



**HAROLD  
DORMAN**

**MOUNTAIN OF LOVE**



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...AND MORE BEARS • Achtern Dahl 4 • D-27729 Vollersode • Germany

Alle Menschen  
sind Ausländer.  
Fast überall.

1. MOUNTAIN OF LOVE  
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2. I'LL COME RUNNING  
(Harold Dorman)
3. SOUNDS LIKE BIG TROUBLE  
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(Harold Dorman)

# HAROLD DORMAN



# MOUNTAIN OF LOVE

In an abandoned closet at the old PHILLIPS warehouse in Memphis there is a little spiral bound notepad with 'Songs By Harold Dorman' on the cover. The songs inside have their completion dates which range from 1955 to 1957. After four abortive sessions, that notepad was left in the old SUN studio. Phillips' assistant, Sally Wilbourn, used the empty pages to compose telegrams to dee-jays and transcribe lyrics for copyright.

Those discarded sessions in 1957 inaugurated a train of events that would have their payoff some three years distant. Roland Janes was the guitarist on the first SUN sessions. He heard something that he liked and he kept in touch with Dorman, then a parking lot attendant in Memphis. In September 1959 Roland joined Billy Riley and accountant Ira Vaughn in a recording venture, RITA RECORDS. With a voice that had gained immeasurably in strength, maturity and confidence, Dorman went with Janes and Riley to the HI RECORDS studio on S. Lauderdale Street. HI was another small Memphis label organised by three SUN alumni, Ray Harris, Bill Cantrell and Quinton Claunch in partnership with local record store boss Joe Cuoghi. With yet another SUN alumnus, Jack Clement, at the board, Harold Dorman recorded five or six songs including *Mountain Of Love*.

The following year, 1960, brought the first measure of success to Harold Dorman as *Mountain Of Love* climbed into the Top 20. It was also the first, and last major hit on Janes' and Riley's little label. Dorman's record was the magic blend of lyrics, melody, arrangement and performance that everyone who has ever written or sung a pop song dreams about; it was the moment that it all comes together.

Harold Dorman was no longer a spring chicken when his ship came in. Born in Sledge, Mississippi in 1920 he was almost 34 years old. He had grown up in the small Mississippi town on old Highway 3 between Clarksdale and Memphis. Sledge was also home to Charley Pride who would later have a profound influence on Dorman's career.

Harold Dorman grew up listening to everything that you would expect a kid growing up in that part of the world to listen to. Hank Williams was king. Muddy Waters and Fats Domino also figured in the picture. Dorman married in 1951 and then went to Korea as a draftee. He returned after 16 months of active service determined to carve out a career in music.

Harold and Peggy Dorman moved to Memphis in 1955 and Harold began cultivating a taste for rockabilly music. However, when he walked into the SUN studio early in 1957 he was holding a notebook full of ballads. Four sessions held during March and June 1957 resulted in innumerable cuts on 6 *I'm Stepping Aside, Spark Of Love and To Be With You*, but, after all the work,

nothing was released. "Sam said I was was a real good writer and singer," recalled Dorman. "but he never did get around to putting anything out."

Roland recalled that Dorman and his partner Wiley Gann, who had also moved from Sledge at about the same time, had auditioned at Fernwood shortly before RITA RECORDS was formed. "I knew Harold was a great songwriter," recalled Roland, "and I couldn't understand why someone didn't pick up on him. When we decided to form a record label he was one of the first people we wanted to record. It turned out to be one of the greatest singers from this part of the country too."

The first sides with Harold Dorman were cut on a Webcor single track tape recorder in 1959 which accounts for the slightly muddy sound. *Soda Pop Baby* dates from this period as does *Lonely Nights*, a song that Roland had written on the Golden Gate bridge while he was on tour with Jerry Lee Lewis.

Later that year, Roland arranged a session at ROYAL/Hi studio [which was the old Royal Theatre, gutted and converted into a recording studio by Hi RECORDS] with Jack Clement at the board. Roland led the pickers on the studio floor. The session cost \$12 an hour. The basic track of *Mountain Of Love* was overdubbed with a chorus at Pepper Studio in Memphis. Pepper specialised in commercials after a brief foray into the manufacturing business and they had a good vocal group on staff.

After trying to lease the master, Janes and Riley decided to release it on their RITA label. *"We were getting spotty action,"* recalled Roland, *"but the record broke real good out of Macon, Georgia. We took some free records and some photos to a record hop down there, promoting Harold's record and J.M. Van Eaton's 'Beat-Nik.' The dee-jay that ran the record hop really liked 'Mountain Of Love' and from that day forward, we started getting orders. Gwen Kesler at Southland Record Distributors did a real good job on it. Jud Phillips had introduced me to her when I was working on the road with Jerry Lee Lewis. Gwen got excited about the record and got on the stations in Atlanta. WLAC in Nashville helped a lot and Memphis played it but I don't think we would have got a hit without Macon, Georgia."*

*"After the record started breaking we could have gone with several different labels, all of whom had previously turned down our master, but about this time Bill Justis and Jud Phillips had gone to work with Bill Lowery in Atlanta. We went with them and they thought that to get the record played in the northern and eastern states it needed to have a little more class so it was their idea to put the strings on it. I never felt like they helped the record that much though I guess they didn't hurt it. To me, the fewer things you put on a record the better. Only add them if they do something for the record. But, during that era, people were string happy and I guess the strings helped us to get play in areas where we might not have sold records."*

And so it was that the nation came to hear Harold Dorman's little tale. His wife Peggy recalled that the song had been written about a hill near

Sledge [the nearest mountains would probably be in the Ozarks some two hundred miles away.] *"He sat on the side of our bed one night with his guitar,"* she recalled, *"and the next thing you know, he had it written."*

It was at this point that things started to go wrong. Dorman was placed by Jud Phillips on a package tour with Johnny and the Hurricanes and Connie Francis and he went back into the studio to cut his follow-up, *River Of Tears*. However, Lowery's operation reportedly failed to pay RITA RECORDS and Dorman's recording career suffered a setback at a vital moment. SUN tried to pick up the momentum when they recorded him in 1961 and 1962 but it was too late and SUN were facing problems of their own. Dorman had the cream of the Nashville and Memphis session men behind him but they could not help him recapture the magic he had sparked so effortlessly with *Mountain Of Love*.

The last SUN single was released in April 1962. Dorman went on to make some recordings for Wayne McGinnis and he was still touring with the Bill Black Combo but he soon realised that his day had passed as a performer. The arrival of the Beatles in 1964 confirmed that fact. *"I never did like them one little bit,"* insisted Dorman who, by this point, was working a day job in leather manufacturing after a brief stint as a typewriter repairman.

Harold Dorman's second career in the music business got off the ground a decade later when Charley Pride recorded *Mississippi Cotton Picking*

*Delta Town*. Dorman and Wiley Gann had previously placed a few songs [Moon Mullican had recorded *Mr. Tears* for HALLWAY and Ray Smith had recorded *After This Night Is Through* for INFINITY] but it was the overwhelming success of *Mississippi Cotton Picking Delta Town* that gave Dorman his new lease on life in the recording business. Pride even revived *Mountain Of Love* with great success in 1982.

Dorman continued to make his home in Memphis and work in the leather business until two strokes left him partially aphasic in 1984. He has made a good recovery and is still writing with his son and helping his daughter get started in the music business. In the final analysis, he will probably be remembered as the one hit wonder who produced *Mountain Of Love*. Perhaps if Janes and Riley had allied their fledgling RITA label with another distributor the story might have been different. But perhaps another distributor might have lost the momentum that Roland started on *Mountain Of Love*. There is simply no way of knowing.

With a pronounced dislike of consistent touring, Dorman can at least capitalise on the constant revivals of *Mountain Of Love* and the steady airplay money from his country hits without having to leave his living room. This is his first belated album and it makes an irrefutable case for Dorman the singer. He was simply very good.



**SOURCES:**

Harold Dorman and Roland Janes interviewed by Colin Escott, June 1987. Special thanks to Wayne Russell.

# THE SONGS

## 1. MOUNTAIN OF LOVE

(Harold Dorman)

*Rita 1003*

*recorded at Royal Studio 1959, Memphis*

*1959 strings overdubbed at Fernwood Studio, Memphis*

*1960 chorus overdubbed at Pepper-Tanner Studio, Memphis*

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; Wiley Gann: guitar; Billy Riley: bass; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano; Martin Willis: sax

## 2. I'LL COME RUNNING

(Harold Dorman)

*Rita 1008*

*recorded 1959 at Royal Studio, Memphis*

Harold Dorman: vocal; Wiley Gann: guitar; Roland Janes; guitar; Billy Riley: bass; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano; Martin Willis: sax

## 3. SOUNDS LIKE BIG TROUBLE

(Rice - Foster)

*previously unissued*

*recorded at an unknown date and studio*

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar & bass; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano

#### 4. REMEMBER ME (I'M THE ONE WHO LOVES YOU)

(Hamblen)

*previously unissued*

recorded 1962, at Royal Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; Prentiss McPhail: bass; Danny Taylor: drums; Travis Wammack: harmonica; Tommy Bennett: piano;

#### 5. IS SHE WILLING TO FORGET

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued*

unknown date • recorded at Sonic Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; Prentiss McPhail: bass; Danny Taylor: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano;

#### 6. DO YOU WANT TO GO STEADY

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued*

recorded at an unknown date and studio

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; Billy Riley: bass; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano;

## 7. MISTER TEARS

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued*

unknown date • recorded at Sonic Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal/guitar; Roland Janes; guitar; Prentiss McPhail: bass; Danny Taylor: drums; James L. Crabb: piano;

## 8. LOVE WILL FIND A WAY

(Harold Dorman - Janes)

*previously unissued*

unknown date • recorded at Sonic Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal/guitar

## 9. MOUNTAIN OF LOVE

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued in this form*

as Mountain Of Love“, except strings

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; Wiley Gann: guitar; Billy Riley: bass; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano; Martin Willis: sax

## 10. MOVING UP TO LOVE

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued*

unknown date • recorded at Fernwood Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano;

## 11. MOVED TO KANSAS CITY

(Harold Dorman)

*Rita 1012*

*recorded 1960, at Fernwood Studio, Memphis*

*1960 strings & chorus overdubbed at Pepper-Tanner Studio,*

Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; Wiley Gann: guitar; Roland Janes: bass; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano; Martin Willis: sax

## 12. LET THERE BE LOVE

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued*

recorded 1960 at Sonic Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes; guitar; Prentiss McPhail: bass; J.M. van Eaton: drums; Tommy Bennett: piano

### 13. DIAMOND RINGS, TEDDY BEARS

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued*

1962 recorded at Sonic Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal/guitar ; Roland Janes; guitar; Prentiss McPhail: bass; Danny Taylor: drums; James L. Crabb: piano

### 14. SODA POP BABY

(Janes)

*previously unissued*

### 15. SWEET, SWEET LOVE

(Janes)

*previously unissued*

### 16. LONELY NIGHTS

(Janes)

*previously unissued*

14 - 16: recorded 1959 at Sonic Studio, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal/guitar ; Roland Janes: harmony vocal/lead: guitar overdubbed; Wiley Gann: percussion; James L. Crabb: piano

## 17. I'LL STICK WITH YOU

(Harold Dorman)

Sun 362

## 18. THERE THEY GO

(Harold Dorman)

Sun 362

## 19. WAIT 'TIL SATURDAY NIGHT

(Harold Dorman)

Sun 377

recorded April 14, 1961, 7th Avenue Nashville

Harold Dorman: vocal; Kelton 'Kelso' Herston: guitar ; Hank Sugarfoot' Garland: guitar; Roy M- 'Junior' Huskey, Jr: bass; Murray M. 'Buddy' Harman: drums; Floyd Cramer: piano; CHORUS: Mildred Kirkham, Dorothy Ann Dillard, Gordon Stoker, Louis Dean Nunley

## 20. UNCLE JONAH'S PLACE

(Harold Dorman)

Sun 370

## 21. JUST ONE STEP

(Harold Dorman)

*Sun 370*

recorded September 15, 1961, 639 Madison, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal; Scotty Moore: guitar; Elbert Eldair: guitar; unidentified: bass & drums; Bobby Wood: piano; Ace Cannon & Ben Keller: horn

## 22. IN THE BEGINNING

(Harold Dorman)

*Sun 377*

recorded March 12, 1962, 639 Madison, Memphis

Harold Dorman: vocal; Roland Janes: guitar; Al Jackson: bass; O.T. Shaw: Vincent Trauth & Martin Willis: sax

## 23. WALK THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW WAY

(Harold Dorman)

*previously unissued*

recorded at an unknown date and studio

Harold Dorman: vocal