Stardust

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh flew solo from New York to Paris. President Calvin Coolidge announced he would not run for re-election. A tube of Pepsodent toothpaste cost 50 cents. The hit songs of the day were "Old Man River" and "Bill" from the musical "Showboat." And in 1927, Hoagy Carmichael wrote a melody that would become one of the greatest hits of all time, "Stardust."

Stardust

According to Carmichael, the inspiration for “Stardust" came to him while he was on the campus of his alma mater, Indiana University, in Bloomington, Indiana. He began whistling the tune then rushed to the Book Nook, a popular student hangout, and started composing. Carmichael studied to be a lawyer, where he met jazz trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke. The melody for “Star Dust” emerged from an improv session with Beiderbecke.



Bix Beiderbecke

On October 31, 1927, Hoagy Carmichael and His Pals recorded “Star Dust” at the Gennett Records studio in Richmond, Indiana. Hoagy’s “pals,” Emil Seidel and His Orchestra, agreed to record the medium-tempo instrumental in between their Sunday evening and Monday matinee performances in Indianapolis, seventy miles away.In 1928 Carmichael again recorded “Star Dust,” this time with lyrics he had written, but Gennett rejected it because the instrumental had sold so poorly. The following year, at Mills Music, Mitchell Parish was asked to set lyrics to coworker Carmichael’s song. The result was the 1929 publication date of “Star Dust” with the music and lyrics we know today. The Mills publication changed the title slightly to “Star Dust” from “Stardust” as it was originally spelled.



Hoagy Carmichael & His Pals - Stardust 1928

Hoagy Carmichael (1899 - 1981) was influenced by his mother, who played piano at local movie houses, and by the music of black jazz ensembles. But he went on to study law where he organized a band. Success was slow in coming, but he recorded some songs for Mills Music which were picked up by leading bands. Mildred Bailey had hits with “Rockin’ Chair” in 1929 and “Georgia on My Mind” in 1932 (lyrics by Stuart Gorrell).



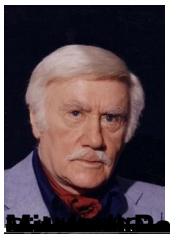
Hoagy Carmichael

In 1936 Carmichael headed to Hollywood for success both on and off screen. He established his persona as a pianist/singer—hat tipped back, coatless, cigarette hanging from his lips—in the Bogart/Bacall film 'To Have and Have Not' (1942), and people loved his relaxed, nasal delivery. By 1946 he had three songs on the Hit Parade, and in 1951 he and Johnny Mercer won an Oscar for “In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening.” Other Mercer collaborations turned out “Lazy Bones” (1931) and “Skylark” (1941). But it is “Stardust” (1928) for which Carmichael is best remembered. At one time “Stardust” was the most recorded song, with more than a thousand versions that cross genres and styles. That time has long passed but it remains a most beloved entry in the Great American Songbook (GAS).



Hoagy Carmichael

Mitchell Parish (1900 - 1993) was born in Lithuania and arrived in the United States at the age of seven months. An early interest in literature and poetry piqued his desire to write lyrics. He plugged away at it until he had his first success with Cliff Burwell, “Sweet Lorraine” (1928). But it was in 1929, when he contributed the lyrics to “Stardust,” that the Parish name entered the music history books.



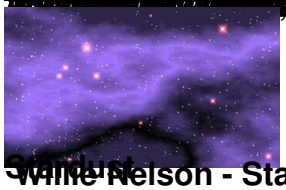












Willie Nelson - Stardust