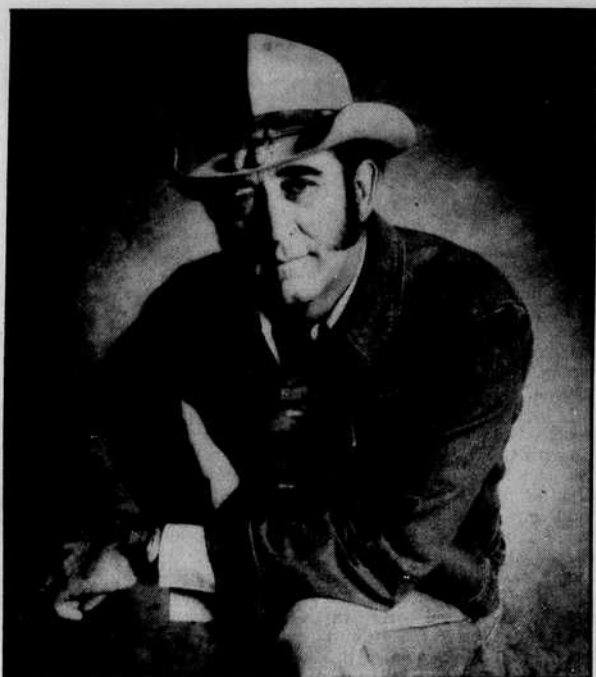


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Country singer Don Williams will perform for Eugene fans on Sunday, September 18, at the Hult Center.

Don Williams Wears His Own Kind of Hat

On Sept. 18th, local country music fans will have the opportunity to see singer/songwriter Don Williams in concert at the Hult Center in Eugene. Williams' music has appeared regularly on the country charts during the last decade and has earned him various awards and a wide following of loyal listeners.

If you enjoy country music with a solid grounding in a folk tradition that balances feeling with intelligence, then I encourage you to attend Williams' performance.

Don Williams' career goes back to the late Sixties when the popularity of folk music brought about, among other things, the emergence of pop folk groups like the New Christy Minstrels and the Back Porch Majority. Williams was a member of the group called the Pozo Seco Singers whose most memorable song, "Time," made the pop charts in 1968.

Legend has it that Williams left the group to return to the Southwest and his family's furniture business. Whatever the reasons for his departure from Pozo Seco, the result was the development of a first-rate writing and singing talent.

In one of his recent hit singles, Williams asks the question, "What do you do with good ole boys like me?" Maybe he really does see himself as a good ole boy—but when was the last time you heard a good ole boy refer to novelist Thomas Wolfe or playwright Tennessee Williams in a country song? Don Williams mentions both writers when he describes his youthful influences in "Good Ole Boys Like Me."

My own idea of a good ole boy is closer to the image conveyed in Jerry Jeff Walker's "Up Against the Wall, Redneck Mother" or Hank Williams,

Jr.'s "All My Rowdy Friends Have Settled Down." If you listen to country music, you know the type well—hard-drinking, hard-living, and more inclined to fight than consider other points of view.

But Don Williams' musical persona contains none of those boisterous traits. Country deejays often introduce him as "Mr. Slow Motion" and indeed, his vocal style—direct and unadorned—and his lyrics—personal and reflective—support his nickname.

Don Williams' songs are often simple statements of devotion combined with tuneful melodies. He chooses to celebrate love rather than cry in his beer, as many of his song titles indicate: "Till All the Rivers Run Dry," "Love Me Over Again," "It Must Be Love," "Lay Down Beside Me," and "I Believe in You."

If anyone can sing sentimental lyrics and still remain credible, it's Don Williams. In "I Believe in You," perhaps his ultimate credo, he can even get away with telling us he believes in babies, in Mom and Dad, and "I believe in you."

A vein of self-effacement runs through some of his songs which is a familiar theme in country music. It's the old dichotomy between rural and urban values, with the singer opting for the simpler country life. "I'm Just a Country Boy" ("money have I none") is an example, and "Amanda" (later covered by Waylon Jennings) is another. Here he's just another country singer ("crowding thirty and still wearing jeans") whose refrain is "Amanda, light of my life/ Fate should have made you a gentleman's wife."

In his more recent single, "If Hollywood Don't Need You," he's rooted in the country, longing for his departed woman who has been lured by the bright lights and big city. He's good-humored about her choice—he says, "If you see Burt Reynolds, say hello—I've seen all his movies," but he is also more than ready to take her back.

"Tulsa Time" once again reiterates the preference of country over city, from personal experience: "They don't need me in the movies and nobody sings my songs," and "I had no business leavin' and nobody would be grievin' if I went back on to Tulsa time."

"Tulsa Time," with its rocking beat, was a departure from Williams' standard type of song and became enormously popular—with it he won the Country Music Award for Best Male Vocalist and for Single of the Year in 1978. And Eric Clapton would later belie that line about "nobody sings my songs" by recording it on his "Just One Night" album.

I remember watching that 1978 Country Music Awards show on television, and Don Williams was true to form when he performed "Tulsa Time." Amidst all the tuxedos and sequined gowns, Mr. Slow Motion appeared on stage wearing casual attire and his familiar Stetson, with its crumpled brim and cavalry tassel. I can't recall ever seeing a Don Williams album without that hat somewhere in evidence.

So I'm inclined to think that when the hazel-eyed, sideburned performer walks onto the Silva Hall stage in mid-September, he'll be wearing his own kind of hat.

—Tim Volem

NIGHTCLUB MUSIC



Thursday/8

Molly Scholz & Don Ross play country and contemporary music, 9:30-1:30 at Harry's on the Canal, 2200 Centennial Blvd.

Friday/9

Bill Bartel plays ragtime guitar at Zoo Zoo's Natural Foods Restaurant, 6-9 pm, 454 Willamette St.

Gary Hagberg plays with Le Jazz Hot in the Courtyard at 5th St. Public Market, 5-7 pm.

Molly Scholz & Don Ross continue. See Thursday/8.

Liz Klute will perform a variety of wonderful tunes at Cafe Z, 9:30-midnight, 454 Willamette St.

Mesa is playing country, country rock, and 50's rock and roll at the Pioneer Villa, 9-2 am. On I-5 (north), Halsey-Brownsville Exit.

Saturday/10

Alonzo plays music for breakfast at Zoo Zoo's Restaurant, 9:30-noon, 454 Willamette St.

Molly Scholz & Don Ross continue. See Thursday/8.

Hedgehogs play acoustic music to dine from 6-9 pm at Zoo Zoo's Restaurant, 454 Willamette St.

O'Carolans Consort will play breakfast music from 9:30-noon at Zoo Zoo's Restaurant, 454 Willamette St.

Mesa continues. See Friday/9.

Sunday/11

Oregon Mozart Players will perform in the Courtyard at the 5th St. Public Market, 1-3 pm.

Glad To Be Home play at Zoo Zoo's Restaurant, 6-9 pm, 454 Willamette St.

Mesa continues. See Friday/9.

Monday/12

Eagle Park Slim plays blues at Zoo Zoo's Restaurant from 6-9 pm, 454 Willamette St.

Charlie Vaughn plays original acoustic music from 6-9 pm at Zoo Zoo's Restaurant, 454 Willamette St.

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