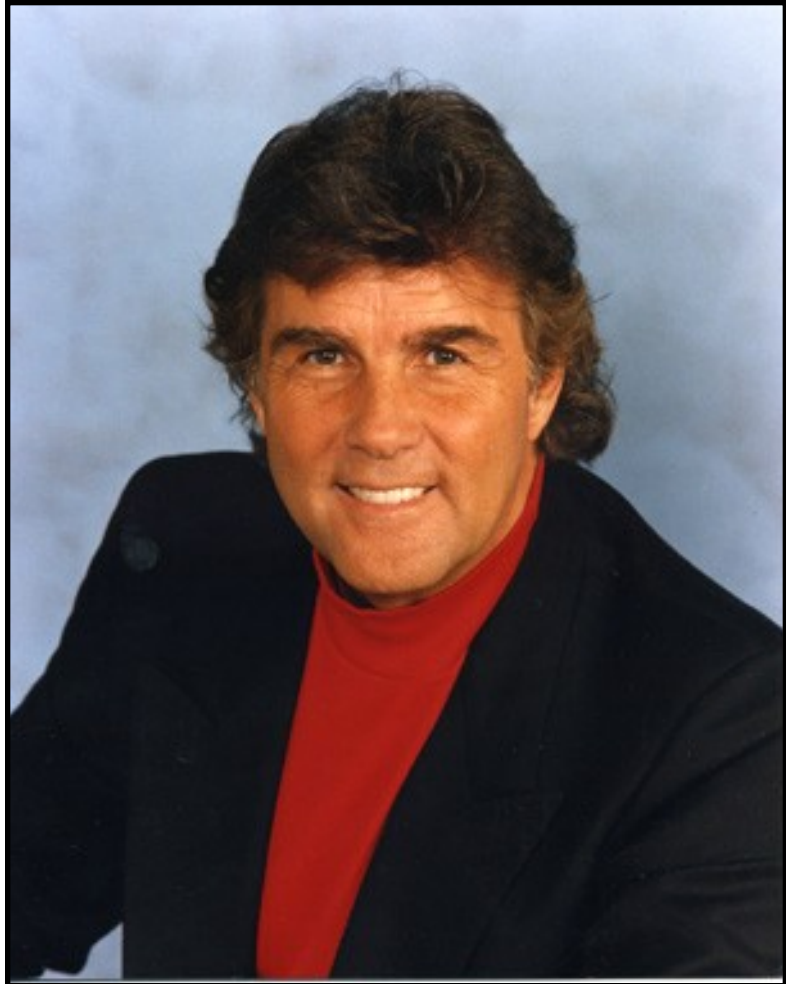


BILLY "CRASH" CRADDOCK
by Tamela Meredith Partridge
"Our Brown County" magazine
Nashville, IN
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Country and pop icon, Billy "Crash" Craddock, still knows how to rub audiences the right way with his No. 1 singles, "Ruby, Baby," "Broken Down In Tiny Pieces," and "Rub It In."

"There were about 1200 country radio stations across the U.S. that were not playing 'Rub It In,' when it was first released in '74," Craddock says, who will perform at The Little Nashville Opry on Saturday, March 19 at 7 p.m. "They all felt like it was a dirty song. I remember I spent several days calling all those country radio stations and explaining to them that the



song wasn't dirty at all -- it was about suntan lotion! They must have appreciated me calling, because they gave the record a chance and started playing it. Within eight weeks 'Rub It In' went No. 1 and became one of the biggest records of my career."

Craddock, a Greensboro, N.C. native, was born the youngest of 13 children. Surrounded by his family's love of singing, harmonizing, and playing instruments provided the singer and guitarist with a solid foundation in country, gospel and folk music.

"We had 7 boys and 6 girls in my family," Craddock says. "All of my brothers and sisters could play music. Mom would sing and dad could tap dance and play the washboard and harmonica. It was just a very musical family."

Other musical influences for "Mr. Country Rock" include listening to the radio and singing along to songs by legendary country artists Little Jimmy Dickens, Hank Williams, Ray Price, Faron Young, and Elvis Presley.

"I used to pretend I was performing at the Grand Ole Opry when I was a little boy," Craddock says. "I would grab a broom, go out to the barn and introduce artists, sing, and perform just as if I was on the Grand Ole Opry stage. When I grew up and actually made my Grand Ole Opry debut performance, my mouth was so dry I could hardly talk. I'm sure I was either sharp or flat when I started to sing, because I was just so nervous! There is nothing quite like the feeling of performing on the Grand Ole Opry stage for the first time."

Craddock earned his lifetime nickname, "Crash," during his high school football days.

"I played right halfback," Craddock says. "I was the smallest man on the team. When a guard or tackle would open up a hole in which to get through, I was able to get through there before anyone could get me. So, they nicknamed me 'Crash,' and it just kind of stuck."

Craddock debuted in '59 with the pop single, "Don't Destroy Me," and has charted over 40 country singles including "Dream Lover," and "Easy As Pie."

"My first love was always country music," Craddock says. "When I first started out, they wanted to make me a rock n' roll star. I didn't hit with rock n' roll here in the U.S., I hit over in Australia! Then I was able to record a country cover of Tony Orlando and Dawn's pop song, "Knock Three Times," using the fiddles and steel guitars and all. And that's what got me back into the country field."

Craddock continues to entertain enthusiastic crowds with his interactive stage show of country, pop, rock 'n' roll, gospel, and '50's and '60' music.

"I just love performing," Craddock says. "And I love the fans. When I hit the stage and I see the fans faces and hear the applause, it really motivates me."