# Ford, Tennessee Ernie (1919-1991) Encyclopedia Article

## Ford, Tennessee Ernie (1919-1991)

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# Ford, Tennessee Ernie (1919-1991)

With his smooth bass voice and warm country charm, Ernest Jennings "Tennessee Ernie" Ford became one of the first country music stars to cross both musical and cultural boundaries to reach a truly national audience during the 1950s. Working as a disk jockey and radio performer in California after World War II, Ford came to the attention of Capitol Records, which signed him in 1949. A string of hits followed, most of them in the "country boogie" style he helped pioneer that married boogie-woogie rhythms with country music themes and instrumentation, including "The Shot Gun Boogie," "Anticipation Blues," and "I'm Hog-Tied Over You." He became a national figure when his recording of "Sixteen Tons" became both a country and pop hit in 1955. He starred in his own television programs between 1955 and 1961 and later recorded a number of highly successful gospel albums.

**Tennessee Ernie Ford (right) with Gary Crosby on the Tennessee Ernie Ford Show.**

## Further Reading:

Malone, Bill C. *Country Music U.S.A.: A Fifty Year History.* Austin, American Folklore Society, University of Texas Press, 1968.

Stambler, Irwin, and Grelun Landon. *Country Music: The Encyclopedia.* New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997.

*Sixteen Tons of Boogie: The Best of Tennessee Ernie Ford.* Rhino Records, 1990.