

PAUL WILLIAMS

What would you call a person who has composed innumerable hit songs; received an Academy Award for the Best Song of the Year; is a gifted scriptwriter, actor and comedian; a personality capable of holding his own with Mike Douglas and Led Zeppelin; and a winner of awards and citations in virtually every field he enters?

You could call him a renaissance man, but he doesn't paint.

"But I used to," concedes Paul Williams. "Of course," he adds with wry modesty, "I was painting kitchens and bathrooms. But I was paid to paint, and that's more than most people can say."

Williams, in his mid-thirties, has accomplished all of this and vastly more within the last ten years; thanks to a presence that's hard to forget, a quick wit, and an attitude that causes him to describe himself quite seriously as "a card-carrying sentimentalist."

Paul was born in Omaha, Nebraska (September 19, 1940). His younger brother, Mentor, is a well-known songwriter ("Drift Away") and record producer. Paul's older brother was construction engineer on the first American satellite carrying a nuclear reactor put into orbit, and currently designs nuclear reactors, "You'd expect him to be the straightest one of the three of us," says Paul, "but actually, he's the craziest—completely bananas."

Their father was an architect who worked for a prominent Midwestern firm and travelled from town to town working on projects for one or two years at a time—the Atomic Energy Commission headquarters in Akron, B-36 bomber hangers in Rapid City, South Dakota, and Nebraska's Boys Town where some of his projects. Consequently, the Williams family moved often, with Paul constantly "the new kid in town."

When Paul was 13, his father died in an automobile crash, splitting the family. Paul settled for five years with an aunt in Long Beach, California.

By the early 1960s, Paul had moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico (his father had designed the Veterans Administration hospital there), and had obtained a job in a title insurance office. He fell in with a troupe of stunt parachutists, and began joining them for weekend shows. Before long, Paul found that he was making more money on Saturday and Sunday than he was for the entire rest of the week, and having considerably more fun besides. So he quit the title insurance office—which left him with five days a week free time.

He joined a local little theater operation by walking in the door and asking for work. His first assignments were set constructions, but he eventually achieved a strong local reputation as an actor.

Paul was on the verge of becoming one of Albuquerque's hottest show biz properties when he decided to move out of town; a proposed children's TV show, in which Paul was to star, had been shelved by the station. Paul headed west to Los Angeles to seek his fortune there. Three days later, the station decided to go ahead with the program and tried unsuccessfully to persuade Paul to return.

In Los Angeles, Paul set his mind firmly upon an acting career. He went through the usual small-time struggles, augmenting his income by helping his landlady's son-in-law paint houses. After a succession of tiny "showcase" productions, Paul received his Actors Equity card, and a part in a TV commercial for Parsons' Ammonia.

His first memorable role was in Tony Richardson's 1964 film, *The Loved One*, in which he played a fourteen-year-old genius given to conducting bizarre scientific experiments. A year later, Paul was cast in a relatively minor part in the Marlon Brando vehicle, *The Chase*.

On location for the film, with little to do between scenes, Paul picked up a guitar and began to "in

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vent" chords and write lyrics--his first even half-serious venture into things musical; despite the fact that brother Mentor had been playing in and out of bands for several years,

Back in Los Angeles, Paul was introduced to comedian Mort Sahl, who remembered him from *The Loved One* and asked him to play a part in a sketch on an episode of Sahl's local TV program. The next week, Paul joined the show full-time as a writer. Guesting on the program was singer-songwriter Biff Rose, with whom Paul struck up a friendship. The two decided to compose some songs together, and were signed to A&M Records' publishing wing.

Two of Paul's songs were released on record on the same day in 1968. One was a collaboration with Roger Nichols, "It's Hard to Say Goodbye" sung on A&M by Claudine Longet. The second, a Williams-Biff Rose collaboration entitled "Fill Your Heart" was the B side of Tiny Tim's "Tiptoe Through the Tulips," which reached the Top Twenty nationwide.

Tiny Tim's producer, Richard Perry, tells the next part of the story in the liner notes to Reprise Records RS6311. "Fill Your Heart" had always been my favorite cut from Tiny's first album, but while listening to Paul's voice on the demonstration record I experienced a rare musical high: the producer's dream of discovering an artist-writer who he feels can be of genuine importance. My excitement was intensified when Paul told me of his plans to form a group.

The group, Holy Mackerel, was formed, says Paul, strictly because he had no intention of performing alone. Mentor, fresh from a job in a furniture store, also participated in the album as writer and singer.

The Holy Mackerel were dropped from the Reprise roster after the one album release, but Paul's option was picked up. The first Paul Williams solo album, *Someday Man*, (still available as Reprise 6401) was released.

At the time, *Someday Man* was not one of the label's strongest sellers, despite an impressive selection of Williams-Nichols originals and an all-star cast of backing musicians including Hal Blaine, Chad Stuart, Larry Knechtel and Joe Osborne. Paul decided to quit performing and concentrate on his songwriting. From that period came to copyrights

that would establish Williams as a hit composer.

First came Williams' and Nichols' "Out In the Country" discovered and recorded by Three Dog Night, always on the prowl for good material by undiscovered composers.

As "Out In the Country" climbed the charts, Paul and Roger were called in by an advertising agency to help with a commercial for a California-based bank. The idea was to increase their appeal to the 18-25 year-olds. The lyric, says Paul, came to him almost immediately, and he and Nichols write a complete song just in case anyone should be interested in recording a version longer than the sixty-second spot. The song, "We've Only Just Begun" has in the ensuing years enjoyed prolonged life through a gold record for the Carpenters, in Paul's own version (and those of dozens of other singers) and through having that commercial syndicated to a number of financial institutions throughout the country. It has also become a recurring theme for graduation ceremonies and a wedding song more popular than "Promise Me," and has sold over one million copies of sheet music to date.

Paul's career as a recording artist resumed when he was called upon by A&M's Herb Alpert to compose lyrics for, and participate vocally on, Michel Colombier's ambitious cantata, *Wings*. Other featured vocalists included Bill Medley, Lani Hall, and Alpert himself.

Since then, Paul's career has remained well within the public eye. In addition to his albums of songs, Paul has written material for a number of television programs and feature films, including the 1975 season premier script of "Baretta," in which he guest-starred with Robert Blake. He starred in, co-authored and composed the music for the musical film *Phantom of the Paradise*, for which he received Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations and a citation from the Count Dracula Society for his contribution to horror literature (The soundtrack album has reached gold status in Canada and France.) He received another Academy Award nomination for the song "Nice to Be Around," from the film *Cinderella Liberty*. His songs were entered in the Tokyo Song Festival twice, and won both times. He is spokesman for the



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American Song Festival.

Paul did the music for the film *Bugsy Malone*, an Oscar nominated score, and is currently working with Paul Zindel on a Broadway-bound musical, *Dorothy*, based on the life of author and critic Dorothy Parker. He was musical supervisor for "A Star Is Born," and wrote eight of the eleven songs for the celebrated film, five with Kenny Ascher, two with

Rupert Holmes and, of course, Oscar-winner "Evergreen" with Barbra Streisand. In his concert performances, he has won a vast following of devotees who respond to his combination of strong, original material and the impish Williams-as-raconteur wit that seems to transcend boundaries of age of experience. And, while Paul occasionally refers to his lyrics as "sentimental," in reference to their deep romantic quality, there is in each Paul Williams song, a winning quality of intelligence, wit, honesty and sophistication.

At present, Paul is one of the busiest artists in the entertainment business. He co-stars with Peter Falk in the film *The Cheap Detective*, and appears with Burt Reynolds, Jackie Gleason and Sally Fields in *Smokey and the Bandit*. With Charles Fox, he's working on five songs for a film called *One On One* starring Robby Benson. Seals and Crofts will sing the new songs in the film which Paul describes as "a kind of *Rocky* of basketball." Also in collaboration with Charles Fox, he's writing the main love theme and title song for the film version of *Grease* which will star John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John and Stockard Channing.

He's writing the title tune for a forthcoming TV series titled *Just Another Day*, and is the Musical Supervisor for another TV series starring Barbi Benton called *Girls, Girls, Girls*. He'll be appearing in a revival of *Finian's Rainbow* and is currently working on two projects with Charles Bronson and Jill Ireland. Paul will produce Jill's first album and will co-star with her in a Bronson-starring film titled *\$1.98*. Beyond that one of his own film production companies is at work on a pilot for a TV series produced by Mary Tyler Moore Productions called *Arthur Among the Animals*. He's a regular on *Hollywood Squares* and will appear next season in TV specials with Donnie and

Marie Osmond and with Captain and Tennille.

Paul was nominated for Golden Globe Awards five times and won twice; he's been nominated for four Academy Awards and capped his already illustrious career on Oscar Night when he accepted with Barbra Streisand his award for "Evergreen."

And while he's only just begun, his brilliant list of awards and achievements would be a superb tribute to an artist twice his age. The future can only hold greater success for Paul Williams, for as a close friend and business associate points out, "Paul doesn't just dabble in different areas. He's monstrously successful in anything he touches."

PAUL WILLIAMS DISCOGRAPHY

Classics--1977

Produced by Michael Jackson and Kenny Ascher

A Star Is Born--1976 (Columbia)

Produced by Barbra Streisand and Phil Ramone

Ordinary Fool--1975

Produced by Paul Williams

Bugsy Malone--1975 (RSO)

Produced by Paul Williams

A Little Bit of Love--1974

Produced by Kenny Ascher

Phantom of the Paradise--1974

Produced by Paul Williams

Here Comes Inspiration--1974

Produced by Kenny Ascher

Life Goes On--1973

Produced by Michael Jackson

Just An Old Fashioned Love Song--1972

Produced by Michael Jackson

Michel Colombier's *Wings*--1971

(with Lani Hall, Bill Medley & Herb Alpert)

Produced by Herb Alpert

Someday Man--1970 (Reprise Records)

Produced by Roger Nichols

The Holy Mackerel--1968 (Reprise Records)

Produced by Richard Perry

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WILLIAMS ON WILLIAMS

Paul Williams comments on the ten songs in *Classics*:

"Waking Up Alone:" "This is the second time I've recorded this song, and in redoing it in a stronger fashion, I think it holds up beautifully. It's as if Robert Mitchum did a remake of a Leslie Howard film and the role fit both actors perfectly."

"You and Me Against the World:" "It's the first song I wrote with Kenny Ascher. And while I've thought of it as about a man/woman relationship, Helen Reddy directed her hit version to her daughter."

"An Old Fashioned Love Song:" "It's basically what I generally write. I went to pick up a girl I was dating and mentioned to her that I'd just gotten another gold record for an old fashioned love song. The I walked over to the piano and started writing "An Old Fashioned Love Song."

"Rainy Days and Mondays:" ". . .don't really bring me down, It's just that they're generally accepted symbols for depression."

"We've Only Just Begun:" "My first big hit. In a recent review in the *Los Angeles Times*, Robert Hilburn said who would believe that a song as gentle and unassuming as this one would become a battle song; the impetus for a whole new wave of sound in the 70's. That was a nice compliment. People are always telling me they played the song when they got married."

"That's Enough For Me:" "It's my favorite of my love songs. It's about the most unselfish side of love--enjoying somebody else's pleasure."

"Loneliness:" "It's what Sinatra would call a saloon song. It could be a traditional downer, but as with most of my songs, by the time you roll around to the first bridge or get to the end, you'll find something positive in it."

"I Won't Last a Day Without You:" "I never meant it to be a possessive song, but rather I wanted to express the real value of a specific relationship."

"With One More Look At You:" "It's a new song and perhaps my favorite from "A Star Is Born." It was inspired by watching earlier versions of the film where Fredric March turns to Janet Gaynor or James Mason looks at Judy Garland and says: 'Stop, I can do anything if you'll just let me take one more look at you.'"

"Evergreen:" "I wrote this song with a rather famous girl from Brooklyn, and I am especially pleased because it was honored by the Motion Picture Academy with an Oscar."

