

# ROCKIN' AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE — 1958

**WRITER: JOHNNY MARKS**

**PRODUCER: OWEN BRADLEY**

**ARTIST: BRENDA LEE**

**DECCA RECORDS**



**D**uring a midnight session on October 19, 1958, thirteen-year-old Brenda Lee stepped into a studio to record “Rockin’ Around The Christmas Tree,” a song that boldly merged the nascent Nashville Sound with the new and controversial rock-and-roll style of the Eisenhower Era. It eventually sold over 8 million singles, and has woven Lee’s wholesome voice into the red and green tapestry of American pop culture. Johnny Marks’ song was groundbreaking for Brenda Lee, since it made her the first woman to have a hit with this kind of Yuletide hybrid, and the second person in music history to achieve this kind of Christmas-rock success. (SEE JINGLE BELL ROCK)

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 11, 1944, Brenda gave her first performance in church at the age of five, and a year later awed judges of a local talent contest with her grand-voice version of “Take Me Out To The Ball Game.” She nabbed first prize, and embarked upon a professional singing career that began at a local radio station and led to regular television gigs in Atlanta. By the time she was sixteen, Brenda Lee was catapulted to international stardom.

The early years of her career saw her shattering a variety of barriers and stereotypes at a time when few women were allowed to experiment in the somewhat taboo and newly emerging sound of rock and roll music. Yet it was apparent from the start that the little girl with the big, hiccuping Elvis Presley-esque voice, had the strength to take on such a monumental task, since as a child she helped support her family when her father died in a tragic accident, and her mother was forced to work sixteen-hour days in a cotton mill.