



Dwight Yoakam

Biography

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Born [October 23, 1956](#) · [Pikeville, Kentucky, USA](#)

Birth name Dwight David Yoakam

Height 6' (1.83 m)

Mini Bio

Since the start of his music career, Dwight Yoakam has proven he's more than just another guy with a guitar and a hat. He has risen from hot country star to being one of country music's biggest influences. While doing that, he has also become a critically acclaimed actor.

Dwight David Yoakam was born on October 23, 1956 in the coal mining community of Pikeville, Kentucky, to Ruth Ann (Tibbs), a key-punch operator, and David Yoakam, a gas-station owner. Soon after his birth, his family moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he was raised. As part of the Drama Club in his days at Northland High School in Columbus, he acted in school plays. He played [Helen Keller's](#) brother in his sophomore year in the school's production of "The Miracle Worker." He followed that his Junior year playing the lead as Charlie in "Flowers for Algernon." He capped off his high school acting career as Richard Bravo in The "Demon Seed." In 1977, Dwight moved to Nashville to pursue a career in music. At the time, Nashville was moving away from the traditional country sound that he was playing. After a brief time there, he moved to California, which was more receptive to the music he was doing. He hooked up with producer/guitar virtuoso [Pete Anderson](#) in 1982. That began a musical relationship that became country music's equivalent to rock's Glimmer Twins ([Mick Jagger](#) and [Keith Richards](#)).

Financial backing to make a high-quality recording came from Dwight's sister and brother-in-law, an insurance check that was meant to fix Dwight's El Camino and **money raised from a benefit classical music concert staged by UCLA music professor Dr. Robert Winter**. With the EP (extended play) that captured the "Dwight Yoakam sound." In 1984, Dwight released the six-song EP "Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc." on the independent Oak label, and then hit the road with such artists as [Los Lobos](#) and [Violent Femmes](#). Playing traditional country music, Dwight gained a following among not only country fans but punk rockers and rockabilly fans as well. This eclectic fan base brought him to the attention of many record labels. Warner Brothers signed him to its newly revived Reprise Record label in 1985. The EP's title and tracks were kept intact and more songs added to make a full album. At the time, country music was in the waning days of its [Urban Cowboy \(1980\)](#) phase, and fans of country were hungry for something "new." This new sound was a return to a more traditional style that had been abandoned when [John Travolta](#) put on a cowboy hat. After establishing himself in the music industry, Dwight set his sights on his second love, acting. In 1991 he appeared as a stuntman/country singer in an episode of [P.S.I. Luv U \(1991\)](#). This became the beginning of his professional acting career. In 1992, he appeared on the big screen for the first time in the [Nicolas Cage/Dennis Hopper](#) film [Red Rock West \(1993\)](#). In 1993, Dwight released what is considered his masterpiece, the album "This Time." He supported the album with a tour that lasted over a year and covered the world. In 1994, he received his first Grammy for the album's single, "Ain't That Lonely Yet." In 1996, he co-starred in [Billy Bob Thornton's](#) film [Sling Blade \(1996\)](#). His work as the evil Doyle Hargraves left audiences speechless and critics hailing his performance.