams for his craftsmanship as a songwriter who expressed universal feelings with poignant simplicity and played a pivotal role in transforming country music into a major musical and cultural force in American life."*

Today many of Williams' songs are an integral part of the DNA of American music. Generations of singers and songwriters, in the country, pop, folk, rock and jazz fields have used Hank and his songs as a touchstone. That includes Tony Bennett, Jo Stafford and Jerry Lee Lewis in the 50's, Ray Charles in 1962, Roy Orbison in 1970, Norah Jones just a few years ago, right up to Yo Lo Tengo, who covered Hank's "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" in 2015.

Prior to World War II, country songs and singers generally looked at events, romance, moral issues and various aspects of life with a rural perspective. Hank, a natural composer, inspired a new approach that took things to another level. Despite his lack of formal education, his keen observational skills blended with the ups and downs of his turbulent personal life and his innate creativity allowed him to create direct, hard-hitting slice of life songs. His melodies were simple, his lyrics easily remembered.

Whether the subject was partying, romance, moral lessons or darkest melancholy, Hank dug deeply into a topic. A musical catalyst, he incorporated the country styles that preceded him and offhandedly added elements of pop, jazz and blues elements that gave his music a melting pot feel. Among the many singer-writers who followed his example were Lefty Frizzell, Don Gibson, Roger Miller, Cindy Walker, Hank Cochran, Mel Tillis, Willie Nelson and others up through Dwight Yoakam and Alan Jackson.

Vocally raw and elemental, he made no attempt to mask his proud rural twang. His delivery was hard-hitting and direct. His melodies were simple, his lyrics easily remembered. It's the reason that even during Hank's lifetime, pop singers could succeed with his songs. More country singers recorded Hank's songs than could be listed here. Johnny Cash, George Jones, Willie Nelson and Glen Campbell were among the many to record albums of Hank's material. Roy Clark and jazz guitar great Joe Pass recorded an instrumental album of Hank's songs.

Hank figured as a subject in other tunes, like the Waylon Jennings classic "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way" and the Waylon-Hank Williams, Jr. duet "The Conversation."

His spoken recitations, released under the pseudonym Luke The Drifter, targeted the core country audience with them parables stressing moral values or serving as cautionary tales about somber events like divorce ("Help Me Understand") or death ("The Funeral"). Others warned against being judgmental ("Be Careful Of Stones That You Throw"), or offered patriotic sentiments (the upbeat "No, No Joe" slyly mocked Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin). No Luke recordings became hits for Hank, but Hank Williams, Jr. had hits with several singles under the name of "Luke The Drifter, Jr."

The Pulitzer Committee had it right. Hank's achievements expanded country's audience, paved the way for the rise of Nashville and ultimately helped fuel the massive popularity the music enjoys in the early 21st Century.

HANK: HE RELATED TO HIS PUBLIC

Hank Williams, despite his humble roots and darker moments, also had a winning, down to earth personality. His refusal to put on any airs endeared him to fans. He could relate to audiences, speaking to them as a friend. He was one of them, projecting an unvarnished sincerity people could connect with. He knew his fans, their hopes and dreams, what pained and inspired them. He understood their moral values and deep ties to religion. He was a poet whose songs didn't have the feel of "highbrow" poetry. To Hank, the basic, the tried and true was the way to communicate.

Whether singing to a crowd in an Alabama beer joint, entertaining a national audience on the Louisiana Hayride or the Grand Ole Opry, he offered warmth, sincerity and honesty. That earthy, friendly good humor came across as strongly on radio as it did at a concert or on a pre-recorded radio program. An Alabama native, he spoke the language of the South, but his sincerity transcended his roots. He treated audiences as friends. If he could sing a song a fan requested, he made a point to honor the request, a trait common to many country singers of his generation. But if an audience yelled out those same requests during a show, he'd be just as quick to reprimand them for being rude.

He was honest and direct in interviews, explaining to reporters he sang and wrote what he felt, taking issue if he didn't like the questions. Few country singers were seen as guests on network TV during Hank's lifetime. He appeared on top variety shows hosted by Perry Como and Kate Smith, proudly offering his music with the same pride he showed at the Opry.

In an era of TMZ, Twitter and Instagram, when celebrities' faults and bad behavior go viral with dizzying speed, it's sometimes forgotten that performers once hid their less pleasant sides behind a wall of publicists, spin doctors and others who'd would cover for them.

In Hank's day, the Grand Ole Opry reflected a rural, wholesome and upstanding image that most of its artists tried to project. Hank made no attempt to hide his demons. He didn't care if fans saw his flaws. He might try to perform when drunk or semi-drunk, or not show up at all. That behavior cost him his spot on the Opry, but not his stardom. His fans, mesmerized by his down-home charisma and genius, were willing to forgive.

Hank's humanity, his vulnerability and his soulfulness combined with his stellar skills as a singer and composer explain why his reputation and influence have only grown since his death. Sixty three years later they show no signs of diminishing.

LONG SYNOPSIS

1944:

Hank Williams, a popular Montgomery, Alabama country singer and songwriter, and aspiring singer Audrey Mae Sheppard, his girlfriend of about a year, are married at an Andalusia, Alabama service station owned by the Justice of the Peace who does the honors. Hank, an alcoholic since his teenage years, and his band the Drifting Cowboys perform live on a daily radio show at WSFA in Montgomery. They also play raw, violent roadhouses and taverns in small towns in rural Alabama. Audrey joins them onstage, even though she has virtually no singing ability.

Hank's mother Lillie, runs a Montgomery boarding house and serves as Hank's manager, driving him and the band to gigs. Hank, Audrey and her daughter Lycrecia also reside at Lillie's. Ultraproductive of her son, she sees Audrey as a threat. Drunks at one club heckle Audrey's singing. When Hank tells them off, one drunk rushes the stage, knocking Hank backwards and injuring his back, already damaged by a birth defect.

Hank's drinking gives him a reputation for unreliability. It gets him in trouble at WSFA when he shows up 12 minutes late for the next day's radio program. Lillie drives him to the station, leaving Audrey, who she distrusts, behind. Even so, both Lillie and Audrey encourage him to pursue his goal of stardom on Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, America's most prestigious live country stage and radio program. He's appeared on some major concerts with stars, but the Opry already knows about his problems. .

1946:

He visits Nashville only to be told that attaining Opry membership wasn't simple; he'd have to pass muster with higher-ups. A second Nashville visit takes him to songwriter Fred Rose. He and Hank's musical hero, Opry star Roy Acuff, own the Acuff-Rose song publishing firm. Impressed by Hank's writing, Rose signs him to a contract and arranges for him to record for Sterling, a small New York label. He serves as Hank's record producer as well.

1947:

Rose moves Hank to the larger MGM Records, owned by the film studio. He records "Move It On Over," his first hit single, in Nashville, but remains based in Montgomery. His marriage grows shaky, largely due to his drinking and Audrey's free-spending ways with his record royalties. Hank and the band realize she can't sing, and when she insists on singing with Hank on the radio, the engineer turns off her mike. Fed up with his drinking and refusal to support her singing, she moves out and files for divorce.

1948:

Hank's with another woman during a 1948 Florida trip and reads a letter from Rose, a recovering alcoholic who has become a sort of surrogate father. He counsels patience with Audrey, whom Lillie has come to despise. While the Opry remains skeptical of Hank, Rose gets him a spot on

the new, Opry-inspired *Louisiana Hayride* radio program in Shreveport. Hank visits Audrey and convinces her to drop the divorce and reconcile. They move to Shreveport without Lillie. Audrey is pregnant, while Hank performs on the Hayride and does shows with the cast during the week.

1949:

Audrey gives birth to their son Randall Hank Williams in Shreveport on May 26, known to later generations as Hank Williams, Jr. Hank travels to Cincinnati to record, intent on recording "Lovesick Blues." A 27 year old pop tune Hank didn't write, his performance excited crowds wherever he sang it. Rose was convinced Hank didn't sing the song well enough to record it, but when Hank remained firm, citing the response at show, Rose took a cigarette break as Hank and the studio musicians recorded it.

"Lovesick" becomes Hank's first # 1 country single. This time, the Opry can't turn him away. He sings "Lovesick" as a guest on the June 11 Opry broadcast and the explosive audience response hands him his goal: Opry membership. He, Audrey and their son move to a large ranch home in Nashville that summer. She continues pushing to sing, growing bitter that she's largely left out of his career.

1950:

While capable of sold, sober performances, Hank's demons remain. He often backslides. When he and the Drifting Cowboys roll into an outdoor show in Texas September 16, the promoter insists that Hank, despite being drunk and out of it, perform anyway. He offers a pained rendition of one of his moralistic "Luke The Drifter" spoken numbers: "Help Me Understand," about children in the midst of divorce. Despite making her own records (for another label), a resentful Audrey remains intent on hurting her husband. She has an abortion, angering him by telling him only after the fact.

1951:

At Hank Williams Day in Montgomery, Audrey resents the adulation Hank receives from the home folks. She matches Hank's drinking and womanizing with her own partying and adultery. His sketchy reputation as a drinker grows. When Hank and the Drifting Cowboys travel to New York in November to appear on singer Perry Como's CBS TV show, a New York reporter asks questions about his drinking in an interview. Feeling he's being talked down to, Hank abruptly ends their discussion.

His back pain, which never went away, worsens after Hank takes a hard fall during a hunting trip. As he faces back surgery, doctors explain how his Spina Bifida aggravates the problem. Confined to bed after the surgery, Hank is unable to appear at shows in Baltimore and Washington D.C. The Opry, frustrated by his unreliability, feels they have to reassure fans. Opry manager Jim Denny insists Hank record an apology to be played for the crowd in Washington on December 27.

1952:

Audrey, consumed with partying, sour toward her husband, returns home with two women friends. All are appalled to find Hank firing a pistol at bottles in the backyard. She insists he leave and files for divorce. Hank moves into a home in Nashville's Natchez Trace neighborhood with friend and musical protégé Ray Price, who's been opening Hank's concerts. The place becomes notorious for wild parties. At the house, he meets Bobbie Jett, a secretary and former dancer. The two become involved.

In April, Hank meets with MGM producer Dore Schary in Hollywood. Schary saw a possible acting role for him in the musical comedy "Small Town Girl" that could pay \$ 4500 a week. Drunk and antagonistic, Hank dismisses the money, asserting he can make more on the road. Trying to evaluate Hank's looks, Schary asks Hank to remove his hat to see his hair. Hank, who's balding, refuses, telling the producer he's got a "drawer full of hair." MGM quickly cancels the movie contract.

As he continues to spiral out of control, Hank meets Billie Jean Jones Eshliman at the *Opry*. The strikingly beautiful, raven-haired divorcee from the Shreveport area is there with her boyfriend, *Louisiana Hayride* singer Faron Young. When Hank makes his interest in Billie Jean known, Young amiably bows out. Billie visits Hank's and Price's home and finds Bobbie Jett there. Things quickly get tense, and Billie angrily departs.

Hank's drinking, which helped wreck his marriage and his professional reputation, is about to exact an even bigger price. The *Opry*, fed up with his repeated no-shows, lays down a firm ultimatum: appear at his scheduled August 9 appearance and an *Opry* concert in Knoxville a day later—or else. When he misses both shows, Denny fires him. In three years, Hank has lost the prestigious spot he coveted for so long. As partying gets out of hand, even Ray Price leaves—unable to take any more.

Hank tries to smooth things over with Bobbie, taking her to Lake Martin in Alabama, specifically to a section known as Kowaliga Bay (a name that inspired the title of his hit "Kaw-Liga"). When she becomes nauseated, Hank discovers it's because she's pregnant with his child. With Billie Jean still on his mind, Hank tells Bobbie he doesn't want to marry her but makes provisions to take financial responsibility for her and his child.

Fred Rose works his magic yet again, and the *Hayride* welcomes Hank back into the fold. He reconciles with Billie Jean. They marry in a private ceremony. Returning to the *Hayride*, however, doesn't renew Hank's vigor. As drinking erodes his stamina, he connects with Toby Marshall, an ex-convict and bogus "physician." Marshall, who bought his diploma for \$ 25 at a gas station, claimed he had expertise in treating alcoholics and "prescribed" the powerful sedative Chloral Hydrate for Hank, hastening his physical decline.

Hank returns to Nashville to record and plays Fred a new song clearly inspired by Audrey: "Your Cheatin' Heart." Over the 1952 Christmas holidays, he talks by phone to Hank Jr. Audrey refuses to bring their son to Shreveport to visit. Hank has several show dates, including a New Year's Day show in Canton, Ohio with singers Hawkshaw Hawkins, Autry Inman and his friends, the comic singing duo of Homer & Jethro. Billie Jean drives her husband to Montgomery, where they visit Lillie.

He hires a 17 year old college student Charles Carr as his chauffeur. Carr will drive Hank's powder-blue Cadillac to the shows. Billie Jean wants to join him. Hank, joking that he needs the leg room in the back seat, insists she remain with Lillie at the boarding house. He says goodbye to them; the Cadillac heads northeast.

1953:

On New Year's Day, the Memorial Auditorium in Canton is packed when A.B. Bamford, the show promoter, walks onstage. Visibly upset, he informs the audience that Hank died enroute to the show, followed by the entire cast standing onstage singing "I Saw The Light." There's an elaborate funeral in Montgomery's Municipal Auditorium a few days later. Among those singing: Hank's Opry friends including Red Foley, Webb Pierce, Roy Acuff and the Drifting Cowboys. The funeral footage is from Hank's actual funeral.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Marc Abraham p.g.a. (Writer/Director/Producer)

Marc Abraham is an American film director, writer and producer. In 2015 Sony Classics is releasing *I SAW THE LIGHT*, which Abraham wrote, directed and produced, and is based on the life of legendary singer-songwriter Hank Williams. Tom Hiddleston (*THOR*, *THE AVENGERS*, *ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE*) portrays Williams during the last six years of his life. In 2009, Abraham directed *FLASH OF GENIUS* for Universal starring Greg Kinnear, Lauren Graham, and Alan Alda. The film won the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize at the Hamptons International Film Festival, was the winner of the Best Actor Award at the Boston Film Festival, and an Official Selection at the Telluride Film Festival and Toronto International Film Festival, among many others.

Brett Ratner p.g.a. (Producer)

Brett Ratner is one of Hollywood's most successful filmmakers. His diverse films resonate with audiences worldwide and have grossed over \$2 billion at the global box office. Brett began his career directing music videos before making his feature directorial debut with *MONEY TALKS*, starring Charlie Sheen and Chris Tucker. He followed with the blockbuster *RUSH HOUR* and its successful sequels. Brett also directed *THE FAMILY MAN*, *RED DRAGON*, *AFTER THE SUNSET*, *X-MEN: THE LAST STAND*, *TOWER HEIST* and *HERCULES*.

Ratner has also enjoyed success as a producer. Prior to 2015's *TRUTH*, his recent films include the smash hit comedy *HORRIBLE BOSSES* and its sequel, and the re-imagined Snow White tale *MIRROR MIRROR*. He also served as an executive producer on *BLACK MASS*, starring Johnny Depp. Upcoming RatPac projects include *I SAW THE LIGHT*, starring Tom Hiddleston and Elizabeth Olsen; an as-yet-untitled Howard Hughes project, written and to be directed and produced by Warren Beatty; and the much-anticipated drama *THE REVENANT*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

His additional producing credits include the documentaries *CATFISH*, the Emmy-nominated *WOODY ALLEN—A DOCUMENTARY*, *HELMUT* by June, and *I KNEW IT WAS YOU: REDISCOVERING JOHN CAZALE*. He also executive produced the Golden Globe-nominated FOX series "Prison Break," and is currently executive producing the television series "Rush Hour," based on his hit films.

Brett, along with his business partner James Packer, formed RatPac Entertainment, a film finance production and media company, in 2013. RatPac has a first-look deal with Warner Bros. and joined with Dune Capital to co-finance over 75 films including *GRAVITY*, *THE LEGO MOVIE*, and *AMERICAN SNIPER*. Internationally, Warner Bros. and RatPac have formed a joint venture content fund with China's Shanghai Media Group to finance local Chinese content. In partnership with New Regency, RatPac also finances the development and production of Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment.

Aaron L. Gilbert, p.g.a. (Producer)

Gilbert is the CEO of Bron Media Corp. an integrated film and entertainment company with subsidiaries focused on content creation for the motion picture, television, and digital media sectors. "Bron" was co-founded by Aaron L. Gilbert and Brenda Gilbert in 2010 and is

headquartered in its facility in Burnaby, British Columbia, with satellite offices in Los Angeles, Toronto, and second facility in Duncan, B.C. Subsidiary Bron Studios has produced over 20 feature films since its founding; working with new voices and established talents both in front of and behind the camera including; Will Ferrell, Kristen Wiig, William H. Macy, Ellen Page, Tim Robbins, Olivia Wilde, Billy Crudup, Zooey Deschanel, Eric Bana, Johnny Galecki, Anjelica Huston, Ricky Gervais, Luke Wilson, Rebecca Hall, Jason Sudeikis, Elizabeth Olsen, Armie Hammer, James Marsden, Vera Farmiga Tom Hiddleston, and many others. Recent films include SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS (starring Ricky Gervais, Eric Bana, and Vera Farmiga), acquired by Netflix; I SAW THE LIGHT (starring Tom Hiddleston and Lizzie Olsen), acquired by Sony Classics; Nate Parker's THE BIRTH OF A NATION (starring Nate Parker and Armie Hammer); William H. Macy's THE LAYOVER (Kate Upton, Alessandra Daddario, Rob Corrdry and Kal Penn); and INTO THE FOREST (starring Ellen Page and Evan Rachel Wood), premiering at TIFF 2015

G. Marq Roswell, p.g.a. (Producer)

G. Marq Roswell is an American music supervisor and producer based in Los Angeles. Roswell co-produced *I Saw The Light*, which portrays the life of legendary singer-songwriter Hank Williams and will be released in 2015 by Sony Classics. Roswell is currently the co-executive music producer on *Soundbreaking*, the forthcoming 8-hour documentary series for PBS broadcast in 2016 that will explore and celebrate the art and science of making records—from Edison to YouTube. The series was conceived with and inspired by Sir George Martin.

Roswell has contributed to the musical landscape of more than 60 films, with an impressive list of credits including *The Great Debaters*, *Spy Game*, *The Hurricane*, *Man With the Iron Fists*, *Varsity Blues*, *Tommy Boy*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *For Love of the Game* and *The Commitments*. He has also provided his expertise on award winning documentaries; *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, *Iraq for Sale*, and PBS' *Half the Sky*.

Raised in Los Angeles, Roswell is a 6th generation Californian. He graduated from UCLA Film School and is a member of the Producer's Guild of America.

Dante Spinotti, ASC, AIC (Director of Photography)

Dante Spinotti is an acclaimed cinematographer who has been nominated for 2 Academy Awards for his work on the films THE INSIDER and L.A. CONFIDENTIAL and won a BAFTA Award for his work on THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS. Born in Tolmezzo, Italy, Spinotti also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society of Cinematographers and was honored twice by The Los Angeles Film Critics Association for his work on THE INSIDER and L.A. CONFIDENTIAL. Some of Spinotti's other work include HEAT, X-MEN: THE LAST STAND, PUBLIC ENEMIES, WONDER BOYS and also both film versions of author Thomas Harris's Red Dragon: Michael Mann's MANHUNTER and Brett Ratner's RED DRAGON.

Alan Heim, ACE (Editor)

Alan Heim, ACE is currently the president of the Editors Guild Local 700 IASTE and the American Cinema Editors. He has won an Academy Award, a BAFTA Award and an American Cinema Editors Eddie Award for Best Film Editing for ALL THAT JAZZ (1979) and was nominated for an Academy Award, a BAFTA Award and an American Cinema Editors Eddie

Award for Best Film Editing for NETWORK (1976). Some of Heim's other works include editing the films LENNY, AMERICAN HISTORY X and THE NOTEBOOK.

Merideth Boswell (Production Designer)

After a successful career as one of Hollywood's most sought after set decorators for directors such as Oliver Stone, Tom Hanks and Barry Levinson, Merideth Boswell accepted Ron Howard's offer to advance to Production Designer on his big budget Western, 'The Missing' starring Cate Blanchett and Tommy Lee Jones. This was to be her 4th collaboration with Mr. Howard, two of which yielded Oscar nominations for Art Direction, along with Michael Corenblith, for 'Apollo 13' and 'How The Grinch Stole Christmas'. She has gone on to production design for one of France's most esteemed directors, Bertrand Tavernier, as well as for Tommy Lee Jones' in his critically acclaimed directorial outings of 'The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada', 'The Sunset Limited' and 'The Homesman'.

She describes her recent experience as the Production Designer on Marc Abraham's 'I Saw The Light' as the following; 'It was the perfect combination of process and product. We knew we weren't trying to make a biopic but rather a deconstruction of Hank Williams. It freed us in the most interesting ways, creatively. I could not be more proud to have been involved in this project.'

She divides her time between New York City and Fayetteville, Arkansas and is currently working on an as of yet untitled project with Errol Morris.

Lahly Poore-Ericson (Costume Designer)

Costume Designer Lahly Poore-Ericson was raised in Vermont, where she attended Marlboro College, graduating with a degree in Theatre. Moving to Los Angeles to pursue a career in costume she had the privilege of working under such costume luminaries as Deborah Scott, Milena Canonero, Ann Roth, and Gary Jones. She got her "sea legs" as an Assistant Designer on Titanic, and a Supervisor on Love Affair. She was Assistant Designer on The Patriot, Minority Report, and Seraphim Falls. Her Costume Design credits include EDGE, I SAW THE LIGHT, THE HOMESMAN, 50 to 1, DOC WEST, SPOKEN WORD, FIRST SNOW and SAVE ME. She presently lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico with her husband and daughters.

Rodney Crowell (Executive Music Producer)

Rodney Crowell is a Texas-born, Nashville-based songwriter, artist, producer and author whose work and career sets a benchmark for commercial success and lifelong artistic ambition and integrity in country and roots music. His compositions, including "Til I Gain Control Again," "I Ain't Livin' Long Like This," "Song For The Life" and "Ashes By Now" have been widely and successfully covered by legendary singers. But he led the way as a recording artist, achieving a dazzling run of radio hits in the 1980s, followed by a series of more personal albums in the 2000s that secured his place as much more than a chart-topper. His 2011 memoir Chinaberry Sidewalks, vividly fleshed out the life story of this sincere and complex artist. Crowell is a Grammy Award winner, a member of the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame and the recipient of the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award for Songwriting from the Americana Music Association.

Carter Little (Music Supervisor)

Carter Little is a music supervisor and soundtrack producer based out of Nashville, TN, and has

directed the music for a number of award-winning films and television series, including CIRCUS (PBS), MARINA ABRAMOVIC: ARTIST IS PRESENT (HBO), HALF THE SKY (PBS), THE MAN WITH THE IRON FISTS (UNIVERSAL PICTURES), ON RECORD (PBS), and I SAW THE LIGHT (Sony Pictures Classics). As a soundtrack album producer, Little has worked with a wide-range of artists in the studio ranging from Wu-Tang Clan, The Black Keys, Rodney Crowell and Kanye West. Little is a partner in the L.A. based music supervision firm, 35Sound, and is a member of the Guild of Music Supervisors.

Aaron Zigman (Music)

Award winning composer Aaron Zigman has composed **over** 50 film scores for many of the major Hollywood directors and studios. Zigman combines his classical background and training with a strong knowledge of contemporary music which has enabled him to create some of film's most memorable scores, including THE NOTEBOOK, BRIDGE TO TARABITHIA FLASH OF GENIUS, THE PROPOSAL, FOR COLORED GIRLS, both SEX & THE CITY movies and ESCAPE FROM PLANET EARTH and the upcoming film WAKEFIELD starring Bryan Cranston.

A native of San Diego, Aaron Zigman began training as a classical pianist at age six with his mother, a pianist and harpist. While in his third year at UCLA, Zigman signed a 4 year songwriting contract with publishing giant Almo Irving and began writing producing arranging and orchestrating for many of the top major artists in the record industry. He was one of 4 songwriters on their staff and under their aegis, he penned songs for Carly Simon, the T.V. show Fame, co-wrote with David Lasley, Jerry Knight and Steve Cropper.

In 1983 at the age of 20 he began studying with his renowned cousin George Bassman, a noted MGM composer who orchestrated for the WIZARD OF OZ and wrote the music for the films MARTY AND THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE. He penned the Tommy Dorsey Classic, "Getting Sentimental Over You", was the musical arranger for Lena Horne and Benny Goodman and orchestrated for the legendary Andre Kostelanetz.

Then in the middle 1980's Zigman broke in as a studio musician, working with producers Don Was, Gary Katz, Steely Dan and Stewart Levine. From this experience he started to get a name for himself as a producer/writer and soon wrote a big hit in pop music called "Crush On You" which was a top chart record for a group called The Jets. He then worked for Clive Davis and produced and arranged for Aretha Franklin and Natalie Cole. During this time he wrote, arranged and produced songs for many of the top vocalists and artists in the industry such as Ray Charles, Sting, Phil Collins, Dionne Warwick, Boz Skaggs, Tina Turner, Seal, Carly Simon, the Pointer Sisters, Huey Lewis, Jennifer Holliday, Patti LaBelle, Chicago, Natalie Cole and Christina Aguilera.

In the 1990's he entered the film industry, with his work being featured on film soundtracks for MULAN, WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT, BIRD CAGE, LICENSE TO KILL, CADDYSHACK and POCAHONTAS. Although his list of pop accomplishments was formidable, creating orchestral music was still Zigman's primary focus. It was inevitable that Zigman lifelong devotion to classical music would eventually lead him to the film scoring stage.

ABOUT THE CAST

Tom Hiddleston (Hank Williams)

After he was seen in a production of *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* by Lorraine Hamilton of the notable actors' agency Hamilton Hodell, Tom Hiddleston was given his first television role in Stephen Whittaker's adaptation of *NICHOLAS NICKLEBY* (2001) for ITV, starring Charles Dance, James D'Arcy and Sophia Myles. Roles followed in two one-off television dramas co-produced by HBO and the BBC. The first was *CONSPIRACY* (2001), a film surrounding the story of the Wannsee Conference in 1942 to consolidate the decision to exterminate the Jews of Europe. The film prompted Tom's first encounter with Kenneth Branagh who took the lead role of Heydrich. The second project came in 2002 in the critically acclaimed and Emmy Award-winning biopic of Winston Churchill *THE GATHERING STORM*, starring Albert Finney and Vanessa Redgrave. Tom played the role of Randolph Churchill, Winston's son, and cites that particular experience – working alongside Finney and Redgrave, as well as Ronnie Barker, Tom Wilkinson, and Jim Broadbent – as extraordinary; one that changed his perspective on the art, craft and life of an actor.

Tom graduated from RADA in 2005, and within a few weeks was cast as Oakley in the British independent film *UNRELATED* by first-time director Joanna Hogg. *UNRELATED* premiered at the Times BFI 51st London Film Festival in 2007 where it was awarded the FIPRESCI International Critics' Award. The film went on to win the Guardian First Film Award, and was nominated for the Evening Standard Best Film Award and the Critics' Circle Breakthrough Filmmaker Award. It was also cited as the 21st best film of the decade by the Guardian newspaper.

Following this, Tom met Declan Donnellan, Artistic Director of the award-winning theatre company Cheek By Jowl, and was cast as Alsemero in *THE CHANGELING* by Thomas Middleton, starring alongside Olivia Williams and Will Keen. The production toured Europe for six months in 2006, and ran in the main house at the Barbican in London for six weeks. For *THE CHANGELING* Tom was nominated for the 2006 Ian Charleson Award, which recognizes exceptional classical stage performances by actors under the age of 30.

In 2007 Cheek By Jowl once again asked Tom to perform for them as the hero, Posthumus Leonatus, and the anti-hero Cloten, in Declan Donnellan's production of Shakespeare's late romance, *CYMBELINE*. The production toured the world for seven months in 2007, playing in New York, Milan, Paris, Moscow, Madrid, and in London at the Barbican. The Guardian praised Tom's performance: "The masterstroke of Donnellan's production is to have both Posthumus, who comes to doubt Imogen's fidelity, and Cloten played by the same actor, Tom Hiddleston. Remember that name, because one day the lad is going to be a star, and deservedly so". The Sunday Times agreed that Tom stole the show: "Tom Hiddleston plays Cloten as a snooty Hooray Henry, giving the outstanding performance of the evening".

Later that summer, Tom shot the period BBC drama, *MISS AUSTEN REGRETS*, about the last five years of Jane Austen's life. He starred as John Plumptre alongside Olivia Williams, Imogen Poots, Hugh Bonneville and Greta Scacchi. It went on to win both a BAFTA Award and a Writer's Guild of Great Britain Award.

It was on the strength of his performance in CYMBELINE that Tom was invited to audition to play Cassio in Michael Grandage's production of OTHELLO at the Donmar Warehouse, starring Ewan McGregor, Chiwetel Ejiofor, and Kelly Reilly. The play opened to extraordinary reviews. The Independent on Sunday said: 'McGregor is actually outshone by Tom Hiddleston a barely known newcomer and name to watch. His youthful Cassio is startlingly charismatic and dangerous in its own way, naively mixing professional duty with womanising'.

Tom was nominated twice in the category of Best Newcomer at the 2008 Laurence Olivier Awards for CYMBELINE and OTHELLO. He won the award for his performance in CYMBELINE.

In 2008 Tom joined forces with Kenneth Branagh again to film the first series of WALLANDER, a BAFTA and Broadcasting Press Guild Award-winning and Emmy, Golden Globe and Satellite Award-nominated television series based on the detective novels by Swedish author Henning Mankell. In the same year Tom went on to star in the Donmar Warehouse/West End production of Chekhov's IVANOV, again opposite Branagh, as well as Gina McKee and Andrea Riseborough. In addition to shooting the second series of WALLANDER in 2009, Tom starred in the second series of the highly acclaimed BAFTA and Emmy award-winning RETURN TO CRANFORD, starring opposite Judi Dench and Jonathan Pryce. In 2009 Tom also filmed Joanna Hogg's second film ARCHIPELAGO, in which he played the lead role.

2011 saw Tom excel in a number of projects including Woody Allen's MIDNIGHT IN PARIS, where he was seen as F. Scott Fitzgerald alongside Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams and Michael Sheen. The film opened the Cannes Film Festival, and went on to achieve the highest gross of any of Woody Allen's films in North America.

Tom is perhaps best known for his role as the villain Loki in Kenneth Branagh's THOR for Marvel, a role that he reprised in the 2012 blockbuster hit Marvel movie THE AVENGERS. The film was received with positive reviews and set numerous box office records, including the biggest opening weekend in North America, tied the record for the fastest film to gross \$1 billion worldwide and became the third highest-grossing film.

2012 saw Tom nominated for a BAFTA Rising Star Award and an Evening Standard Film Award in the Best Actor category for his roles in Joanna Hogg's ARCHIPELAGO & Terence Davies's THE DEEP BLUE SEA. Tom was the winner of the British Rising Star Award at The Richard Attenborough Regional Film Awards and won Best Male Newcomer for his role in THOR at the 2012 Empire Awards. Tom was named Glamour magazine's Man of the Year and also World's Hottest Actor by Total Film magazine.

Also in 2012, Tom was seen on our screens portraying Prince Hal in HENRY IV PARTS 1&2 and the title role in HENRY V which aired on the BBC as part of the highly anticipated Cultural Olympiad. The series received rave reviews, with many reviewers singling Tom out for his outstanding performance. Tom won the Times Breakthrough Award for this role at the 2013 South Bank Sky Arts Awards.

In October 2013, Tom returned to his role as Loki in THOR: THE DARK WORLD, alongside an all-star cast including Chris Hemsworth, Natalie Portman and Idris Elba. The film went to the top of the North American charts with an estimated \$86.1m, producing the ninth biggest

November debut in history. Tom received excellent personal reviews, with Dave Fawbert from Shortlist calling Tom “the star of the show” and The Hollywood Reporter’s Leslie Felperin, claiming that Tom “steal(s) the whole show”.

Tom was also seen in a cameo role in Joanna Hogg’s, EXHIBITION. The film received its world premiere at the 2013 Locarno Film Festival and was also screened at the BFI London Film Festival in 2013.

In December 2013 Tom returned to the Donmar Warehouse, to play the title role in Shakespeare's searing tragedy of political manipulation and revenge, CORIOLANUS. Tom starred opposite Hadley Fraser and Mark Gatiss and was directed by the Donmar's Artistic Director, Josie Rourke. His performance received rave reviews, cited as “magnificent” by Paul Taylor from The Independent, as well as Charles Spencer from The Telegraph defining Tom’s performance as “compelling and persuasive”. The production ran until 13th February 2014. CORIOLANUS was also broadcast to cinemas around the world on 30th January in partnership with National Theatre Live. Tom was honoured with the award for Best Actor at the 60th London Evening Standard Theatre Awards and was also nominated for the Best Actor award at the 2014 Olivier Awards for this performance.

In February 2014, Tom starred opposite Tilda Swinton, John Hurt and Mia Wasikowska in Jim Jarmusch’s ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE. The film premiered at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival in competition for the prestigious Palme d’Or award. The film then received a warm response at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival where critics described it as ‘hypnotic, dreamlike and mesmerizing.’ The feature also screened at the 2013 BFI London Film Festival, as well as the 51st New York Film Festival; where it was in competition for ‘Official Selection’.

Tom was also heard in Disney’s TINKER BELL AND THE PIRATE FAIRY, alongside Christina Hendricks and was also seen in The Muppets sequel, MUPPETS MOST WANTED. Tom went on to receive the ELLE Man of The Year Award at the ELLE Style Awards in February 2014.

Tom will next be seen in Guillermo del Toro’s Gothic thriller, CRIMSON PEAK, alongside Academy-Award-nominee Jessica Chastain, Mia Wasikowska and Charlie Hunnam. The film tells the story of an aspiring author who is torn between love for her childhood friend and the temptation of a mysterious outsider in the aftermath of a family tragedy, and will be released in October this year.

Recently completed is a starring role in Ben Wheatley’s thriller HIGH-RISE, alongside an all-star cast including Jeremy Irons, Luke Evans, Sienna Miller and Elisabeth Moss. The story charts the lives of affluent residents of a futuristic apartment block, in which all modern amenities are contained, leaving them cut off from the rest of society. It’s an unnerving tale of life running out of control, as residents become driven by their primal urges. Tom leads the cast in the role of Doctor Robert Laing, who is fascinated by the building, forming a relationship with the architect’s aide Charlotte (Sienna Miller). HIGH-RISE is based on J.G Ballard’s acclaimed 1975 novel of the same name, and will premiere at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival. HIGH-RISE will also show as part of the gala premieres at Zurich Film Festival, and will join the competition line-up at the upcoming San Sebastian Film Festival.

Tom also stars in I SAW THE LIGHT, the independent biopic about the country music icon Hank

Williams. Directed by Marc Abraham, the film is based on Colin Escott, George Merritt and William MacEwen's 1994 book, *Hank Williams: The Biography*. Born in 1923 in Alabama, Hank Williams broke out in the post-World War II era with the song "Move It on Over." The film covers the country-music legend's rise, his volatile relationship with his wife (played by Elizabeth Olsen), and his struggles with substance abuse and *spina bifida occulta* — all before his death at the age of 29. The film will premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in September this year.

Next year, Tom will star opposite Hugh Laurie in the television adaptation of John le Carré's novel *THE NIGHT MANAGER*. BBC One, The Ink Factory and AMC will co-produce the series, which began filming in Spring 2015. A contemporary interpretation of le Carré's espionage drama, and the first television adaptation of a John le Carré novel in more than 20 years, *THE NIGHT MANAGER* series will bring together love, loss and revenge in a complex story of modern criminality. The eagerly anticipated drama follows former British soldier Jonathan Pine (Hiddleston) as he navigates the shadowy recesses of Whitehall and Washington where an unholy alliance operates between the intelligence community and the secret arms trade. To infiltrate the inner circle of lethal arms dealer Richard Onslow Roper (Laurie), Pine must himself become a criminal. Published in 1993, *The Night Manager* is one of le Carré's most beloved and critically acclaimed books. A fusion of spy story and tale of organized crime, the novel was a best-seller in the US and the UK, translated into over 20 languages and selling over a million copies in North America alone.

Tom will soon commence filming the lead role in Legendary's King Kong origins story, *KONG: SKULL ISLAND*, which will be directed by Jordan Vogt-Roberts. The film will be released in March.

Elizabeth Olsen (Audrey Williams)

Elizabeth Olsen is a vivacious and engaging young actress, and a graduate from New York University's prestigious Tisch School of the Arts.

Recently, Olsen completed production on *CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR*, alongside Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson, Paul Bettany, and Anthony Mackie. Olsen will reprise her role as the Scarlet Witch in the Marvel franchise. The film is scheduled to be released in theaters on May 6, 2016.

Olsen first made her appearance as the Scarlet Witch in *AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON*, alongside Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner, Paul Bettany, James Spader and Aaron Taylor-Johnson. The film was released on May 1, 2015 and earned \$1,398,752,317 worldwide.

Next, Olsen will be seen in the Hank Williams biopic titled *I SAW THE LIGHT*. She will play the role of Audrey Mae Williams, opposite Tom Hiddleston. The Sony Pictures Classics film will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 11, 2015.

Last year, Olsen appeared in the Warner Brothers and Legendary Pictures reboot of *GODZILLA*, opposite Aaron-Taylor Johnson and Bryan Cranston. The film was released on May 16, 2014.

In 2013, Olsen starred in the Spike Lee-directed film, *OLDBOY*, opposite Samuel L. Jackson and Josh Brolin. The film centers around an everyday man that has only five days and limited resources to discover why he was imprisoned in a nondescript room for 15 years without any explanation. *OLDBOY* was released on October 11, 2013. Additionally, Olsen also appeared in the film “In Secret,” opposite Jessica Lange and Oscar Issacs. The film was released on February 21, 2013. That same year, Olsen helped kick off the Classic Stage Company’s Fall 2013-2014 season as the lead role, Juliet, in the Off Broadway play, “Romeo and Juliet.”

Olsen also starred in *VERY GOOD GIRLS*, opposite Dakota Fanning, which premiered at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. The Naomi Foner-directed film is about two New York City girls that make a pact to lose their virginity during their first summer out of high school. Additionally, Olsen had two previous films premiere at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival: “Liberal Arts” opposite Josh Radnor, John Magaro, Zac Efron and Richard Jenkins, and “Red Lights” opposite Robert DeNiro, Cillian Murphy and Sigourney Weaver.

In spring of 2012 Olsen starred in the independent film “Silent House” from Open Road Films. The film is the re-imagining of the successful Uruguayan psychological horror-thriller, “La Casa Muda.”

In 2011 Olsen received a Gotham Award, Critics Choice, and Independent Spirit Award nomination for Lead Actress for her performance in “Martha Marcy May Marlene” from Fox Searchlight. The film is a drama that follows a young woman who is living with her older sister after escaping a cult. Olsen stars opposite Hugh Dancy, John Hawkes, Sarah Paulson, and Brady Corbet. “Martha Marcy May Marlene” was also selected in the Un Certain Regard as part of the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. She has been nominated for her performance from the following critic associations: St. Louis, Las Vegas, Houston, FIND Spirit, San Diego, IPA, and Detroit. She won BEST ACTRESS from the Indiana Critics Association.

Olsen is also very familiar to the stage as she understudied both on the Off-Broadway play “Dust” and the Broadway play “Impressionism” while attending New York University. Other workshops include “Bottom of the World” by Lucy Thurber (Atlantic Theatre Company), and “The Living Newspaper” (DRD Theatricals). Olsen has had formal training at Atlantic Acting School and Moscow Art Theatre School.

Cherry Jones (Lillie Williams)

CHERRY JONES is a Tony and Emmy Award-winning actress, whose films include *Ocean’s Twelve*, *Cradle Will Rock*, *The Horse Whisperer*, *The Perfect Storm*, *Erin Brockovich*, *Signs*, *The Village*, *Mother and Child*, *Swimmers*, and Terrence Malick’s *Knight of Cups*. Jones received her fifth Tony nomination for *The Glass Menagerie*, which originated at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, where she is a founding member and has appeared in over 25 productions including *Twelfth Night*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. She won her first Tony for Lincoln Center Theater’s production of *The Heiress*, her second for Manhattan Theater Club’s production of *Doubt*, and her Emmy for her portrayal of President Taylor on “24.” Other theater: *Pride’s Crossing*, *The Baltimore Waltz*, *Faith Healer*, *Flesh and Blood*, *Imaginary Friends*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Tony nomination), *Angels in America*, *Our Country’s Good* (Tony nomination), *When We Were Young* and *Unafraid*, and *Roundabout*

Theater Company's productions of Mrs. Warren's Profession, Major Barbara, and The Night of the Iguana.

Maddie Hasson (Billie Jean Jones)

Maddie Hasson's success came fast and at a young age. Leaving High School to check out the LA acting scene, Maddie immediately broke in as a lead in the Fox tv series "The Finder". Now at the tender age of 20 Maddie has moved on to starring and co-starring in feature films.

Maddie is currently shooting the lead in the indie dramatic feature Good After Bad co-starring Billy Burke (Twilight Saga and CBS' ZOO) about a mature womanizer who becomes the guardian of a troubled young girl.

Maddie Hasson will soon be seen co-starring in two independent feature films. This fall Sony Classics will release "I Saw The Light" on November 27, 2015. The true tale of legendary country singer Hank Williams stars Tom Hiddleston and Elizabeth Olsen. Maddie plays Williams second wife who was with him up to his early death. The film will premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2015.

Following is the indie thriller "Light Beneath Their Feet" where Maddie stars a troubled teen bent on causing trouble to a popular high school girl. The film stars Taryn Manning and Madison Davenport.

Maddie Hasson achieved success and two Teen Choice Award nominations as Jo Masterson on the ABC Family hit mystery-thriller series "Twisted," a show about a suspected sociopathic teen who reconnects with his childhood best friends on return from juvenile detention. The show ran 2013 and 2014.

In 2012 and during Maddie's first trip to Los Angeles to engage with the acting scene, Maddie hit gold as series regular Willa on FOX's "The Finder" opposite Michael Clarke Duncan and Geoff Stults.

In 2012 she also appeared as the lead in the independent feature film UNDERDOGS, the story of a hometown football rivalry. And "God Bless America" directed by Bobcat Goldthwait. Maddie also made a guest appearance on the NBC hit series, "Grimm" In 2014.

Since the age of seven, Hasson has danced, sung and acted her way to legendary status in her hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina. Having won numerous awards, including the prestigious choreographer Mia Michaels Scholarship at the Broadway Dance Center and the Triple Threat Winner at the Access Broadway Event in New York City, Hasson's focus moved to acting where she found her true passion. Performing back to back in diverse roles in Cape Fear Academy productions and her local professional theatre, The Opera House Theatre, she won praise for her performances in "Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Anything Goes," "Antigone," "Vital Signs" and "Grey Gardens."

Maddie Hasson currently resides in Los Angeles, California.

Wrenn Schmidt (Bobbi Jett)

With achievements in theater, film, and television, Wrenn Schmidt has made her mark on the industry as a respected actress and notable up and comer. Schmidt first drew attention in NY Magazine's "The Projectionist's Best Performances of 2010" for her work in Client9: The Rise and Fall of Eliot Spitzer.

Schmidt was no stranger to television with credits including CBS's "3 lbs"; ABC's "Body of Proof"; and NBC's "Mercy" and "Law & Order", but as Julia Sagorsky opposite Jack Huston on HBO's Boardwalk Empire she landed on the map. Her on screen notoriety and performance in Brooklyn Academy of Music's The Master Builder opposite John Turturro, earned Schmidt a place on Indiewire's "On The Rise: 10 Actresses to Watch in 2013"

Schmidt was profiled by The New York Times and followed her success to star in Christopher Dunham's Preservation with Pablo Schreiber and Aaron Staton. Preservation was featured at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival. Prior to Preservation, Schmidt appeared in Our Idiot Brother and How to Follow Strangers (L.E.S. Film Festival Prix d'Or). Schmidt can also be seen as Becky Silva in the upcoming Michael Bay film "13 Hours" for Paramount Pictures in January of 2016.

Schmidt's television career has only gotten bigger and more extensive. She guest starred on CBS's Unforgettable and Blue Bloods to then heavily recur on FX's The Americans and Tyrant, and CBS's Person of Interest. After wrapping the pilot in the fall of 2014, Schmidt resumed production as Megan Holter on Cinemax's Outcast this July. Outcast is based on the Kirkman/Azaceta comic and comes from The Walking Dead executive producer, Robert Kirkman.

Schmidt began her career in the theatre with the National Broadway tour of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" with Bill Irwin and Kathleen Turner and she was most recently seen at the Old Globe starring as Raina in "Arms and the Man." New York theatre highlights include Broadway's Come Back, Little Sheba, Be a Good Little Widow at Ars Nova (world premiere), Jailbait at the Cherry Lane Theater, Beyond the Horizon and Sive at Irish Repertory Theatre, and Katie Roche and Temporal Powers at the Mint Theater.

A graduate of the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities and Meadows School of the Arts, SMU, Schmidt resides in Brooklyn, NY.

SONGS

"Cold Cold Heart"

Written by Hank Williams Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Even Though You Let Me Go"

Written by Marc Abraham and Rodney Crowell
Performed by Elizabeth Olsen
Courtesy of Roustabout Publishing

"I Can't Get You Off Of My Mind"

Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Honky Tonkin"

Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Blues Come Around"

Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Tom Hiddleston, Elizabeth Olsen, and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"The Tennessee Waltz"

Written by Pee Wee King
Performed by Jo Stafford
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing
Courtesy of Columbia Records
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Field Hand Man"

Written by Alton Delmore, Rabbon Delmore and Sydney Nathan
Performed by The Delmore Brothers
With permission from Carlin America and BMG Music Publishing
Courtesy of KING Records

"Pan American" Written by Hank Williams

Performed by Tom Hiddleston, Elizabeth Olsen, and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Please Don't Let Me Love You"

Written by Ralph Jones
Performed by George Morgan
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing
Courtesy of Columbia Records
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Right or Wrong"

Written by Arthur Sizemore and Paul Biese
Performed by Bob Wills
Courtesy of Columbia Records

By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Lovesick Blues"

Written by Cliff Friend / Irving Mills

Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"A Pair Of Broken Hearts"

Written by Fred Rose

Performed by Spade Cooley
With permission of Sony/ATV Music Publishing
Courtesy of Columbia Records
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Walking the Floor Over You"

Written by Ernest Tubb

Performed by Chris Scruggs and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Warner Chappell Music publishing

"Santa Baby"

Written by Joan Javits, Anthony Springer and Philip Springer

Performed by Eartha Kitt

With permission from Tamir, Carlin America and BMG Music Publishing
Courtesy of Columbia Records
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Men With Broken Hearts"

Written by Hank Williams

Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"It Is Thy Servant's Prayer, Amen"

Written by Thomas Dorsey

Performed by The Sallie Martin Singers featuring Cora Martin
With permission from Warner Chappell Music Publishing
Courtesy of Specialty Records
Used by permission of Concord Music Group, Inc.

"Home in San Antone"

Written by Fred Rose

Performed by The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Hey Good Lookin'"

Written by Hank Williams Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys

With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"That's What's Knockin' Me Out" Written and Performed by Jimmy Liggins and His Drops of Joy

With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

Courtesy of Specialty Records

By permission of Concord Music Group, Inc.

"(Where Are You) Now That I Need You"

Written by Frank Loesser
Performed by Doris Day with the Mellomen
With permission of Sony/ATV Music Publishing
Courtesy of Columbia Records
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Low and Lonely"
Written by Fred Rose
Performed by Roy Acuff
With permission of Sony/ATV Music Licensing
Courtesy of Columbia Records
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Why Don't You Love Me"
Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Jack of Diamonds" Traditional Arrangement
Performed by The Saddle Spring Boys

"Anytime"
Written by Herbert Lawson
Performed by Eddy Arnold
With permission of Warner Chappell Music Publishing
Courtesy of Columbia Records
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"Your Cheatin' Heart"
Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"I Saw The Light"
Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Rodney Crowell, Cory Chisel, Tania Hancheroff, and Chris Scruggs
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"
Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Tom Hiddleston, Rodney Crowell, and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Jambalaya"
Written by Hank Williams
Performed by Tom Hiddleston and The Saddle Spring Boys
With permission from Sony/ATV Music Publishing

Soundtrack available on Legacy Recordings
QQ LOGO