Stevens, Ray (1939-) Encyclopedia Article

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Before Ray Stevens, a country humorist was a guy in overalls, chewing on a stalk of straw and telling homespun stories about cow pies and two-seater privies. Stevens changed all that in 1962, when he released "Ahab the Arab," an off-the-wall saga of a Mideastern camel driver, complete with sound effects. Stevens went on to score hit records with a wide range of approaches. He spoofed Tarzan and rock 'n' roll at the same time in "Gitarzan," a 1970s public nakedness fad in "The Streak," and 1980s televangelism with "Would Jesus Wear a Rolex?" He also displayed a talent for sophisticated musical humor when he transformed the jazz standard "Misty" into a bluegrass romp, and had a way with sentimental country in his 1970 chart-topper, "Everything Is Beautiful." But through all that, he maintained his identification as a country artist. Stevens became one of the leaders in music marketing in the 1990s, with his aggressive and successful television mail order promotions of his music videos.

Ray Stevens