

BIOGRAPHY PAT BOONE

Google Pat Boone – be warned, more than 1.9 million results show up! – and a word picture of an astonishing, long lasting, still thriving career in music and entertainment emerges.

Singer, actor, TV host, producer, songwriter, author, motivational speaker, TV pitchman, radio personality, record company head, TV station owner, sports team owner, family man, humanitarian and a man unafraid to air his views, Pat Boone, 89, was a teen idol who shot to stardom via an early national talent show.

A lot of Pat Boones from which to pick and choose. A lot of Pat Boones to go around.

Right now, Boone – the #10 all time top recording artist, according to music industry bible, Billboard – is the Lion in Winter, nearly seven decades of recording history behind him and a busy future ahead. A very active lion...

Boone runs his own record company, The Gold Label, designed for legendary artists of a certain age and certifiable talent (all with million-selling gold records to their credit) “It’s a senior tour for singers,” he jokes. “But there is a qualification: they have to be able to sell records.” Glen Campbell, Jack Jones, Roger Williams, Patti Page, Cleo Laine, Sha Na Na and others (as well as Boone himself) all lived up to the Founder’s Maxim. More than 30 Gold Label albums have been released to date and the label is now 20 years old.

Boone has involved himself in a couple of personal projects: “For My Country,” a musical tribute to the National Guard that Boone wrote himself and regards as a follow-up to his Pledge of Allegiance pitch, “Under God,” recorded in 2002, which landed in the Top 20 and became Boone’s 61st hit record. Tuned to current events, close to Boone’s heart and views, both stirred up debate as well as sales.

An updated pictorial autobiography, “Pat Boone’s America - 50 Years” has joined the line of more than a dozen autobiographical and motivational books. He became a book author very early, writing the still-in-print “Twixt Twelve And Twenty,” in 1958 as a Teen Idol, himself barely out of his own teens and a senior at Columbia University. That first book sold millions in soft and hard covers and was the No. 1 non-fiction best-seller for 2 years! And among many others, his next million-seller was “A New Song” about his own experience spiritually. One of his later book ventures, co-written with Cord Cooper, is “Questions About God – And the Answers That Could Change Your life.”

Today Boone keeps connected to that ‘50s Generation, now pre-Boomers and Boomers. He is national spokesman for the 60 Plus Association. They hear him on two nationally syndicated radio shows, “The Pat Boone Hour” on SiriusXM’s ‘50s Gold channel 72, and “The Pat Boone Show,” which features contemporary gospel music on many local stations across America. His personally written columns have appeared weekly on WorldNetDaily.com and NewsMax.com, fearlessly embracing politics, religion, and timely causes that catch his attention. In recent months, the topics have ranged from separation of church and state, illegal immigration, abortion, the death penalty, to public education, the NEA and the ACLU. He even wrote 8 articles on nuclear fusion on WorldNetDaily.com and NewsMax.com. He and his wife Shirley were so concerned about the Cambodian food crisis in the 1970s, they initiated what is now a five-hundred million dollar a year humanitarian organization called Mercy Corps.

Pat and Shirley (Foley) Boone (daughter of Country star 'Red' Foley) were married for over 65 years. "We lived a wonderful, blessed life together. I've parted with my better half for a little while...but we don't die, we just move on to another Heavenly place, and today (January 11, 2019) was moving day," Pat said of his high school sweetheart. "She's changed her address, that's all, and moved to a different mansion that I expect to join her in one day."

Pat Boone, of course, is a man of many interests. Not all to do with music. He thinks he may – at this stage of his career – be suffering from an Edifice Complex.

"They keep naming things after me, even buildings", he says. True. Villanova, Pa., Northeastern Christian Junior College had Boone Hall – the main campus building, established by royalties from Boone's first million selling book, "Twixt, Twelve And Twenty." There is another Boone Hall in the World Impact Outreach Center for Underprivileged, inner-city kids, which is supported by Boone and wife Shirley. Pepperdine University in California is the home of the Boone Center for the Family (Boone has been chairman of Pepperdine's Advisory Board for the past 40 years), and he and Shirley gave \$5 million to Lipscomb University's College of Entertainment & the Arts as the lead gift to build a new facility for its performing arts program to be named the Boone Family Center for the Performing Arts. Similarly, on the campus of Abilene Christian University the recently upgraded performance venue was renamed the Pat Boone Theatre.

Boone Fact #1 (that you may not know) *Boone once sponsored a basketball team in Hollywood's Studio League whose players included Bill Cosby, Rafer Johnson, Denzel Washington, players from the Rams and Dodgers – and of course Boone himself. Boone also helped start the American Basketball Association; owned the Oakland Oaks that won 17 games in a row in the 2nd season with Hall-of-Famer Rick Barry and took home the championship in 1969.*

In the beginning, Pat Boone was not just a rock 'n roll star but also a symbol. Lured away from a high school teaching career by TV and radio appearances on such programs as "The Ted Mack Amateur Hour" (in which he became the original American Idol, selected week after week by the viewers), and "The Arthur Godfrey Show," the Columbia U., New York, graduate was further turned away from academics by record producer Randy Wood of Dot Records who thought Pat Boone could sing rock 'n roll.

"I thought I would be singing the Perry Como, Eddie Fisher type of ballad," recalls Pat. "I was a big Bing Crosby fan."

But Wood came up with a concept, one that would turn Boone into a major star and lead to Hollywood movies and his own TV shows. Also, one that would lead to Boone's first musical brouhaha.

Wood wanted Boone to record cover versions of R&B pioneers, such as Fats Domino and Little Richard, hard driving and blues based and a long, long way from Perry Como. The records were very successful but lead eventually to some critics accusing Boone of ripping off the originators.

Boone does not apologize. "At that time, R&B was actually called "race music," and the original artists were not going to get played on 90 percent of the radio stations in America," he told fellow label chief, Joe Smith. {They} hoped and prayed their records would get covered by someone who could get pop airplay. And

that meant...even more recognition in their own field and potentially crossover to a vastly larger audience. We were literally catalysts who helped R&B become rock 'n roll. The proof is that the only R&B artists known today are the ones whose records were "covered" by pop artists at that time."

Boone also remembers the time Fats Domino brought him on stage in New Orleans, pointed to the most expensive diamond ring on his finger, and said, "Pat Boone bought me this ring." Adds Boone, smiling: "He was referring, of course, to his writer royalties from my recording of his 'Ain't That a Shame'."

"As I looked back, he (Pat) really opened a wider door for me. By him recording 'Tutti Frutti' it made it bigger and made me accepted to a wider market and I became 'Pop' instantly! You know, thank you, Pat," said Little Richard, later in his career.

But in the midst of all this early success, Boone continued at Columbia University, graduating Magna cum Laude in 1958, appearing on the cover of TV Guide in his cap and gown.

Boone Fact #2 (that you may not know) *Pat Boone has a sense of humor about himself and his clean-cut image. He once kidded Johnny Carson on The Tonight Show that he nearly drowned while swimming and, as is supposed to happen, his whole life flashed before him. "What did you do?" asked Carson. "I fell asleep," replied Boone.*

Boone's recording career was stratospheric: from the 1950s on, nearly 50 million records sold, 38 Top 10 hits, gold, and platinum records. Boone rates #6 among artists with the most consecutive Top 10 hits, #10 with the most Top 40 hits, #16 with the most No. 1 hits, and today he still holds the #1 ranking of all-time for two charts; spending 220 consecutive weeks on the charts with one or more songs each week, and the artist with the all-time longest chart career— 70 years! He began producing other artists and also branched into gospel music, starting his first label, gospel-based Lamb & Lion Records.

A Boone album of hymns sold three million in the late '50s, considerably opening up the market and allowing Boone to stay loyal to this genre all his life. He hosted a gospel TV program for a decade and syndicated gospel music radio shows, continuing today. He's a member of the Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

But amazingly, in 1997 his gospel music show was suddenly dropped by its Christian network. All because he supposedly "dabbled with the devil" and recorded an album of ...Heavy Metal Music with big band orchestrations!

It was not only the music but Boone's appearance on the American Music Awards. In black leather and fake tattoos, he was promoting his new album, "Pat Boone In A Metal Mood," heavy metal songs given a roaring big band treatment. The appearance stunned the media and music world, sending the CD halfway up the Billboard charts the next week, delighting Boone and his record company. But the shock was too great in the "gospel arena" who took his show off the air until they listened to the music and finally saw what he was doing, that it was perfectly fine, and reinstated his show two months later.

Pat's comment at the time was "The AMA Awards appearance seemed, to me, like wearing a costume to a party, not to be taken seriously, but I guess I did it too well." He was obviously in very good physical shape, and the record, "Pat Boone In A Metal Mood," was a smash!

Boone's original teen idol success, not to mention his classic boy-next-door good looks, attracted Hollywood's interest, leading to Boone starring in 26 movies...and they were major features, not rock 'n roll quickies. They showcased Boone with such stars as Ann Margret, James Mason, Debby Reynolds and Tony Curtis and were box office hits. He was, in fact, Elvis' main competition at this time, mid-fifties onwards. Television also beckoned: Boone became the youngest person in history to have his own weekly musical variety show (ABC), at times the number one show in television featuring many first time-on-TV artists like Sammy Davis, Ella Fitzgerald and Nat 'King' Cole, and was an in-demand guest star for other shows, both musical and dramatic. Advertisers discovered that Pat Boone's personality sold things. He became an accomplished TV pitchman, especially for the Chevrolet company for several years, and numerous others since.

Boone fact #3 (that you may not know): *Elvis Presley once opened for Boone at a big disc jockey "sock hop" in Cleveland in 1956. "I had to follow him," recalls Boone. "Thank God I had 3 million-selling hit records already and I was the star that night. But I never wanted to follow Elvis again!"*

In 1960 Pat Boone wrote the lyric to the theme from the movie "Exodus," "The Exodus Song (This Land Is Mine)," about the creation of the State of Israel. It provided him a special connection with the country, one that he has maintained for six decades. Boone has been named the Christian Ambassador of Tourism by the Israel Ministry of Tourism, and has led 20 tours of the country over the years. He also possesses an Israel Cultural Award, the country's highest award for a non-native. He is spokesman for the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews "Wings of Eagles" program, which has directly enabled 300,000 Jews from iron curtain countries to resettle in Israel, and in November, 2022 was presented the "Warrior for Truth Award" at the Allgemeiner 50th Anniversary Gala in New York City. He is a Bible believing Christian, and calls himself an "adopted" Jew.

Boone has been National Spokesman for the March of Dimes, the National Association of the Blind, Entertainment Chairman for the National Easter Seals telethon (18 years) which raised over \$600 million for the disabled during his tenure. His own Cambodian relief organization formed in the Boone family's living room in 1979, "Save The Refugee Fund," is now Mercy Corps, currently operating with 5,900 team members in 40 countries and responsible, so far, for delivering 1.3 billion dollars worth of food and supplies where needed.

People agree and disagree with Pat Boone – about rock 'n roll, politics, religion, the usual stuff. Boone knows he can't be all things to all people, but most people agree on one thing... Pat Boone has lived his life, engineered his career, utilized his talent and celebrity with integrity.

Boone Fact #4 (that you may not know): *Pat Boone is a non-drinker (of hard liquor), but he thinks he knows what it's like to be drunk. In New York, waiting for the light, he heard his version of "Ain't That A Shame" played on the car radio next to him, a car crowded with teenagers obviously really enjoying the music. "Hearing a record of mine on the air for the first time, and seeing the reactions of the kids, was the closest I ever came to being drunk". He was 20 at the time.*

Among his current projects, the inspirational "IF" book and "The Mulligan" golf-themed movie, which debuted in 2022 at the legendary Masters golf tournament in Augusta, GA, is newly released on DVD, and Boone has won the Best Supporting Actor award at the Canadian International Faith & Film Festival (CIFF).

When the racial conflicts erupted two years ago in the U.S., Boone released “Can’t We Get Along” that quickly garnered 5.2 million video views and featured Nashville vocalist and “The Voice” Season 21 finalist Wendy Moten. Boone wrote the words and music, but felt it should be sung by a black artist.

Also upcoming for Pat, "Country Jubilee," a commemorative double vinyl/double CD loaded with 25 all-time Favorite Classics including "Chattanooga Sheshine Boy," "Peace in the Valley," "Cold, Cold Heart," and now he's written "Grits," a true-blue country "novelty song" featuring country music stars Ray Stevens, The Gatlin Brothers, Lorrie Morgan, Deborah Allen, and Roger Miller's son, Dean Miller, and a newly recorded Boone duet of "You and I" with country music icon Crystal Gayle. In the pre-production stage is a celebrity group recording of Boone's "One" anthem calling attention to the plight of Tanzanians in Africa in daily search of water to survive. In collaboration with another charity, Pat Boone World Missions dispatched start-up funds for an 80-foot-deep fresh water well, a wood-framed school already transforming the lives of young people with an education up to the eighth-grade level, and resources for fresh vegetable gardens that serve multiple villages. Also provided to date is foundational funding for a community development center where much-needed health services are provided to families from neighboring villages.

Pat and Shirley Boone successfully reared and guided their daughters, Cherry, Lindy, Debby, and Laury in the midst of Hollywood's spotlight and he now has 16 grandchildren and 17 great grandchildren.

When the world-famous Hollywood Walk of Fame was first instituted, Pat had the rare honor of three stars – for Recording, Motion Picture, and Television.

“As for now,” he says, “I may not have much time left, realistically. But I’m still busy, healthy, singing and swimming – and I want God to use every inch of me for His pleasure and purposes. And I’m trying, as I always have, to bring as many other people to Heaven with me as I can.”

###