

# A White Sports Coat 373

## Marty Robbins

No artist in the history of country music has had a more stylistically diverse career than Marty Robbins. Never content to remain just a country singer, Robbins performed successfully in a dazzling array of styles during more than 30 years in the business. To his credit, Robbins rarely followed trends but often took off in directions that stunned both his peers and fans. Plainly Robbins was not hemmed in by anyone's definition of country music. Although his earliest recordings were unremarkable weepers, by the mid-'50s Robbins was making forays into rock music, adding fiddles to the works of Chuck Berry and Little Richard. By the late '50s, Robbins had pop hits of his own with teen fare like "A White Sport Coat (And a Pink Carnation)." Almost simultaneously, he completed work on his *Song of the Islands* album. In 1959, Robbins stretched even further with the hit single "El Paso," thus heralding a pattern of "gunfighter ballads" that lasted the balance of his career. Robbins also enjoyed bluesy hits like "Don't Worry," which introduced a pop audience to fuzz-tone guitar in 1961. Barely a year later, Robbins scored a calypso hit with "Devil Woman." Robbins also left a legacy of gospel music and a string of sentimental ballads, showing that he would croon with nary a touch of hillbilly twang.

Born and raised in Glendale, AZ, Robbins (born Martin David Robertson, September 26, 1925; died December 8, 1982) was exposed to music at an early age. His mother's father was "Texas" Bob Heckle, a former medicine show man who told his grandson cowboy stories and tales of the traveling show. Robbins became enraptured by the cowboy tales and, once he became a teenager, worked on his older brother's ranch outside of Phoenix, concentrating more on his cowboy duties than his studies. Indeed, he never graduated from high school, and by his late teens, he started turning petty crimes while living as a hobo. In 1943, he joined the U.S. Navy to fight in World War II, and while he was in the service, he learned how to play guitar and developed a taste for Hawaiian music. Robbins left the Navy in 1947, returning to Glendale, where he began to sing in local clubs and radio stations. Often, he performed under the name "Jack Robinson" in an attempt to disguise his endeavors from his disapproving mother. Within three years, he had developed a strong reputation throughout Arizona and was appearing regularly on a Mesa radio station and had his own television show, *Western Caravan*, in Phoenix. By that time, he had settled on the stage name of Marty Robbins.

A couple of rock & roll covers, "That's All Right" and "Maybellene," returned him to the country Top Ten in 1955, but it wasn't until "Singing the Blues" shot to number one in fall 1956 that Robbins' career was truly launched. Staying at number one for a remarkable 13 weeks, Robbins decided to record with easy listening conductor Ray Conniff for his next singles. It was a crafty move and one that kept him commercially viable during the peak of rock & roll. The first of these collaborations, "A White Sport Coat (And a Pink Carnation)," became a huge hit, spending five weeks at the top of the country charts in spring 1957 and peaking at number two on the pop charts, giving him his long-awaited breakthrough record.

In October 1982, he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Two months later, he suffered his third major heart attack and died on December 8. In the wake of his death, his theme song to Clint Eastwood's movie *Honky Tonk Man* was released and climbed to number ten. Robbins left behind an immense legacy, including no less than 94 charting country hits and a body of recorded work that proved how eclectic country music could be.

Ukulele Club of Santa Cruz September 2007

C Dm G G > F# > F  
**A white sports coat, and a pink carnation**  
 G C G

**I'm all dressed up for the dance**  
 C Dm G G > F# > F

**A white sports coat, and a pink carnation**  
 G C F C

**I'm all alone in romance**

G  
**Once you told me long ago,**  
 C

**To the prom with me you'd go**  
 D7

**Now you've changed your mind it seems,**  
 G

**Someone else will hold my dreams**

C Dm G G > F# > F  
**A white sports coat, and a pink carnation**  
 G C F C

**And in a blue, blue mood**

G  
**Once you told me long ago,**  
 C

**To the prom with me you'd go**  
 D7

**Now you've changed your mind it seems,**  
 G

**Someone else will hold my dreams**

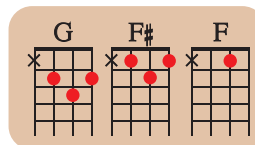
C Dm G G > F# > F  
**A white sports coat, and a pink carnation**  
 G C F C

**And in a blue, blue mood**

F G C F C

**I'm in a blue, blue mood**

Two different ways  
 to do the walkdown



or

