

**LAWRENCINE
“LORRIE” MAY
COLLINS
1942-2018**



**PHOTOGENIC
ROCKABILLY
STAR**

Lorrie Collins, along with Wanda Jackson and Brenda Lee, was considered one of the most dynamic rockabilly stars of the 1950s. She and her brother Larry performed as the Collins Kids, one of the most original, prolific and energy-packed acts. Lorrie was born in May 1942 near Tahlequah. Her mother, who was a singer and played the mandolin, became their manager when their musical talents was discovered.

In 1950, eight-year-old Lorrie won a talent contest at the Tulsa Ballroom. Three years later, the family moved to Los Angeles. In February 1954, the duo auditioned for “Town Hall Party”, a weekly television show hosted by country star Tex Ritter. They were hired to perform the next evening. They dressed in flashy Western wear, with the beautiful brunette Lorrie belting out the songs with a sexual flair and guitar-whiz Larry playing the double-neck Mosrite guitar.

The duo’s visually captivating performances and their youth landed them guest spots on national programs including “The Jackie Gleason Show”, “Hollywood Palace”, “The Steve Allen Show”, and “The Grand Ole Opry”. They toured with everyone from Eddie Cochran to Johnny Cash. But not everyone was thrilled. Larry remembered, “People were awful to my parents saying that they shouldn’t let Lorrie sing those kinds of songs or dress like that!”

In 1955, the Collins Kids signed with Columbia Records and released singles like “Hop, Skip and Jump and Beetle Bug Bop”. None of their songs cracked the Billboard chart due to Columbia’s lack of promotion. According to rock guitarist Deke Dickerson, “Lorrie never had the right song to break through. She was not billed as a solo artist. But as far as the talent goes, she had the pipes to compete with anybody during that era.”

In 1958, Lorrie briefly dated teenage idol Ricky Nelson and twice appeared as his girlfriend on the top-rated sitcom “The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet”. The next year, teenage Lorrie was on the road with Johnny Cash when she eloped with his manager Stu Carnall. In 1961, she had a child and decided to give up show business. After that, songwriter Larry had success with songs like “Delta Dawn” (1972) for Tanya Tucker and “You’re the Reason God Made Oklahoma” (1981) for David Frizzell and Shelly West. Both were nominated for Grammy Awards.

In 1992, the siblings made a comeback before thousands of fans at a British rockabilly festival, performing for the first time since they were children. Their legend had grown in their absence, with the reissue of their 50s recordings and bootleg tapes of their television appearances. They performed together until Lorrie’s death in August 2018.

Performers who become child stars often have difficulty adjusting to life afterwards. Larry said this was not the case with them. “We grew up with Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Carl Perkins. Lorrie and I got to meet them, know them, travel with them, work with them. We had the luckiest childhoods of anyone that you can imagine.”