

JINGLE BELL ROCK — 1957

**WRITERS: JOSEPH BEAL
JIM BOOTHE**

PRODUCER: OWEN BRADLEY

ARTIST: BOBBY HELMS

DECCA RECORDS



Even though its roots are firmly planted in Nashville, Tennessee, its lyrics have nothing to do with rock music, and its charismatic singer came from a country-western world, “Jingle Bell Rock,” released in December 1957, is considered to be the very first rock and roll Christmas song to gain mainstream acceptance. Like Brenda Lee’s “Rockin’ Around The Christmas Tree,” Bobby Helms’ hit shot the relatively new star to unparalleled heights of holiday immortality. Likewise, it was an exciting extension of the then-burgeoning Nashville scene, and represented an experimental ‘country-politan’ sound that cleverly merged various musical styles of the time.

A Hoosier native, Bobby Helms was born on August 15, 1933, and began singing at the age of nine on his father’s *Monroe County Jamboree* radio program in Bloomington, Indiana. As a teenager, he started appearing on *The Hayloft Frolic* television show and caught the ear of country-music maven Ernest Tubb, who recognized his natural talent and invited him to Nashville. It was Helms’ big break, and he subsequently landed a record deal with Decca Records’ country music division in 1956.

At this time, the country music world was in serious trouble. Its record sales were quickly dwindling, and it was desperately struggling to redefine itself as it began to face stiff competition from a daring new style of music best symbolized by a trend-setting newcomer named Elvis Presley. To regain its audience, it needed to recreate its rural past by turning it into something that sounded more like the city.