

Album: *The Biggest Life*

Artist: Summer Dean

In March 1973, Waylon Jennings released *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean* after recharging from tour burnout and regaining creative control of his career from RCA. The release found him invigorating new life into old cuts, accepting imperfection, experimenting with live session recording, and stripping back even his image to the bare basics. The results led to critical acclaim and provided a strong step towards his seminal album *Honky Tonk Heroes* in July 1973.

Listening to Summer Dean's *The Biggest Life* it would be impossible to not find the parallels between it and other pivotal moments of such Country giants as Jennings. Those special junctures are where a musician leaves no part of their true heart hidden, allowing only vulnerability to flow through the speakers.

Produced with a Midas touch by songwriting titan Bruce Robison, *The Biggest Life* presents a self-assured portrait of Dean who has gratefully accepted her past, present, and future with open arms. The lovesick, sunsoaked opener "Big Ol Truck" aptly sets the tone for impeccable heartbreaker "She Ain't Me" where Dean's committed vocals are reminiscent of the late Patsy Cline, whose wrenching performances stuck to souls long after any song's conclusion. The swinging "Might Be Getting Over You" matches the elegant delivery of "The Biggest Life Worth Living is the Small," and the gutsy Blues-accented "Move Along Devil," all of which find her sharing wisdom from authentically lived experiences. Though it's the delightfully stripped down "Baling Wire" that encompasses all of Dean. She's a helper, a good neighbor, a problem solver, a hard worker, and a devoted appreciator of life's often overlooked blessings. Yet above all else, she's a singular observer which is further demonstrated on the tear-inducing "Other Women" and the superb "Lonely Girl's Lament" that finds her analyzing but never truly second guessing her past decisions.

One spin of *The Biggest Life* would easily answer any fool that dared question Summer Dean winning Ameripolitan Award 2023's Honky Tonk Female of the Year. Dean's living the biggest, purest, most fearless life and we're lucky enough to have a front row seat in witnessing the journey. Somewhere up above, Jennings is tipping his hat knowing that the Honky Tonk is in steadfast, capable hands.