Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby Jr. (ˈkrɔːzbi /; May 3, 1903 – October 14, 1977) was an American singer and actor. His trademark warm bass-baritone voice made him the best-selling recording artist of the 20th century, having sold over one billion records, tapes, compact discs and digital downloads around the world. His early career coincided with technical recording innovations such as the microphone. This allowed him to develop a laid-back, intimate singing style that influenced many of the popular male singers who followed him, including Perry Como.

Crosby won an Academy Award for Best Actor for his role as Father Chuck O'Malley in the 1944 motion picture Going My Way and was nominated for his reprise of the role in The Bells of St. Mary's opposite Ingrid Bergman the next year, becoming the first of six actors to be nominated twice for playing the same character. In 1963, Crosby received the first Grammy Global Achievement Award. He is one of 33 people to have three stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Crosby influenced the development of the postwar recording industry. He became the first performer to pre-record his radio shows and master his commercial recordings onto magnetic tape. Through the medium of recording, he constructed his radio programs with the same directorial tools and craftsmanship (editing, retaking, rehearsal, time shifting) used in motion picture production, a practice that became an industry standard. In addition to his work with early tape recording, he helped to finance the development of videotape, bought television stations, bred racehorses, and co-owned the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team.
Childhood


Performance career

Early years

In 1923, Crosby was invited to join a new band composed of high school students a few years younger than himself. Al Rinker, Miles Rinker, James Heaton, Claire Pritchard and Robert Pritchard, along with drummer Crosby, formed the Musicaladers,<ref>Giddins, 2001, pp. 92–97</ref> who performed at dances both for high school students and club-goers. The group performed on Spokane radio station KHQ, but disbanded after two years.<ref>Giddins, 2001, p. 92–97</ref> Early KHQ broadcast from the Davenport Hotel Spokane Crosby and Al Rinker then obtained work at the Clemmer Theatre in Spokane (now known as the Bing Crosby Theater). Crosby was initially a member of a vocal trio called 'The Three Harmony Aces' with Al Rinker accompanying on piano from the pit, to entertain between the films. Bing and Al continued at the Clemmer Theatre for several months often with three other men – Wee Georgie Crittenden, Frank McBride and Lloyd Grinnell – and they were billed as 'The Clemmer Trio' or 'The Clemmer Entertainers' depending who performed.<ref>"Bing Crosby and Gonzaga University: 1903–1925" Gonzaga University, via Internet Archive. Archived from the original on April 29, 2015. Retrieved November 24, 2015. The university granted him an honorary doctorate in 1937. "Bing Crosby comes home to his Gonzaga" Spokane Daily Chronicle. October 21, 1937. p. 1.</ref>

In October 1925, Crosby and his partner Al Rinker, brother of singer Mildred Bailey, decided to seek fame in California. They traveled to Los Angeles where they met up with Mildred Bailey. She introduced them to her show business contacts, and the Fanchon and Marco Time Agency hired them for thirteen weeks for a revue called The Syncopation Idea, starting at the Boulevard Theater in Los Angeles and then on the Loew's circuit. They each earned $75 a week. Bing and Al Rinker began as a minor part of The Syncopation Idea and it was there that they started to develop as entertainers. They had a lively and individual style and were particularly popular with college students. After The Syncopation Idea closed, Bing and Al worked in the Will Morrissey Music Hall Revue. They further honed their skills with Morrissey, and blossomed when they subsequently had the chance to present their own independent act, and were quickly spotted by the Paul Whiteman organization. At that time, it was felt that Whiteman needed something different and entertaining to break up his musical selections, and Crosby and Rinker filled this requirement. After less than a year in full-time show business, they had become part of one of the biggest names in the entertainment world.<ref>Macfarlane, 2001</ref> They were billed as 'The Bingville Bugle.' Hired for $150 a week in 1926, they debuted with Whiteman on December 6 at the Davenport Hotel Spokane. Their first recording, in October 1926, was 'I've Got the Girl,' with Don Clark's Orchestra, but the Columbia-issued record did them no vocal favors, as it was inadvertently recorded at a speed slower than it should have been, which increased the singers' pitch when played at 78 rpm. Throughout his career, Crosby often credited Mildred Bailey for getting him his first important job in the entertainment business.<ref>Paul Whiteman's Original Rhythm Boys" Redhotjazz.com. Retrieved November 19, 2016.</ref>

The Rhythm Boys

Initial successes with Whiteman were followed by disaster when they reached New York and for a while Whiteman must have thought of letting them go. Possibly Bing might have been retained as Whiteman was already using him as a solo performer on record, but the prospects for Rinker must have been bleak. However, the addition of pianist and aspiring songwriter Harry Barris made all the difference to the act and "The Rhythm Boys" were born. The additional voice meant that the boys could be heard more easily in the large New York theaters and they quickly became a real success. A year touring with Whiteman performing and recording with musicians Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Eddie Lang and Hoagy Carmichael, provided valuable experience and then they were sent out on tour alone. Much has been written about the escapades of the three men during this period and clearly they were living life to the full. Despite all of this, Bing was continuing to develop and when the Rhythm Boys rejoined the Whiteman troupe in 1929, he had matured considerably as a performer. He
Crosby soon became the star attraction of the Rhythm Boys, and in 1928 he had his first number one hit with the Whiteman orchestra, a jazz-influenced rendition of "Ol' Man River". In 1929, the Rhythm Boys appeared in the film The King of Jazz with Whiteman but Bing's growing dissatisfaction with Whiteman led to the Rhythm Boys leaving his organization. They joined the Gus Arnheim Orchestra performing nightly in The Coconut Grove of the Ambassador Hotel. Singing with the Arnheim Orchestra, Bing's solos began to steal the show, while the Rhythm Boys act gradually became redundant. Harry Barris wrote several of Crosby's subsequent hits including "At Your Command", "I Surrender Dear", and "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams". In the early months of 1931, a solo recording contract came Bing's way. Mack Sennett signed him to make film shorts and a break with the Rhythm Boys became almost inevitable. Bing had married Dixie Lee in September 1930 and after a threatened divorce in March 1931, he started to apply himself seriously to his career. His gramophone records in 1931 broke new ground as his powerful and emotional singing started to change the face of popular music forever.

Their low salaries at the Cocoanut Grove of the Ambassador Hotel had led the Rhythm Boys to walk out, causing union problems for Bing. Bing's brother, Everett, interested Bill Paley of CBS in his brother and Paley beckoned Bing to come to New York. A settlement was reached with the Ambassador Hotel and Bing made his first solo national radio broadcast in September 1931 and then went on to star at the New York Paramount Theatre.

### Success as a solo singer

On September 2, 1931, Crosby made his solo radio debut. Before the end of the year, he signed with both Brunswick Records and CBS Radio. Doing a weekly 15-minute radio broadcast, Crosby quickly became a huge hit. His songs "Out of Nowhere", "Just One More Chance", "At Your Command" and "I Found a Million Dollar Baby (in a Five and Ten Cent Store)" were all among the best selling songs of 1931.

As the 1930s unfolded, Crosby became the leading singer in America. Ten of the top 50 songs for 1931 featured Crosby, either solo or with others. A so-called "Battle of the Baritones" with singing star Russ Columbo proved short-lived, replaced with the slogan "Bing Was King". Crosby played the lead in a series of sound-era musical comedy short films for Mack Sennett, signed with Paramount and starred in his first full-length feature, 1932's The Big Broadcast, the first of 55 films in which he received top billing. He would appear in 79 pictures, and signed a long-term deal with Jack Kapp's new record company Decca in late 1934.

His first commercial sponsor on radio was Cremo Cigars and increasingly his fame spread nationwide. After a long run in New York, Bing went back to Hollywood to film The Big Broadcast and his personal appearances, his records, and his radio work substantially increased his impact. The success of his first full-length film brought him a contract with Paramount and he began a regular pattern of making three films a year. On radio, he fronted his own show for Woodbury Soap for two seasons and gradually his live appearances dwindled. His records produced hit after hit at a time when record sales generally were in decline because of the Depression. Critically acclaimed audio engineer Steve Hoffman once stated: "By the way, Bing actually saved the record business in 1934 when he agreed to support Decca founder Jack Kapp's crazy idea of lowering the price of singles from a dollar to 35 cents and getting a royalty for records sold instead of a flat fee. Bing's name and his artistry saved the recording industry. All the other artists signed to Decca after Bing did. Without him, Jack Kapp wouldn't have had a chance in hell of making Decca work and the Great Depression would have wiped out phonograph records for good."
Crosby's much-imitated style helped take popular singing beyond the kind of "belting" associated with boisterous performers like Al Jolson and Billy Murray, who had been obliged to reach the back seats in New York theaters without the aid of the microphone. As Henry Pleasant noted in The Great American Popular Singers, something new had entered American music, a style that might be called "singing in American" with conversational ease. This new sound led to the popular epithet "crooner". During the Second World War, Crosby made numerous live appearances before American troops fighting in the European Theater. He also learned how to pronounce German from written scripts and would read propaganda broadcasts intended for the German forces. The nickname "Der Bingle" was common among Crosby's German listeners and came to be used by his English-speaking fans. In a poll of U.S. troops at the close of World War II, Crosby topped the list as the person who had done the most for G.I. morale, ahead of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, General Dwight Eisenhower, and Bob Hope.

The June 18, 1945, issue of Life magazine stated: "America's number one star, Bing Crosby, has won more fans, made more money than any entertainer in history. Today he is a kind of national institution." They also state: "In all, 60,000,000 Crosby disks have been marketed since he made his first record in 1931. His biggest best seller is White Christmas, 2,000,000 impressions of which have been sold in the U.S. and 250,000 in Great Britain." They go on to say: "Nine out of ten singers and bandleaders listen to Crosby and his broadcasts each Thursday night and follow his lead. The day after he sings a song over the air – any song – some 50,000 copies of it are sold throughout the U.S. Time and again Crosby has taken some new or unknown ballad, has given it what is known in trade circles as the "big goose" and made it a hit single-handed and overnight." and "Precisely what the future holds for Crosby neither his family nor his friends can conjecture. He has achieved greater popularity, made more money, attracted vaster audiences than any other entertainer in history. And his star is still in the ascendent. His contract with Decca runs until 1955. His contract with Paramount runs until 1954. Records which he made ten years ago are selling better than ever before. The nation's appetite for Crosby's voice and personality appears insatiable. To soldiers overseas and to foreigners he has become a kind of symbol of America, of the amiable, humorous citizen of a free land. Crosby, however, seldom bothers to contemplate his future. For one thing, he enjoys hearing himself sing, and if ever a day should dawn when the public wearies of him, he will complacently go right on singing – to himself." [ref] "Bing Crosby 1945 – Bing Crosby Internet Museum"<ref> Stevenlewis.info. June 18, 1945. Retrieved November 19, 2016.</ref> <ref>Life. Books.google.ca. June 18, 1945. p. 17. Retrieved November 19, 2016.</ref>

"White Christmas"

Main article: White Christmas (song)

The biggest hit song of Crosby's career was his recording of Irving Berlin's White Christmas, which he introduced on a Christmas Day radio broadcast in 1941. (A copy of the recording from the radio program is owned by the estate of Bing Crosby and was loaned to CBS Sunday Morning for their December 25, 2011, program.) The song then appeared in his 1942 movie Holiday Inn. His record hit the charts on October 3, 1942, and rose to No. 1 on October 31, where it stayed for 11 weeks. A holiday perennial, the song was repeatedly re-released by Decca, charting another 16 times. It topped the charts again in 1945 and for a third time in January 1947. The song remains the bestselling single of all time. [ref name="kl."/> According to Guinness World Records, his recording of "White Christmas" has sold over 100 million copies around the world, with at least 50 million sales as singles. [ref] Guinness Book of Records 2007. Guinness. ISBN 978-1-904994-12-1.</ref> His recording was so popular that he was obliged to re-record it in 1947 using the same musicians and backup singers; the original 1942 master had become damaged due to its frequent use in pressing additional singles. Though the two versions are similar, the 1947 recording is most familiar today. [citation needed] After his death in 1977, the song was re-released and reached the No. 5 position in the UK Singles Chart in December 1977.<ref>"British Hit Singles & Albums" (2005 ed.). Guinness. p. 126. ISBN 1-904994-00-8.</ref> Crosby was dismissive of his role in the song's success, saying "a jackdaw with a cleft palate could have sung it successfully."

Motion pictures

Crosby starred with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour in seven Road to musical comedies between 1940 and 1962, cementing Crosby and Hope as an on-and-off duo, despite never officially declaring themselves a "team" in the sense that Laurel and Hardy or Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis were teams. The series consists of Road to Singapore (1940), Road to Zanzibar (1941), Road to Morocco (1942), Road to Utopia (1946), Road to Rio (1947), Road to Bali (1952), and The Road to Hong Kong (1962). When they appeared solo, Crosby and Hope frequently made note of the other in a comically insulting fashion. They performed together many times on stage, radio, film, and television.

In the 1949 Disney animated film The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad, Crosby provided the narration and song vocals for ...
Crosby was one of the first singers to exploit the intimacy of the microphone, rather than using the deep, loud "vaudeville style" associated with Al Jolson and others.<ref>Bing Crosby: The Unsung King of Song</ref>, <ref>The New York Times</ref>, Gary Giddins, January 28, 2001. Retrieved December 3, 2014.<ref> He was, by his own definition, a "phraser" or a singer who placed equal emphasis on both the lyrics and the music.<ref>Bing Crosby (1903–1977)”. Music Educators Journal (64 ed.) (7): 56–57. 1978.</ref> Crosby's love and appreciation of jazz music helped bring the genre to a wider mainstream audience. Within the framework of the novelty-singing style of the Rhythm Boys, Crosby bent notes and added off-tune phrasing, an approach that was firmly rooted in jazz. He had already been introduced to Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith prior to his first appearance on record. Crosby and Armstrong would remain professionally friendly for decades, notably in the 1956 film High Society, where they sang the duet "Now You Has Jazz".

During the early portion of his solo career (about 1931–1934), Crosby's emotional, often pleading style of crooning was widely popular. But Jack Kapp (manager of Brunswick and later Decca) talked Crosby into dropping many of his jazzier mannerisms, an approach that predicted the emerging gap between him and the new young generation of musicians and actors who had begun their careers after WWII.

The following year, Crosby and Hope reunited for one more Road movie, The Road to Hong Kong, which teamed them up with the much younger Joan Collins and Peter Sellers. Collins was used in place of their longtime partner Dorothy Lamour, whom Crosby felt was getting too old for the role, though Hope refused to do the movie without her, and she instead made a cameo appearance.<ref name="kl." /> Shortly before his death in 1977, he had planned another Road film in which he, Hope, and Lamour search for the Fountain of Youth. He won an Academy Award for Best Actor for Going My Way in 1944 and was nominated for the 1945 sequel, The Bells of St. Mary's. He received critical acclaim for his performance as an alcoholic entertainer in The Country Girl and received his third Academy Award nomination.<ref> Fisher, J. "Bing crosby: Through the years, volumes one-nine (1954–56).”. ARSC Journal. </ref>

**Television**

*Main article: Bing Crosby TV appearances listing*

The Fireside Theater (1950) was his first television production. The series of 26-minute shows was filmed at Hal Roach Studios rather than performed live on the air. The "telefilms" were syndicated to individual television stations. He was a frequent guest on the musical variety shows of the 1950s and 1960s. He was associated with ABC's The Hollywood Palace. He was the show's first and most frequent guest host and appeared annually on its Christmas edition with his wife Kathryn and his younger children. In the early 1970s, he made two late appearances on the Flip Wilson Show, singing duets with the comedian. His last TV appearance was a Christmas special filmed in London in September 1977 and aired weeks after his death.<ref>Pairpoint, Lionel. "The Chronological Bing Crosby on Television". BING magazine. Retrieved February 21, 2016.</ref> It was on this special that he recorded a duet of "The Little Drummer Boy" and "Peace on Earth" with rock star David Bowie. Their duet was released in 1982 as a single 45-rpm record and reached No. 3 in the UK singles charts.<ref name="British Hit Singles & Albums"> It has since become a staple of holiday radio and the final popular hit of Crosby's career. At the end of the 20th century, TV Guide listed the Crosby-Bowie duet as one of the 25 most memorable musical moments of 20th-century television.

Bing Crosby Productions, affiliated with Desilu Studios and later CBS Television Studios, produced a number of television series, including Crosby's own unsuccessful ABC sitcom The Bing Crosby Show in the 1964–1965 season (with co-stars Beverly Garland and Frank McHugh). The company produced two ABC medical dramas, Ben Casey (1961–1966) and Breaking Point (1963–1964), the popular Hogan's Heroes (1965–1971) military comedy on CBS, as well as the lesser-known show Slattery's People (1964–1965).

**Singing style and vocal characteristics**

Crosby was one of the first singers to exploit the intimacy of the microphone, rather than using the deep, loud "vaudeville style" associated with Al Jolson and others.<ref>Bing Crosby: The Unsung King of Song</ref>, <ref>The New York Times</ref>, Gary Giddins, January 28, 2001. Retrieved December 3, 2014.<ref> He was, by his own definition, a "phraser" or a singer who placed equal emphasis on both the lyrics and the music.<ref>Bing Crosby (1903–1977)”. Music Educators Journal (64 ed.) (7): 56–57. 1978.</ref> Crosby's love and appreciation of jazz music helped bring the genre to a wider mainstream audience. Within the framework of the novelty-singing style of the Rhythm Boys, Crosby bent notes and added off-tune phrasing, an approach that was firmly rooted in jazz. He had already been introduced to Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith prior to his first appearance on record. Crosby and Armstrong would remain professionally friendly for decades, notably in the 1956 film High Society, where they sang the duet "Now You Has Jazz".

During the early portion of his solo career (about 1931–1934), Crosby's emotional, often pleading style of crooning was widely popular. But Jack Kapp (manager of Brunswick and later Decca) talked Crosby into dropping many of his jazzier mannerisms, in favor of a straight-ahead clear vocal style. Crosby credited Kapp for choosing hit songs, working with many other artists, and
Crosby's was among the most popular and successful musical acts of the 20th century. Although *Billboard* magazine operated under different methodologies for the bulk of Crosby's career, his chart numbers remain astonishing: 396 chart singles, including 41 No. 1 hits.

Vocal critic Henry Pleasants wrote:

[While] the octave B flat to B flat in Bing's voice at that time [1930s] is, to my ears, one of the loveliest I have heard in forty-five years of listening to baritones, both classical and popular, it dropped conspicuously in later years. From the mid-1950s, Bing was more comfortable in a bass range while maintaining a baritone quality, with the best octave being G to G, or even F to F. In a recording he made of 'Dardanella' with Louis Armstrong in 1960, he attacks lightly and easily on a low E flat. This is lower than most opera basses care to venture, and they tend to sound as if they were in the cellar when they get there.

Career statistics

Crosby's was among the most popular and successful musical acts of the 20th century. Although *Billboard* magazine operated under different methodologies for the bulk of Crosby's career, his chart numbers remain astonishing: 396 chart singles, including 41 No. 1 hits. Crosby had separate charting singles in every calendar year between 1931 and 1954; the annual re-release of "White Christmas" extended that streak to 1957. He had 24 separate popular singles in 1939 alone. It is widely believed that Crosby is the best selling recording artist ever, with plus or minus 1 billion units sold. Crosby was America's most successful recording artist ever, with plus or minus 1 billion units sold.

For 15 years (1934, 1937, 1940, 1943–1954), Crosby was among the top 10 in box-office drawing power, and for five of those years (1944–1948) he topped the world. He sang four Academy Award-winning songs — "Sweet Leilani" (1937), "White Christmas" (1942), "Swinging on a Star" (1944), "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" (1951) — and won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in *Going My Way* (1944).

A survey in 2000 found that with 1,077,900,000 movie tickets sold, Crosby was the third most popular actor of all time, behind John Wayne (1,114,000,000) and Elvis (1,168,300,000). He sang four Academy Award-winning songs – "Sweet Leilani" (1937), "White Christmas" (1942), "Swinging on a Star" (1944), "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" (1951) – and won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in *Going My Way* (1944).

He received 23 gold and platinum records, according to the book *Million Selling Records*. The Recording Industry Association of America did not institute its gold record certification program until 1958, by which point Crosby's record sales were barely a blip. Before that, gold records were awarded by an artist's own record company. Universal Music, current owner of Crosby's Decca catalog, has never requested RIAA certification for any of his hit singles.

Crosby charted 23 *Billboard* hits from 47 recorded songs with the Andrews Sisters, whose Decca record sales were second only to Crosby's throughout the 1940s. Patty, Maxene, and LaVerne were his most frequent collaborators on disc from 1939 to 1952—a partnership that produced four million-selling singles: *Pistol Packin' Mama*, *Jingle Bells*, *Don't Fence Me In*, and *South America, Take it Away*. They made one film appearance together in *Road to Rio* singing *You Don't Have to Know the Language*, and sang together countless times on radio shows throughout the 1940s and 1950s. They appeared as guests on...
During the Golden Age of Radio, performers had to create their shows live, sometimes even redoing the program a second time for the west coast time zone. Crosby’s radio career took a significant turn in 1945, when he clashed with NBC over his insistence that he be allowed to pre-record his radio shows.<ref>Bing Crosby and Magnetic Recording – Engineering and Technology History Wiki</ref>. Eethw.org. Retrieved November 19, 2016. <ref>(The live production of radio shows was also reinforced by the musicians’ union and ASCAP, which wanted to ensure continued work for their members.) In On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, historian John Dunning wrote about German engineers having developed a tape recorder with a near-professional broadcast quality standard:

[Crosby saw] an enormous advantage in prerecording his radio shows. The scheduling could now be done at the star’s convenience. He could do four shows a week, if he chose, and then take a month off. But the networks and sponsors were adamantly opposed. The public wouldn’t stand for ‘canned’ radio, the networks argued. There was something magic for listeners in the fact that what they were hearing was being performed and heard everywhere, at that precise instant. Some of the best moments in comedy came when a line was blown and the star had to rely on wit to rescue a bad situation. Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Phil Harris, and also Crosby were masters at this, and the networks weren’t about to give it up easily.

Crosby’s insistence eventually factored into the further development of magnetic tape sound recording and the radio industry’s widespread adoption of it.<ref>Hammar, Peter. Jack Mullin: The man and his machines. Journal of the Audio Engineering Society, 37 (6): 490–496, 498, 500, 502, 504, 506, 508, 510, 512; June 1989.</ref><ref>An afternoon with Jack Mullin. NTSC tape, 1989 AES.</ref><ref>"History of Magnetic tape, section: “Enter Bing Crosby”". Archived from the original on June 3, 2004. Retrieved March 22, 2017.</ref> He used his clout, both professional and financial, to innovate new methods of reproducing audio of his performances. But NBC (and competitor CBS) were also insistent, refusing to air prerecorded radio programs. Crosby walked away from the network and stayed off the air for seven months, creating a legal battle with Kraft, his sponsor, that was settled out of court. Crosby returned to the air for the last 13 weeks of the 1945–1946 season.

The Mutual network, on the other hand, had pre-recorded some of its programs as early as the 1938 run of The Shadow with Orson Welles. And the new ABC network, which had been formed out of the sale of the old NBC Blue Network in 1933 following a federal anti-trust action, was willing to join Mutual in breaking the tradition. ABC offered Crosby $30,000 per week to produce a recorded show every Wednesday that would be sponsored by Philco. He would also get an additional $40,000 from 400 independent stations for the rights to broadcast the 30-minute show, which was sent to them every Monday on three 16-inch lacquer discs that played ten minutes per side at 33⅓ rpm.

Crosby wanted to change to recorded production for several reasons. The legend that has been most often told is that it would give him more time for his golf game. And he did record his first Philco program in August 1947 so he could enter the Jasper National Park Invitational Golf Tournament in September, just when the new radio season was to start. But golf was not the most important reason.

Though Crosby did want more time to tend to his other business and leisure activities, he also sought better quality through recording, including being able to eliminate mistakes and control the timing of his show performances. Because his own Bing Crosby Enterprises produced the show, he could purchase the latest and best sound equipment and arrange the microphones his way; the logistics of microphone placement had long been a hotly debated issue in every recording studio since the beginning of the electrical era. No longer would he have to wear the hated toupee on his head previously required by CBS and NBC for his live audience shows (he preferred a hat). He could also record short promotions for his latest investment, the world’s first frozen orange juice, sold under the brand name Minute Maid. This investment allowed Crosby
With Perry Como and Arthur Godfrey in 1950 to make more money by finding a loophole whereby the IRS couldn’t tax him at a 77% rate. Retrieved August 17, 2011.  

Murdo MacKenzie of Bing Crosby Enterprises had seen a demonstration of the German Magnetophon in June 1947—the same device that Jack Mullin had brought back from Radio Frankfurt, along with 50 reels of tape, at the end of the war. It was one of the magnetic tape recorders that BASF and AEG had built in Germany starting in 1935. The 6.5mm ferric-oxide-coated tape could record 20 minutes per reel of high-quality sound. Alexander M. Poniatoff ordered his Ampex company, which he’d founded in 1944, to manufacture an improved version of the Magnetophon.

Crosby hired Mullin to start recording his Philco Radio Time show on his German-made machine in August 1947, using the same 50 reels of I.G. Farben magnetic tape that Mullin had found at a radio station at Bad Nauheim near Frankfurt while working for the U.S. Army Signal Corps. The crucial advantage was editing. As Crosby wrote in his autobiography:

> By using tape, I could do a thirty-five or forty-minute show, then edit it down to the twenty-six or twenty-seven minutes the program ran. In that way, we could take out jokes, gags, or situations that didn’t play well and finish with only the prime meat of the show; the solid stuff that played big. We could also take out the songs that didn’t sound good. It gave us a chance to first try a recording of the songs in the afternoon without an audience, then another one in front of a studio audience. We’d dub the one that came off best into the final transcription. It gave us a chance to ad lib as much as we wanted, knowing that excess ad libbing could be sliced from the final product. If I made a mistake in singing a song or in the script, I could have some fun with it, then retain any of the fun that sounded amusing.

Mullin’s 1976 memoir of these early days of experimental recording agrees with Crosby’s account:

> In the evening, Crosby did the whole show before an audience. If he muffed a song then, the audience loved it—thought it was very funny—but we would have to take out the show version and put in one of the rehearsal takes. Sometimes, if Crosby was having fun with a song and not really working at it, we had to make it up out of two or three parts. This ad lib way of working is commonplace in the recording studios today, but it was all new to us.

Crosby invested US$50,000 in Ampex with an eye towards producing more machines. In 1948, the second season of Philco shows was taped with the new Ampex Model 200 tape recorder using the new Scotch 111 tape from the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) company. Mullin explained how one new broadcasting technique was invented on the Crosby show with these machines:

> One time Bob Burns, the hillbilly comic, was on the show, and he threw in a few of his folksy farm stories, which of course were not in Bill Morrow’s script. Today they wouldn’t seem very off-color, but things were different on radio then. They got enormous laughs, which just went on and on. We couldn’t use the jokes, but Bill asked us to save the laughs. A couple of weeks later he had a show that wasn’t very funny, and he insisted that we put in the salvaged laughs. Thus the laugh-track was born.

Crosby had launched the tape recorder revolution in America. In his 1950 film Mr. Music, Crosby is seen singing into one of the new Ampex tape recorders that reproduced his voice better than anything else. Also quick to adopt tape recording was his friend Bob Hope. He gave one of the first Ampex Model 300 recorders to his friend, musician Les Paul, which led directly to Paul’s invention of multitrack recording. His organization, the Crosby Research Foundation, also held various tape recording patents and developed equipment and recording techniques such as the laugh track that are still in use today.  

Along with Frank Sinatra, Crosby was also one of the principal backers behind the famous United Western Recorders recording studio complex in Los Angeles. Cogan, Jim; Clark, William, Temples of sound : inside the great recording studios, San Francisco : Chronicle Books, 2003. Template:Catalog lookup link

**Videotape development**

Mullin continued to work for Crosby to develop a videotape recorder (VTR). Television production was mostly live television in its early years, but Crosby wanted the same ability to record that he had achieved in radio. 1950’s The Fireside Theater, sponsored by Procter & Gamble, was his first television production. Mullin had not yet succeeded with videotape, so Crosby filmed the series of 26-minute shows at the Hal Roach Studios, and the “telefilms” were syndicated to individual television stations.

Crosby continued to finance the development of videotape. Bing Crosby Enterprises (BCE) gave the world’s first demonstration of videotape recording in Los Angeles on November 11, 1951. Developed by John T. Mullin and Wayne R. Johnson since 1950, the device aired what were described as “blurred and indistinct” images, using a modified Ampex 200 tape recorder and standard quarter-inch (6.3 mm) audio tape moving at 360 inches (9.1 m) per second.  

Crosby was a keen fisherman especially in his younger days but it was a pastime that he enjoyed throughout his life. In the 1959 hole-in-one on the 16th at Cypress Point during the filming of The King of Jazz, Crosby sang “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling”. In the early 1950s, Crosby helped establish the CBS television affiliate in his hometown of Spokane, Washington. He partnered with Ed Craney, who owned the CBS radio affiliate, KXLY (AM), and built a television studio just west of Crosby's alma mater, Gonzaga University. Once it began broadcasting, the station was sold within the year to Northern Pacific Radio and Television Corp. Crosby had the watch the deciding Game 7 of the 1960 World Series, choosing to go to Paris with Kathryn and listen to the game on the radio. He apparently viewed the complete film just once, and then stored it in his wine cellar, where it remained undisturbed until it was discovered in December 2009.<ref>https://spokanetvhistory.wordpress.com/1977/12/16/kxly-celebrates-anniversary</ref> Operating from the Del Mar Racetrack at Del Mar, California, the group included millionaire businessman Charles S. Howard, who owned a successful racing stable that included Seabiscuit.<ref>bingcrosby.com</ref> In 1943, Binglin's horse Don Bingo won the Suburban Handicap at Belmont Park in Elmont, New York. The Bing Stable partnership came to an end in 1953 as a result of a liquidation of assets by Crosby, who needed to raise enough funds to pay the hefty federal and state inheritance taxes on his deceased wife's estate.<ref>People, Aug. 3, 1953</ref> Crosby was also a co-owner of the British colt Meadow Court, with jockey Johnny Longden's friend Max Bell. Meadow Court won the 1965 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes, and the Irish Derby. In the Irish Derby's winner's circle at the Curragh, Crosby sang "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling". Though Crosby's stables had some success, he often joked about his horse racing failures as part of his radio appearances. "Crosby's horse finally came in" became a running gag.

Sports

Crosby had an interest in sports. In the 1930s, his friend and former college classmate, Gonzaga head coach Mike Pecarovich appointed Crosby as an assistant football coach.<ref>Wayback Machine</ref> From 1946 until the end of his life, he was part-owner of baseball's Pittsburgh Pirates. Although he was passionate about his team, he was too nervous to watch the deciding Game 7 of the 1960 World Series, choosing to go to Paris with Kathryn and listen to the game on the radio. Crosby had the NBC telecast of the game recorded on kinescope. The game was one of the most famous in baseball history, capped off by Bill Mazeroski's walk-off home run. He apparently viewed the complete film just once, and then stored it in his wine cellar, where it remained undisturbed until it was discovered in December 2009.<ref>Sandorim, Richard (September 23, 2010). "In Bing Crosby's Wine Cellar, Vintage Baseball". The New York Times. Retrieved September 25, 2010.</ref> The restored broadcast was shown on MLB Network in December 2010.

Crosby was also an avid golfer, and in 1978, he and Bob Hope were voted the Bob Jones Award, the highest honor given by the United States Golf Association in recognition of distinguished sportsmanship. He is a member of the World Golf Hall of Fame. In 1937, Crosby hosted the first 'Crosby Clambake' as it was popularly known, at Rancho Santa Fe Golf Club in Rancho Santa Fe, California, the event's location prior to World War II. Sam Snead won the first tournament, in which the first place check was for $500. After the war, the event resumed play in 1947 on golf courses in Pebble Beach, where it has been played ever since. Now the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, it has been a leading event in the world of professional golf.

Crosby first took up golf at 12 as a caddy, dropped it, and started again in 1930 with some fellow cast members in Hollywood during the filming of The King of Jazz. Crosby was accomplished at the sport, with a two handicap. He competed in both the British and U.S. Amateur championships, was a five-time club champion at Lakeside Golf Club in Hollywood, and once made a hole-in-one on the 16th at Cypress Point.

Crosby was a keen fisherman especially in his younger days but it was a pastime that he enjoyed throughout his life. In the
summer of 1966 he spent a week as the guest of Lord Egremont, staying in Cockermouth and fishing on the River Derwent. His trip was filmed for The American Sportsman on ABC, although all did not go well at first as the salmon were not running. He did make up for it at the end of the week by catching a number of sea trout. <ref>"When Bing Crosby came to stay"</ref> Trout Hotel Web. April 18, 2017. Retrieved May 13, 2017.

Personal life

Crosby was married twice. His first wife was actress/nightclub singer Dixie Lee, to whom he was married from 1930 until her death from ovarian cancer in 1952; they had four sons: Gary, twins Dennis and Phillip, and Lindsay. The 1947 Susan Hayward film, Smash-Up: The Story of a Woman, is indirectly based on Lee's life. Bing and Dixie along with their children lived at 10500 Camarillo Street in North Hollywood for over five years.<ref>1940 US Census via Ancestry.com</ref> After her death, Crosby had relationships with model/Goldwyn Girl Pat Sheehan (who married his son Dennis in 1958) and actresses Inger Stevens and Grace Kelly before marrying the actress Kathryn Grant, who converted to Catholicism, in 1957. They had three children: Harry Lillis III (who played Bill in Friday the 13th), Mary (best known for portraying Kristin Shepard, who shot J. R. Ewing on TV's Dallas), and Nathaniel (the 1981 U.S. Amateur champion in golf).

Crosby was a registered Republican, and actively campaigned for Wendell Willkie in 1940 against President Roosevelt, arguing that no man should serve more than two terms in the White House. After Willkie lost, Crosby decreed that he would never again make any open political contributions.<ref>181</ref> He was a seventh cousin of both President Calvin Coolidge and his Vice President, Charles G. Dawes.<ref>Famous Kin of Bing Crosby, from FamousKin.com</ref>

Crosby reportedly had an alcohol problem in his youth, and may have been dismissed from Paul Whiteman's orchestra because of it, but he later got a handle on his drinking. According to Giddins, Crosby told his son Gary to stay away from alcohol, adding, "It killed your mother."<ref>Giddins181</ref>

After Crosby's death, his eldest son, Gary, wrote a highly critical memoir, Going My Own Way, depicting his father as cruel, cold, remote, and both physically and psychologically abusive.<ref>Ik</ref> Haller, Scot (March 21, 1983). "The Sad Ballad of Bing and His Boys – Child Abuse, Kids & Family Life, Bing Crosby". People. Retrieved January 4, 2011. Gary Crosby wrote:

We had to keep a close watch on our actions ... When one of us left a sneaker or pair of underpants lying around, he had to tie the offending object on a string and wear it around his neck until he went off to bed that night. Dad called it "the Crosby lavaliere". At the time the humor of the name escaped me ... "Satchel Ass" or "Bucket Butt" or "My Fat-assed Kid". That's how he introduced me to his cronies when he dragged me along to the studio or racetrack ... By the time I was ten or eleven he had stepped up his campaign by adding lickings to the regimen. Each Tuesday afternoon he weighed me in, and if the scale read more than it should have, he ordered me into his office and had me drop my trousers ... I dropped my pants, pulled down my undershorts and bent over. Then he went at it with the belt dotted with metal studs he kept reserved for the occasion. Quite dispassionately, without the least display of emotion or loss of self-control, he whacked away until he drew the first drop of blood, and then he stopped. It normally took between twelve and fifteen strokes. As they came down I counted them off one by one and hoped I would bleed early ...

When I saw Going My Own Way I was as moved as they were by the character he played. Father O'Malley handled that gang of young hooligans in his parish with such kindness and wisdom that I thought he was wonderful too. Instead of coming down hard on the kids and withdrawing his affection, he forgave them their misdeeds, took them to the ball game and picture show, taught them how to sing. By the last reel, the sheer persistence of his goodness had transformed even the worst of them into solid citizens. Then the lights came on and the movie was over. All the way back to the house I thought about the difference between the person up there on the screen and the one I knew at home.<ref>NoSpank</ref>

Younger son Phillip vociferously disputed his brother Gary's claims about their father. Around the time Gary made his claim, Phillip stated to the press that "Gary is a whining ... crybaby, walking around with a 2-by-4 and just daring people to nudge it off."<ref>"Leah Garchik's Personals"</ref> The San Francisco Chronicle. January 20, 2004. However, Phillip did not deny that Crosby believed in corporal punishment.
During a later interview conducted in 1999 by the Globe, Phillip said:

"My dad was not the monster my lying brother said he was; he was strict, but my father never beat us black and blue, and my brother Gary was a vicious, no-good liar for saying so. I have nothing but fond memories of Dad, going to studios with him, family vacations at our cabin in Idaho, boating and fishing with him. To my dying day, I'll hate Gary for dragging Dad's name through the mud. He wrote Going My Own Way out of greed. He wanted to make money and knew that humiliating our father and blackening his name was the only way he could do it. He knew it would generate a lot of publicity. That was the only way he could get his ugly, no-talent face on television and in the newspapers. My dad was my hero. I loved him very much. He loved all of us too, including Gary. He was a great father."<ref name="polc />

However, Dennis and Lindsay Crosby confirmed that their father was physically abusive. Lindsay added, "I'm glad [Gary] did it. I hope it clears up a lot of the old lies and rumors." Unlike Gary, however, Lindsay said that he preferred to remember "all the good things I did with my dad and forget the times that were rough." Dennis asserted that the book was "Gary's business" and a result of his "anger," but would not deny the book's claims. Bing's younger brother, singer and jazz bandleader Bob Crosby, recalled at the time of Gary's revelations that Bing was a "disciplinarian," as their mother and father had been. He added, "We were brought up that way." In an interview for the same article, Gary clarified that Bing was abusive as a means of administering punishment: "He was not out to be vicious, to beat children for his kicks."<ref name=ilk />

It was revealed that Crosby's will had established a blind trust, with none of the sons receiving an inheritance until they reached the age of 65.<ref name="Dunn">Dunn, Ashley (December 13, 1989). "Lindsay Crosby Suicide Laid to End of Inheritance Income." Los Angeles Times. Retrieved August 17, 2011.</ref>


Widow Kathryn Crosby dabbled in local theater productions intermittently, and appeared in television tributes to her late husband.

Nathaniel Crosby, Crosby's youngest son from his second marriage, was a high-level golfer who won the U.S. Amateur at age 19 in 1981, at the time the youngest-ever winner of that event. Harry Crosby is an investment banker who occasionally makes singing appearances.

Denise Crosby, Dennis Crosby's daughter, is also an actress and is known for her role as Tasha Yar on Star Trek: The Next Generation, and for the recurring role of the Romulan Sela (daughter of Tasha Yar) after her withdrawal from the series as a regular cast member. She also appeared in the film adaptation of Stephen King's novel Pet Sematary. In 2006, Crosby's niece, Carolyn Schneider, published the laudatory book Me and Uncle Bing.

There have been disputes between Crosby's two families beginning in the late 1990s. When Dixie died in 1952, her will provided that her share of the community property be distributed in trust to her sons. After Crosby's death in 1977, he left the residue of his estate to a marital trust for the benefit of his widow, Kathryn, and HLC Properties, Ltd., was formed for the purpose of managing his interests, including his right of publicity. In 1996, Dixie's trust sued HLC and Kathryn for declaratory relief as to the trust's entitlement to interest, dividends, royalties, and other income derived from the community property of Crosby and Dixie. In 1999, the parties settled for approximately $1.5 million. Relying on a retroactive amendment to the California Civil Code, Dixie's trust brought suit again, in 2010, alleging that Crosby's right of publicity was community property, and that Dixie's trust was entitled to a share of the revenue it produced. The trial court granted Dixie's trust's claim. The California Court of Appeal reversed, however, holding that the 1999 settlement barred the claim. In light of the court's ruling, it was unnecessary for the court to decide whether a right of publicity can be characterized as community property under California law.<ref name=Crosby v. HLC Properties, Ltd., Second District, Div. Three, Cal. App., Case No. B242089, filed January 29, 2014."

### Illness and death

Following his recovery from a life-threatening fungal infection of his right lung in January 1974, Crosby emerged from semi-retirement to start a new spate of albums and concerts. In March 1977, after videotaping a concert at the Ambassador Theater in Pasadena for CBS to commemorate his 50th anniversary in show business, and with Bob Hope looking on, Crosby fell off the stage into an orchestra pit, rupturing a disc in his back requiring a month in the hospital. His first performance after the accident was his last American concert, on August 16, 1977 (the day singer Elvis Presley died); when the power went out during his performance, he continued singing without amplification.

In September, Crosby, his family and singer Rosemary Clooney began a concert tour of Britain that included two weeks at the London Palladium. While in the UK, Crosby recorded his final album,

On October 14, 1977, at the La Moraleja Golf Course near Madrid, Crosby played 18 holes of golf. His partner was World Cup champion Manuel Piñero; their opponents were club president Cesar de Zulueta and Valentin Barrios. Crosby, who had a 13 handicap, lost to his partner by one stroke. According to Barrios, Crosby was in good spirits throughout the day, and was photographed several times during the round.

At the ninth hole, construction workers building a house nearby recognized him, and when asked for a song, Crosby sang "Strangers in the Night". However, others say his final words were, "Let's go get a Coke."

At about 6:30 pm, Crosby collapsed about 20 yards from the clubhouse entrance and died instantly from a massive heart attack. At the clubhouse and later in the ambulance, house physician Dr. Laiseca tried to revive him, but was unsuccessful. At Reina Victoria Hospital he was administered the last rites of the Catholic Church and was pronounced dead.

On October 18, following a private funeral Mass at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Westwood, Crosby's name was "spokesman". Smith, Jim (October 19, 1977). "Memorial Rites Held for city favorite, Bing Crosby", The Spokesman Review. Retrieved May 9, 2014. Crosby was buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City, California.

Legacy


Crosby wrote or co-wrote lyrics to 22 songs. His composition "At Your Command" was no. 1 for three weeks on the U.S. pop singles chart beginning on August 8, 1931. "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You" was his most successful composition, recorded by Duke Ellington, Frank Sinatra, Thelonious Monk, Billie Holiday, and Mildred Bailey, among others. Songs co-written by Crosby include:

Bing Crosby Stadium in Front Royal, Virginia was named after Crosby in honor of his fundraising efforts and direct cash contributions for its construction in the 1948 to 1950 timeframe.

Compositions
1. "That's Grandma" (1927), with Harry Barris and James Cavanaugh
2. "From Monday On" (1928), with Harry Barris and recorded with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra featuring Bix Beiderbecke on cornet, no. 14 on US pop singles charts
3. "What Price Lyrics?" (1928), with Harry Barris and Matty Malneck
4. "Ev'rything's Agreed Upon" (1930), with Harry Barris
5. "At Your Command" (1931), with Harry Barris and Harry Tobias
6. "From Monday On" (1928), with Harry Barris and recorded with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra featuring Bix Beiderbecke on cornet, no. 14 on US pop singles charts
7. "Where the Blue of the Night (Meets the Gold of the Day)" (1931), with Roy Turk and Fred Ahlert, US, no. 4; US, 1940 re-recording, no. 27
8. "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance with You" (1932), with Victor Young and Ned Washington, US, no. 5
9. "Love Me Tonight" (1932), with Victor Young and Ned Washington, US, no. 4
10. "You Taught Me How to Love" (1931), with H. C. LeBlang and Don Herman
11. "Love Me Tonight" (1932), with Victor Young and Ned Washington, US, no. 4
12. "Waltzing in a Dream" (1932), with Victor Young and Ned Washington, US, no. 6
13. "You're Just a Beautiful Melody of Love" (1932), lyrics by Bing Crosby, music by Babe Goldberg
15. "I Would If I Could But I Can't" (1933), with Mitchell Parish and Alan Grey
16. "Where the Turf Meets the Surf" (1941) with Johnny Burke and James V. Monaco
17. "That's What Life is All About" (1975), with Ken Barnes, Peter Dacre, and Les Reed, US, AC chart, no. 35; UK, no. 41
18. "Sail Away from Norway" (1977) – Crosby wrote lyrics to go with a traditional song.

Grammy Hall of Fame

Four performances by Bing Crosby have been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, which is a special Grammy award established in 1973 to honor recordings that are at least 25 years old and that have "qualitative or historical significance".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Recorded</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Year Inducted</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1974</td>
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<tr>
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<td>&quot;Don't Fence Me In&quot;</td>
<td>Traditional Pop</td>
<td>Decca</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>With the Andrews Sisters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Filmography

Main article: Bing Crosby filmography

Discography

Main article: Bing Crosby discography

TV appearances

Main article: Bing Crosby TV appearances listing

Radio

• 15 Minutes with Bing Crosby (1932, CBS), initially 3 nights a week, then twice a week, 15 minutes.
• A Christmas Sing with Bing (1955–1962) -CBS, VOA and AFRS, 1 hour each year, sponsored by the Insurance Company of North America.
• A Christmas Sing with Bing (1955–1962) -CBS, VOA and AFRS, 1 hour each year, sponsored by the Insurance Company of North America.

### RIAA certification

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>RIAA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Merry Christmas (1945)</td>
<td>Gold</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Christmas (re-issue of album above) (1995)</td>
<td>4× Platinum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bing Sings (1977)</td>
<td>2× Platinum</td>
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### Awards and nominations

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<td>Won</td>
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<td>1955</td>
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<td>Here Comes the Groom</td>
<td>Nominated</td>
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<td>1960</td>
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<td>Cecil B. DeMille Award</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Won</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>Laurel Awards</td>
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<td>Nominated</td>
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<td>Laurel Awards</td>
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<td>Golden Laurel Top Male Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
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<td>Won</td>
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1946  | Photoplay Awards  | Most Popular Male Star | — | Won
1947  | Photoplay Awards  | Most Popular Male Star | — | Won
1948  | Photoplay Awards  | Most Popular Male Star | — | Won
1960  | Hollywood Walk of Fame | Recording | 6751 Hollywood Blvd. | Inducted
1960  | Hollywood Walk of Fame | Motion Picture | 1611 Vine Street. | Inducted

See also

Book: Bing Crosby

References

See references group="" responsive="0">/references>

Sources


- Template:Pop Chronicles 40s

Further reading


External links

- Official website at the TCM Movie Database
- Bing Crosby at Virtual History
- Zoot Radio, free 'Bing Crosby Broadcasts' old time radio show downloads, over 360 episodes.
- Bing Crosby at Find a Grave

Template:Bing CrosbyTemplate:Bing Crosby singles Template:AcademyAwardBestActor 1941–1960 Template:Cecil B. DeMille Award 1952–1975 Template:National Board of Review Award for Best Actor
Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby (born May 2, 1903 in Tacoma, Washington; died October 14, 1977 in Madrid, Spain) was an American Grammy Award winning singer and Academy Award winning actor who was one of the first true multimedia stars, from 1934 to 1954 Crosby held a nearly unrivaled command of record sales, radio ratings and motion picture grosses. Widely recognized as one of the most popular musical acts in history, Crosby is also credited as being the major inspiration for... read more.