

Neil Young

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Background information

Birth name Neil Percival Young

Also known as Bernard Shakey, Phil Perspective, Shakey Deal, Clyde Coil, Ol' Neil, Joe Canuck, Joe Yankee, Marc Lynch, Pinecone Young

Born November 12, 1945

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Origin Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Genres Folk rock, country rock, experimental rock, heartland rock, hard rock, grunge

Occupation(s) Musician, singer-songwriter, producer, director, screenwriter, humanitarian, entrepreneur

Instruments Electric guitar, acoustic guitar, vocals, harmonica, piano, reed organ

Years active 1960–present

Labels Warner Bros., Reprise, Atco, Atlantic, Geffen

Associated acts The Squires, The Mynah Birds, Buffalo Springfield, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Crazy Horse, The Stray Gators, The Stills-Young Band, The Ducks, Northern Lights, Pearl Jam, Booker T. Jones, Leon Russell, Elton John, Pegi Morton Young

Notable instruments

"Old Black"

Martin D-45

"Hank"

Gretsch White Falcon

Neil Percival Young, OC OM (born November 12, 1945) is a Canadian singer-songwriter and musician. He began performing in a group covering Shadows instrumentals in Canada in 1960, before moving to California in 1966, where he co-founded the band Buffalo Springfield together with Stephen Stills and Richie Furay, and later joined Crosby, Stills & Nash in 1969. He released his first album in 1968 and has since forged a successful and acclaimed solo career, spanning over 45 years and 35 studio albums, with a continuous and uncompromising exploration of musical styles. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website describes Young as "one of rock and roll's greatest songwriters and performers". He was inducted into the Hall of Fame twice, first as a solo artist in 1995, and second as a member of Buffalo Springfield in 1997.

Young's music is characterized by his distinctive guitar work, deeply personal lyrics and characteristic alto or high tenor singing voice. Although he accompanies himself on several different instruments, including piano and harmonica, his idiosyncratic electric and clawhammer acoustic guitar playing are the defining characteristics of a varyingly ragged and melodic sound.

While Young has experimented with differing music styles throughout a varied career, including swing and electronic music, most of his best known work is either acoustic folk-rock and country rock or electric, amplified hard rock (most often in collaboration with the band Crazy Horse). Musical styles such as alternative rock and grunge also adopted elements from Young. His influence has caused some to dub him the "Godfather of Grunge".

Young has directed (or co-directed) a number of films using the pseudonym Bernard Shakey, including *Journey Through the Past* (1973), *Rust Never Sleeps* (1979), *Human Highway* (1982), *Greendale* (2003), and *CSNY/Déjà Vu* (2008). He has also contributed to the soundtracks of films including *Philadelphia* (1993) and *Dead Man* (1995).

Young is an environmentalist and outspoken advocate for the welfare of small farmers, having co-founded in 1985 the benefit concert Farm Aid. He is currently working on a documentary about electric car technology, tentatively titled LincVolt. The project involves his 1959 Lincoln Continental converted to hybrid technology as an environmentalist statement. In 1986, Young helped found The Bridge School, an educational organization for children with severe verbal and physical disabilities, and its annual supporting Bridge School Benefit concerts, together with his ex-wife Pegi Young (née Morton). Young has three children: sons Zeke (born during his relationship with actress Carrie Snodgrass) and Ben, who were diagnosed with cerebral palsy, and daughter Amber Jean who, like Young, has epilepsy. Young lives on his ranch in La Honda, California. Although he has lived in northern California since the 1970s and sings as frequently about U.S. themes and subjects as he does about his native country, he has retained his Canadian citizenship. On July 14, 2006, Young was awarded the Order of Manitoba, and on December 30, 2009, was made an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Life and career

Early years (1945–1966)

Neil Percival Young was born in Toronto, Ontario on November 12, 1945. His father, Scott Alexander Young (1918–2005), was a journalist and sportswriter who would later rise to prominence in Canada for his work. His mother, Edna Blow Ragland "Rassy" Young (1918–1990) was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. His mother was an American of French ancestry. They married in 1940 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and their first son, Robert 'Bob' Young, was born in 1942.

Shortly after Neil's birth in 1945, the Young family moved to the rural town of Omemee, Ontario, which Neil would later fondly describe as a "sleepy little place". (The Youngtown Museum in Omemee is a tribute to Young.) Young was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes as a child,[27] and also suffered from a bout of polio in 1951, in what was the last major outbreak of the disease in Ontario. Singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell, then aged nine, also contracted the virus in this epidemic.

After his recovery, the Young family vacationed to Florida in the United States in 1952, and upon returning to Canada soon decided to move away from Omemee and into the city of Toronto, before relocating to Pickering, which is just east of Toronto, and then again to north Toronto soon afterward. It was during this period that Young began to take an interest in popular music that he heard on the radio, and also began to raise chickens in order to sell their eggs.

When Young was twelve, his father, who had been having a number of extra-marital affairs, left his mother, and she asked for and received a divorce some years later, in 1960. Due to the breakup of the family, Neil went to live with his

mother, who moved back to Winnipeg, while his brother Bob stayed with his father in Toronto. It was then that his musical drive really kicked in.

"Neil bopped down Yonge Street. Very thin, very tall, with a greased-back D.A. on the sides but a crew cut on top. He had a transistor radio, white bucks, a nice sweater, black pants. Very slick-lookin' guy."

—Comrie Smith, Young's teenage friend

During the mid-fifties, at around the age of ten or eleven, Young was drawn to a variety of musical genres including rock and roll, rockabilly, doo-wop, R&B, country, and western pop. He would listen to pop music broadcast on the CHUM radio station via his transistor radio. Young has stated in interviews that he grew up idolizing Elvis Presley and strove to be just like him. He later referred to him in a number of his lyrics. Other early musical influences included Link Wray, Chuck Berry, Hank Marvin, Little Richard, Fats Domino, The Chantels, The Monotones, Ronnie Self, The Fleetwoods, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, and Gogi Grant. Young first began to play music himself on a plastic ukulele, before, as he would later relate, going on to "a better ukulele to a banjo ukulele to a baritone ukulele – everything but a guitar."

Young and his mother settled into the working class area of Fort Rouge, Winnipeg, where the shy, dry-humoured youth enrolled at Earl Grey Junior High School. It was there that he formed his first band, The Jades, and met Ken Koblun, later to join him in The Squires. While attending Kelvin High School in Winnipeg, he played in several instrumental rock bands. Young's first stable band was called The Squires, with Ken Koblun, Jeff Wuckert and Bill Edmondson on drums, who had

a local hit called "The Sultan". Young dropped out of high school and also played in Fort William (now part of the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario), where they recorded a series of demos produced by a local producer named Ray Dee, whom Young called "the original Briggs". While there, Young first encountered Stephen Stills. In the 2006 film *Heart of Gold*, Young relates how he used to spend time as a teenager at Falcon Lake, Manitoba, where he would endlessly plug coins into the jukebox to hear Ian Tyson's "Four Strong Winds". The Squires played in as many dance halls and clubs in Winnipeg and Ontario as they could.

After leaving the Squires, Young worked folk clubs in Winnipeg, where he first met Joni Mitchell. Mitchell recalls Young as having been highly influenced by Bob Dylan at the time. Here he wrote some of his earliest and most enduring folk songs such as "Sugar Mountain", about lost youth. Mitchell wrote "The Circle Game" in response. The Winnipeg band The Guess Who (with Randy Bachman as lead guitarist) had a Canadian Top 40 hit with Young's "Flying on the Ground is Wrong", which was Young's first major success as a songwriter.

In 1965 Young toured Canada as a solo artist. In 1966, while in Toronto, he joined the Rick James-fronted Mynah Birds. The band managed to secure a record deal with the Motown label, but as their first album was being recorded, James was arrested for being AWOL from the Reserve. After the Mynah Birds disbanded, Young and the bass player Bruce Palmer relocated to Los Angeles. Young admitted in a 2009 interview that he was in the United States illegally until he received a green card in 1970.

Buffalo Springfield (1966–1968)

Once they reached Los Angeles, Young and Palmer met up with Stephen Stills, Richie Furay, and Dewey Martin to form Buffalo Springfield. A mixture of folk, country, psychedelia, and rock, lent a hard edge by the twin lead guitars of Stills and Young, made Buffalo Springfield a critical success, and their first record *Buffalo Springfield* (1966) sold well after Stills' topical song "For What It's Worth" became a hit, aided by Young's melodic harmonics played on electric guitar. According to *Rolling Stone*, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and other sources, Buffalo Springfield helped create the genres of folk rock and country rock.

Distrust of their management, as well as the arrest and deportation of Palmer, exacerbated the already strained relations among the group members and led to Buffalo Springfield's demise. A second album, *Buffalo Springfield Again*, was released in late 1967, but two of Young's three contributions were solo tracks recorded apart from the rest of the group.

In many ways, these three songs on *Buffalo Springfield Again*, "Mr. Soul", "Expecting to Fly", and "Broken Arrow", are harbingers of much of Young's later work in that, although they all share deeply personal, almost idiosyncratic lyrics, they also present three very different musical approaches to the arrangement of what is essentially an original folk song. "Mr. Soul" is the only Young song of the three that all five members of the group performed together. In contrast, "Broken Arrow" was confessional folk-rock of a kind that would characterize much of the music that emerged from the singer-songwriter movement. Young's experimental production intersperses each verse with snippets of sound from other sources, including opening the song with a soundbite of Dewey Martin singing "Mr. Soul" and closing it with the thumping of a heartbeat. "Expecting to Fly" was a lushly produced ballad similar to the baroque pop of the mid-1960s, featured a string arrangement that Young's co-producer for the track, Jack Nitzsche, would dub "symphonic pop".

In May 1968, the band split up for good, but in order to fulfill a contractual obligation, a final album, *Last Time Around*, was released, primarily from recordings made earlier that year. Young contributed the songs "On the Way Home" and "I Am a Child", singing lead on the latter. In 1997, the band was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame; Young did not appear at the ceremony. The three surviving members, Furay, Stills and Young, appeared together as Buffalo Springfield at Young's annual Bridge School Benefit on October 23–24, 2010, and at Bonnaroo in the summer of 2011.

Going solo, *Crazy Horse* (1968–1969)

After the breakup of Buffalo Springfield, Young signed a solo deal with Reprise Records, home of his colleague and friend Joni Mitchell, with whom he shared a manager, Elliot Roberts, who manages Young to this day. Young and Roberts immediately began work on Young's first solo record, *Neil Young* (November 12, 1968), which received mixed reviews. In a 1970 interview, Young deprecated the album as being "overdubbed rather than played", and the quest for music that expresses the spontaneity of the moment has long been a feature of his career. Nevertheless, the album contains some songs that remain a staple of his live shows, most notably "The Loner".

For his next album, Young recruited three musicians from a band called The Rockets: Danny Whitten on guitar, Billy Talbot on bass guitar, and Ralph Molina on drums. These three took the name *Crazy Horse* (after the historical figure of the same name), and *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* (May 1969), is credited to "Neil Young with Crazy Horse". Recorded in just two weeks, the album opens with one of Young's most familiar songs, "Cinnamon Girl", and is dominated by two more, "Cowgirl in the Sand" and "Down by the River", that feature improvisations with Young's distinctive electric guitar solos billowing out over the hypnotic *Crazy Horse* backing. Young reportedly wrote all three songs on the same day, while nursing a high fever of 103 °F (39 °C) in bed.

Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young (1969–1970)

Shortly after the release of *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*, Young reunited with Stephen Stills by joining Crosby, Stills & Nash, who had already released one album *Crosby, Stills & Nash* as a trio in May 1969. Young was originally offered a position as a sideman, but agreed to join only if he received full membership, and the group – winners of the 1969 "Best New Artist" Grammy Award – was renamed Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. The quartet debuted in Chicago on August 16, 1969, and later performed at the famous Woodstock Festival, during which Young skipped the majority of the acoustic set and refused to be filmed during the electric set, even telling the cameramen: "One of you fuckin' guys comes near me and I'm gonna fuckin' hit you with my guitar". During the making of their first album, *Déjà Vu* (March 11, 1970), the musicians frequently argued, particularly Young and Stills, who both fought for control. Stills continued throughout their lifelong relationship to criticize Young, saying that he "wanted to play folk music in a rock band." Despite the tension, Young's tenure with CSN&Y coincided with the band's most creative and successful period, and greatly contributed to his subsequent success as a solo artist.

Young wrote "Ohio" following the Kent State massacre on May 4, 1970. The song was quickly recorded by CSN&Y and immediately released as a single, even though CSN&Y's "Teach Your Children" was still climbing the singles charts.

After the Gold Rush, acoustic tour and Harvest (1970–1972)

Later in the year, Young released his third solo album, *After the Gold Rush* (August 31, 1970), which featured, among others, a young Nils Lofgren, Stephen Stills, and CSNY bassist Greg Reeves. Young also recorded some tracks with Crazy Horse, but dismissed them early in the sessions. The eventual recording was less amplified than *Everybody Knows This is*

Nowhere, with a wider range of sounds. Young's newfound fame with CSNY made the album his commercial breakthrough as a solo artist, and it contains some of his best known work, including "Tell Me Why" and "Don't Let It Bring You Down", the country-influenced singles "Only Love Can Break Your Heart" and "When You Dance I Can Really Love", and the title track, "After the Gold Rush", played on piano, with dream-like lyrics that ran a gamut of subjects from drugs and interpersonal relationships to environmental concerns. Young's bitter condemnation of racism in the heavy blues rock song "Southern Man" (along with a later song entitled "Alabama") was also controversial with southerners in an era of desegregation, prompting Lynyrd Skynyrd to decry Young by name in the lyrics to their hit "Sweet Home Alabama". However, Young said he was a fan of Skynyrd's music, and the band's front man Ronnie Van Zant was later photographed wearing a Tonight's the Night T-shirt on the cover of an album.

In the autumn of 1970, Young began a solo acoustic tour of North America, during which he played a variety of his Buffalo Springfield and CSNY songs on guitar and piano, along with material from his solo albums and a number of new songs. Some songs premiered by Young on the tour, like "Journey through the Past", would never find a home on a studio album, while other songs, like "See the Sky About to Rain", would only be released in coming years. With CSNY splitting up and Crazy Horse having signed their own record deal, Young's tour, now entitled "Journey Through the Past", continued into early 1971, and its focus shifted more to newer songs he had been writing; he famously remarked that having written so many, he could not think of anything to do but play them. Many gigs were sold out, including concerts at Carnegie Hall and a pair of acclaimed hometown shows at Toronto's Massey Hall, which were taped for a planned live album. The shows became legendary among Young fans, and the recordings were officially released nearly 40 years later as an official bootleg in Young's Archive series.

Near the end of his tour, Young performed one of the new acoustic songs on the Johnny Cash TV show. "The Needle and the Damage Done", a somber lament on the pain caused by heroin addiction, had been inspired in part by Crazy Horse member Danny Whitten, who eventually died while battling his drug problems. While in Nashville for the Cash taping, Young accepted the invitation of Quadrafonic Sound Studios owner Elliot Mazer to record tracks there with a group of country-music session musicians who were pulled together at the last minute. Making a connection with them, he christened them The Stray Gators, and began playing with them. Befitting the immediacy of the project, Linda Ronstadt and James Taylor were brought in from the Cash taping to do background vocals. Against the advice of his producer David Briggs, he scrapped plans for the imminent release of the live acoustic recording in favor of a studio album consisting of the Nashville sessions, electric-guitar oriented sessions recorded later in his barn, and two recordings made with the London Symphony Orchestra. The result was Young's fourth album, *Harvest* (February 14, 1972), which would prove to be a massive hit. The only remnant left of the original live concept was the album's live acoustic performance of the harrowing "Needle".

Young's more settled personal life was reflected in the rest of the *Harvest* album's mellow, pastoral tone. After his success with CSNY, Young had been able to purchase a ranch in rural Northern California (where he has lived since), writing the song "Old Man" in honor of the land's longtime caretaker, Louis Avila. The song "A Man Needs a Maid" was inspired by his relationship with actress Carrie Snodgress. "Heart of Gold" was released as the first single from *Harvest*, the only No. 1 hit in his long career. "Old Man" was also immensely popular.

The album's recording had been almost accidental. Its mainstream success caught Young off guard, and his first instinct was to back away from stardom. In the *Decade* (1977) compilation, Young chose to include his greatest hits from the period, but his handwritten liner notes famously described "Heart of Gold" as the song that "put me in the middle of the road. Traveling there soon became a bore, so I headed for the ditch. A rougher ride but I saw more interesting people there."

The "Ditch" Trilogy and personal struggles (1972–1974)

Although a new tour had been planned to follow up on the success of *Harvest* (1972), it became apparent during rehearsals that Danny Whitten could not function due to drug abuse. On November 18, 1972, shortly after he was fired from the tour preparations, Whitten was found dead. Young described the incident to Rolling Stone's Cameron Crowe in 1975: "[We] were rehearsing with him and he just couldn't cut it. He couldn't remember anything. He was too out of it. Too far gone. I had to tell him to go back to L.A. 'It's not happening, man. You're not together enough.' He just said, 'I've got nowhere else to go, man. How am I gonna tell my friends?' And he split. That night the coroner called me from L.A. and told me he'd OD'd. That blew my mind. I loved Danny. I felt responsible. And from there, I had to go right out on this huge tour of huge arenas. I was very nervous and ... insecure."

On the tour, Young struggled with his voice and the performance of drummer Kenny Buttrey, a noted Nashville session musician who was unaccustomed to performing in the hard rock milieu; Buttrey was eventually replaced by former CSNY drummer Johnny Barbata, while David Crosby and Graham Nash contributed rhythm guitar and backing vocals to the final dates of the tour. The album assembled in the aftermath of this incident, *Time Fades Away* (October 15, 1973), has often been described by Young as "[his] least favorite record", and it is one of only two of Young's early recordings that has yet to be officially re-released on CD (the other being the soundtrack album *Journey Through the Past*). Nevertheless, Young and his band tried several new musical approaches in this period. *Time Fades Away*, for instance, was recorded live, although it was an album of new material, an approach Young would repeat with more success later on. *Time* was the first of three consecutive commercial failures which would later become known collectively to fans as the "Ditch Trilogy", as contrasted with the more middle-of-the-road pop of *Harvest* (1972). These subsequent albums were seen as more challenging expressions of Young's inner conflicts on achieving success, expressing both the specific struggles of his friends and himself, and the decaying idealism of his generation in America at the time.

In the second half of 1973, Young formed The Santa Monica Flyers, with Crazy Horse's rhythm section augmented by Nils Lofgren on guitar and piano and Harvest/Time Fades Away veteran Ben Keith on pedal steel guitar. Deeply affected by the drug-induced deaths of Whitten and roadie Bruce Berry, Young recorded an album specifically inspired by the incidents, *Tonight's the Night* (June 20, 1975). The album's dark tone and rawness led Reprise to delay and Young had to pressure them for two years before they would release it. While his record company delayed the release, Young recorded another album, *On the Beach* (July 16, 1974), which presented a more melodic, acoustic sound at times, including a recording of the older song "See the Sky About to Rain", but dealt with similarly dark themes such as the collapse of 1960s folk ideals, the downside of success and the underbelly of the Californian lifestyle. Like *Time Fades Away*, it sold poorly but eventually became a critical favorite, presenting some of Young's most original work. A review of the 2003 re-release on CD of *On the Beach* described the music as "mesmerizing, harrowing, lucid, and bleary".

After completing *On the Beach*, Young reunited with Harvest producer Elliot Mazer to record another acoustic album, *Homegrown*. Most of the songs were written after Young's breakup with Carrie Snodgrass, and thus the tone of the album was somewhat dark. Though *Homegrown* was reportedly entirely complete, Young decided, not for the first or last time in his career, to drop it and release something else instead, in this case, *Tonight's the Night*, at the suggestion of Band bassist Rick Danko. Young further explained his move by saying: "It was a little too personal ... it scared me". Most of the songs from *Homegrown* were later incorporated into other Young albums, but the original album never surfaced. *Tonight's the Night*, when finally released in 1975, sold poorly, as had the previous albums of the "ditch" trilogy, and received mixed reviews at the time, but is now regarded as a landmark album. In Young's own opinion, it was the closest he ever came to art.

Reunions, retrospectives and Rust Never Sleeps (1974–1979)

Young reunited with Crosby, Stills, and Nash after a four-year hiatus in the summer of 1974 for a concert tour.

In 1975, Young reformed Crazy Horse with Frank Sampedro on guitar as his backup band for his eighth album, *Zuma* (November 10, 1975). Many of the songs dealt with the theme of failed relationships; "Cortez the Killer", a retelling of the Spanish conquest of Mexico from the viewpoint of the Aztecs, may also be heard as an allegory of love lost. *Zuma*'s closing track, "Through My Sails", was the only released fragment from aborted sessions with Crosby, Stills and Nash for another group album.

In 1976, Young reunited with Stephen Stills for the album *Long May You Run* (September 20, 1976), credited to The Stills-Young Band; the follow-up tour was ended midway through by Young, who sent Stills a telegram that read: "Funny how some things that start spontaneously end that way. Eat a peach, Neil."

In 1976, Young performed with Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and numerous other rock musicians in the high profile all-star concert *The Last Waltz*, the final performance by The Band. The release of Martin Scorsese's movie of the concert was delayed while Scorsese unwillingly re-edited it to obscure the lump of cocaine that was clearly visible hanging from Young's nose during his performance of "Helpless". *American Stars 'N Bars* (June 13, 1977) contained two songs originally recorded for the *Homegrown* album, "Homegrown" and "Star of Bethlehem", as well as newer material, including the future concert staple "Like a Hurricane". Performers on the record included Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris and Young protégé Nicolette Larson along with Crazy Horse. In 1977, Young also released the compilation *Decade*, a personally selected set of songs spanning every aspect of his work, including a handful of previously unreleased songs. The record included less commercial album tracks alongside radio hits.

Comes a Time (October 2, 1978), Young's first entirely new solo recording since the mid-1970s, also featured Larson and Crazy Horse. The album became Young's most commercially accessible album in quite some time and marked a return to his folk roots, including a cover of Ian Tyson's "Four Strong Winds", a song Young associated with his childhood in Canada. Another of the album's songs, "Lotta Love", was also recorded by Larson, with her version reaching number 8 on the Billboard Hot 100 in February 1979. In 1978, much of the filming was done for Young's film Human Highway, which took its name from a song featured on Comes a Time. Over four years, Young would spend \$3,000,000 of his own money on production. This also marked the beginning of his brief collaboration with the post-punk band Devo, whose members appeared in the film.

Young set out in 1978 on the lengthy "Rust Never Sleeps" tour, in which he played a wealth of new material. Each concert was divided into a solo acoustic set and an electric set with Crazy Horse. The electric sets, featuring an aggressive style of playing, were later seen as a response to punk rock. Two new songs, the acoustic "My My, Hey Hey (Out of the Blue)" and electric "Hey Hey, My My (Into the Black)" were the centerpiece of the new material. Their lyrics have been among Young's most widely quoted.[citation needed] Young also compared the rise of Johnny Rotten with that of the recently deceased "King" Elvis Presley, who himself had once been disparaged as a dangerous influence only to later become an icon. Rotten returned the favour by playing one of Young's records on a London radio show, an early sign of Young's eventual embrace by a number of punk-influenced alternative musicians.[citation needed]

Young's two accompanying albums Rust Never Sleeps (July 2, 1979; new material, culled from live recordings, but featuring studio overdubs) and Live Rust (November 19, 1979) (a mixture of old and new, and a genuine concert recording) captured the two sides of the concerts, with solo acoustic songs on side A, and fierce, uptempo, electric songs on side B. A movie version of the concerts, also called Rust Never Sleeps (1979), was directed by Young under the pseudonym Bernard Shakey. Young worked with rock artist Jim Evans to create the poster art for the film, using the Star Wars Jawas as a theme. Young's work since Harvest (1972) had alternated between being rejected by mass audiences

and being seen as backward-looking by critics, sometimes both at once, and now he was suddenly viewed as relevant by a new generation, who began to discover his earlier work. Readers and critics of Rolling Stone voted him Artist of the Year for 1979 (along with The Who), selected *Rust Never Sleeps* as Album of the Year, and voted him Male Vocalist of the Year as well. The Village Voice named *Rust Never Sleeps* as the year's winner in the Pazz & Jop Poll, a survey of nationwide critics, and honored Young as the Artist of the Decade. The Warner Music Vision release on VHS of *Rust Never Sleeps* in 1987 had a running time of 116 minutes, and although fully manufactured in Germany, was initially imported from there by the markets throughout Europe.

Experimental years (1980–1988)

At the start of the decade, distracted by domestic medical concerns relating to his second disabled son, Ben, Young had little time to spend on writing and recording.[64] After providing the incidental music to a 1980 biographical film of Hunter S. Thompson entitled *Where the Buffalo Roam*, Young released *Hawks & Doves* (November 3, 1980)', a short record pieced together from sessions going back to 1974.

1981's *Re-ac-tor*, an electric album recorded with Crazy Horse, also included material from the 1970s. Young did not tour in support of either album; in total, he played only one show, a set at the 1980 Bread and Roses Festival in Berkeley, between the end of his 1978 tour with Crazy Horse and the start of his tour with the Trans Band in mid-1982.

"The 80s were really good. The 80s were like, artistically, very strong for me, because I knew no boundaries and was experimenting with everything that I could come across, sometimes with great success, sometimes with terrible results, but nonetheless I was able to do this, and I was able to realize that I wasn't in a box, and I wanted to establish that."

—Neil Young

The 1982 album *Trans*, which incorporated vocoders, synthesizers, and electronic beats, was Young's first for the new label Geffen Records (distributed at the time by Warner Bros. Records, whose parent Warner Music Group owns most of Young's solo and band catalog) and represented a distinct stylistic departure. Young later revealed that an inspiration for the album was the theme of technology and communication with his son Ben, who has severe cerebral palsy and cannot speak. An extensive tour preceded the release of the album, and was documented by the video *Neil Young in Berlin*, which saw release in 1986. MTV played the video for "Sample and Hold" in light rotation. The entire song contained "robot vocals" by Neil and Nils Lofgren.

Young's next album, 1983's *Everybody's Rockin'*, included several rockabilly covers and clocked in at less than twenty-five minutes in length. Young was backed by the Shocking Pinks for the supporting U.S. tour. *Trans* (1982) had already drawn the ire of label head David Geffen for its lack of commercial appeal, and with *Everybody's Rockin'* following only seven months later, Geffen Records sued Young for making music "unrepresentative" of himself. The album was also notable as the first for which Young made commercial music videos – Tim Pope directed the videos for "Wonderin'" and "Cry, Cry, Cry". Also premiered in 1983, though little seen, was the eclectic full-length comedy film *Human Highway*, co-directed and co-written by Young, and starring Young, Dean Stockwell, Russ Tamblyn, Dennis Hopper and members of Devo.

The first year without a Neil Young album since the start of Young's musical career with Buffalo Springfield in 1966 was in 1984. Young's lack of productivity was largely due to the ongoing legal battle with Geffen, although he was also frustrated that the label had rejected his 1982 country album *Old Ways*. It was also the year when Young's third child, this with his second with wife Pegi, was born: his daughter Amber Jean, a child who was later diagnosed with inherited epilepsy.

Young spent most of 1984 and all of 1985 touring for Old Ways (August 12, 1985) with his country band, the International Harvesters. The album was finally released in an altered form midway through 1985. Young also appeared at that year's Live Aid concert in Philadelphia, collaborating with Crosby, Stills and Nash for the quartet's first performance for a paying audience in over ten years.

Young's last two albums for Geffen were more conventional in genre, although they incorporated production techniques like synthesizers and echoing drums that were previously uncommon in Young's music. Young recorded 1986's Landing on Water without Crazy Horse, but reunited with the band for the subsequent year-long tour and final Geffen album, Life, which emerged in 1987. Young's album sales dwindled steadily throughout the eighties; today Life remains his all-time-least successful studio album, with an estimated four hundred thousand sales worldwide.

Switching back to his old label Reprise Records, Young continued to tour relentlessly, assembling a new blues band called The Bluenotes in mid-1987 (a legal dispute with musician Harold Melvin forced the eventual rechristening of the band as Ten Men Working midway through the tour). The addition of a brass section provided a new jazzier sound, and the title track of 1988's This Note's For You became Young's first hit single of the decade. Accompanied by a video that parodied corporate rock, the pretensions of advertising, and Michael Jackson, the song was initially unofficially banned by MTV for mentioning the brand names of some of their sponsors. Young wrote an open letter, "What does the M in MTV stand for: music or money?" Despite this, the video was eventually named best video of the year by the network in 1989. By comparison, the major music cable network of Young's home nation, Muchmusic, ran the video immediately.

Young reunited with Crosby, Stills and Nash to record the 1988 album American Dream and play two benefit concerts late in the year, but the group did not embark upon a full tour. The album was only the second-ever studio record for the quartet.

Return to prominence (1989–1999)

Young's 1989 single "Rockin' in the Free World", which hit No. 2 on the U.S. mainstream-rock charts, and accompanying album, *Freedom*, rocketed him back into the popular consciousness after a decade of sometimes-difficult genre experiments. The album's lyrics were often overtly political; "Rockin' in the Free World" deals with homelessness, terrorism, and environmental degradation, implicitly criticizing the government policies of President George H.W. Bush.

The use of heavy feedback and distortion on several *Freedom* tracks was reminiscent of the *Rust Never Sleeps* (1979) album, and foreshadowed the imminent rise of grunge. The rising stars of the genre, including Nirvana's Kurt Cobain and Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, frequently cited Young as a major influence, contributing to his popular revival. A tribute album called *The Bridge: A Tribute to Neil Young* was released in 1989, featuring covers by alternative and grunge acts including Sonic Youth, Nick Cave, Soul Asylum, Dinosaur Jr, and the Pixies.

Young's 1990 album *Ragged Glory*, recorded with Crazy Horse in a barn on his Northern California ranch, continued this distortion-heavy aesthetic. Young toured for the album with Orange County, California country-punk band Social Distortion and alternative rock pioneers Sonic Youth as support, much to the consternation of many of his old fans. *Weld*, a two-disc live album documenting the tour, was released in 1991. Sonic Youth's influence was most evident on *Arc*, a 35-minute collage of feedback and distortion spliced together at the suggestion of Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and originally packaged with some versions of *Weld*.

1992's *Harvest Moon* marked an abrupt return to the country and folk-rock stylings of *Harvest* (1972) and reunited him with some of the musicians from that album, including singers Linda Ronstadt and James Taylor. The title track was a minor hit and the record was well received by critics, winning the Juno Award for Album of the Year in 1994. Young also

contributed to Randy Bachman's nostalgic 1992 tune "Prairie Town", and garnered a 1993 Academy Award nomination for his song "Philadelphia", from the soundtrack of the Jonathan Demme movie of the same name. An MTV Unplugged performance and album emerged in 1993. Later that year, Young collaborated with Booker T. and the M.G.s for a summer tour of Europe and North America, with Blues Traveler, Soundgarden, and Pearl Jam also on the bill. Some European shows ended with a rendition of "Rockin' in the Free World" played with Pearl Jam, foreshadowing their eventual full-scale collaboration two years later.

In 1994 Young again collaborated with Crazy Horse for *Sleeps with Angels*, a record whose dark, sombre mood was influenced by Kurt Cobain's death earlier that year: the title track in particular dealt with Cobain's life and death, without mentioning him by name. Cobain had quoted Young's lyric "It's better to burn out than fade away" (a line from "My My, Hey Hey") in his suicide note. Young had reportedly made repeated attempts to contact Cobain prior to his death. Young and Pearl Jam performed "Act of Love" at an abortion rights benefit along with Crazy Horse, and were present at a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame dinner, sparking interest in a collaboration between the two. Still enamored with the grunge scene, Young reconnected with Pearl Jam in 1995 for the live-in-the-studio album *Mirror Ball* and a tour of Europe with the band and producer Brendan O'Brien backing Young. 1995 also marked Young's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, where he was inducted by Eddie Vedder.

"Young has consistently demonstrated the unbridled passion of an artist who understands that self-renewal is the only way to avoid burning out. For this reason, he has remained one of the most significant artists of the rock and roll era." – Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website.

Young's next collaborative partner was filmmaker Jim Jarmusch, who asked Young to compose a soundtrack to his 1995 black and white western film *Dead Man*. Young's instrumental soundtrack was improvised while he watched the film alone in a studio. The death of longtime mentor, friend, and producer David Briggs in late 1995 prompted Young to

reconnect with Crazy Horse the following year for the album and tour Broken Arrow. A Jarmusch-directed concert film and live album of the tour, Year of the Horse, emerged in 1997. From 1996–97 Young and Crazy Horse toured extensively throughout Europe and North America, including a stint as part of the H.O.R.D.E. Festival's sixth annual tour.

In 1998, Young renewed his collaboration with the rock band Phish, sharing the stage at the annual Farm Aid concert and then at Young's Bridge School Benefit, where he joined headliners Phish for renditions of "Helpless" and "I Shall Be Released". Phish declined Young's later invitation to be his backing band on his 1999 North American tour.

The decade ended with the release in late 1999 of Looking Forward, another reunion with Crosby, Stills and Nash. The subsequent tour of the United States and Canada with the reformed super quartet earned US\$42.1 million, making it the eighth largest grossing tour of 2000.

Continued activism and brush with death (2000s)

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young (in photo, from L to R: Nash, Stills, Young, and Crosby) perform at the PNC Bank Arts Center in 2006.

Neil Young continued to release new material at a rapid pace through the first decade of the new millennium. The studio album Silver & Gold and live album Road Rock Vol. 1 were released in 2000 and were both accompanied by live concert films. His 2001 single "Let's Roll" was a tribute to the victims of the September 11 attacks, and the effective action taken by the passengers and crew on Flight 93 in particular. At the "America: A Tribute to Heroes" benefit concert for the victims of the attacks, Young performed John Lennon's "Imagine" and accompanied Eddie Vedder and Mike McCready on "Long Road", a Pearl Jam song that was written with Young during the Mirrorball sessions. "Let's Roll" was

included on 2002's *Are You Passionate?*, an album mostly composed of mellow love songs dedicated to Young's wife, Pegi, backed by Booker T. & the M.G.s.

In 2003, Young released *Greendale*, a concept album recorded with Crazy Horse members Billy Talbot and Ralph Molina. The songs loosely revolved around the murder of a police officer in a small town in California and its effects on the town's inhabitants. Under the pseudonym "Bernard Shakey", Young directed an accompanying film of the same name, featuring actors lip-synching to the music from the album. He toured extensively with the *Greendale* material throughout 2003 and 2004, first with a solo, acoustic version in Europe, then with a full-cast stage show in North America, Japan, and Australia. Young began using biodiesel on the 2004 *Greendale* tour, powering his trucks and tour buses with the fuel. "Our *Greendale* tour is now ozone friendly," he said. "I plan to continue to use this government approved and regulated fuel exclusively from now on to prove that it is possible to deliver the goods anywhere in North America without using foreign oil, while being environmentally responsible." Young spent the latter portion of 2004 giving a series of intimate acoustic concerts in various cities with his wife, who is a trained vocalist and guitar player.

In March 2005, while working on the *Prairie Wind* album in Nashville, Young was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm. He was treated successfully with a minimally invasive neuroradiological procedure, performed in a New York hospital on March 29, but two days afterwards he passed out on a New York street from bleeding from the femoral artery, which radiologists had used to access the aneurysm. The complication forced Young to cancel his scheduled appearance at the Juno Awards telecast in Winnipeg, but within months he was back on stage, appearing at the close of the Live 8 concert in Barrie, Ontario, on July 2. During the performance, he debuted a new song, a soft hymn called "When God Made Me". Young's brush with death influenced *Prairie Wind*'s themes of retrospection and mortality. The album's live premiere in Nashville was immortalized by filmmaker Jonathan Demme in the 2006 film *Neil Young: Heart of Gold*.

Young's renewed activism manifested itself in the 2006 album *Living With War*, which like the much earlier song "Ohio", was recorded and released in less than a month as a direct result of current events. In early 2006, three years after the US invasion of Iraq, the sectarian war and casualties there were escalating. While doing errands on a visit to his daughter, Young had seen a newspaper photo of wounded US veterans on a transport plane to Germany, and noticing that the same paper devoted little actual coverage to the story, he was unable to get the image out of his head, realizing the suffering caused to families by the war had not truly registered to him and most Americans who were not directly affected by it. Young cried, and immediately got his guitar out and began to write multiple songs at once. Within a few days he had completed work and assembled a band. He later said he had restrained himself for a long time from writing any protest songs, waiting for someone younger, with a different perspective, but no one seemed to be saying anything.

Most of the album's songs rebuked the Bush administration's policy of war by examining its human costs to soldiers, their loved ones, and civilians, but Young also included a few songs on other themes, and an outright protest titled, "Let's Impeach the President", in which he stated that Bush had lied to lead the country into war. Young's lyrics in another song named Illinois Senator Barack Obama, who had not declared any intention to run for president at the time and was widely unexpected to be able to win either the Democratic Party nomination or a general election, as potentially a replacement for Bush. That summer, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young reunited for the supporting "Freedom of Speech Tour '06", in which they played Young's new protest songs alongside the group's older material, meeting with both enthusiasm and anger from different fans, some of whom were supportive of Bush politically. CSNY *Déjà Vu*, a concert film of the tour directed by Young himself, was released in 2008, along with an accompanying live album.

While Young had never been a stranger to eco-friendly lyrics, themes of environmentalist spirituality and activism became increasingly prominent in his work throughout the 1990s and 2000s, especially on *Greendale* (2003) and *Living with War* (2006). The trend continued on 2007's *Chrome Dreams II*, with lyrics exploring Young's personal eco-

spirituality. Also in 2007, Young accepted an invitation to participate in Goin' Home: A Tribute to Fats Domino, contributing his version of "Walking to New Orleans".

Young remains on the board of directors of Farm Aid, an organization he co-founded with Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp in 1985. According to its website, it is the longest running concert benefit series in the USA, and it has raised \$43 million since its first benefit concert in 1985. Each year, Young co-hosts and performs with well-known guest performers who include Dave Matthews and producers who include Evelyn Shriver and Mark Rothbaum, at the Farm Aid annual benefit concerts in order to raise funds and provide grants to family farms and prevent foreclosures, provide a crisis hotline, and create and promote home grown farm food in the United States.

In 2008, Young revealed his latest project, the production of a hybrid-engine 1959 Lincoln called Lincvolt. A new album loosely based on the Lincvolt project, *Fork in the Road*, was released on April 7, 2009. The album, partly composed of love songs to the car, also commented on the economic crisis, with one narrator attacking the Wall Street bailouts enacted in late 2008. Unfortunately, the car caught fire in November 2010, in a California warehouse, and along the way it burned an estimated US\$850,000 worth of Young's rock and roll memorabilia collection. Initial reports suggest the fire might have been triggered by an error in the vehicle's plug-in charging system. Young blamed the fire on human error and said he and his team were committed to rebuilding the car. "The wall charging system was not completely tested and had never been left unattended. A mistake was made. It was not the fault of the car", he said.

A Jonathan Demme concert film from a 2007 concert at the Tower Theater in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, called the Neil Young Trunk Show premiered on March 21, 2009, at the South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Conference and Festival in Austin, Texas. It was featured at the Cannes Film Festival on May 17, 2009 and was released in the US on March 19, 2010 to critical acclaim. Young's most recent album appearance was on the album *Potato Hole*, released on April 21, 2009 by Memphis organ player Booker T. Jones, of Booker T. & the MGs fame. Young plays guitar on nine of the album's

ten instrumental tracks, alongside Drive-By Truckers, who already had three guitar players, giving some songs on the album a total of five guitar tracks. Jones contributed guitars on a couple of tracks.

Young continues to tour extensively. In 2009, he headlined the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and Glastonbury Festival in Pilton, England, at Hard Rock Calling in London (where he was joined onstage by Paul McCartney for a rendition of "A Day in the Life") and, after years of unsuccessful booking attempts, the Isle of Wight Festival in addition to performances at the Big Day Out festival in New Zealand and Australia and the Primavera Sound Festival in Barcelona.

Young has been a vocal opponent of the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline, which would run from Alberta to Texas. When discussing the environmental impact on the oilsands of Fort McMurray, Alberta, Young asserted that the area now resembles the Japanese city of Hiroshima in the aftermath of the atomic bomb attack of World War II. Young has referred to issues surrounding the proposed use of oil pipelines as "scabs on our lives". In an effort to become more involved, Young has worked directly with the Athabasca Chipewyan First nation to draw attention to this issue, performing benefit concerts and speaking publicly on the subject.

Young participated in the Blue Dot Tour, which was organized and fronted by environmental activist David Suzuki, and toured all 10 Canadian provinces alongside other Canadian artists including the Barenaked Ladies, Feist, and Robert Bateman. The intent of Young's participation in this tour was to raise awareness of the environmental damage caused by the exploitation of tar sands. Young has argued that the amount of CO₂ released as a byproduct of tarsand oil extraction is equivalent to the amount released by the total number of cars in Canada each day. Young has faced criticism by representatives from within the Canadian petroleum industry, who have argued that his statements are irresponsible. Young's opposition to the construction of oil pipelines has influenced his music as well. His song, "Who's Going to Stand Up?" was written to protest this issue, and features the lyric "Ban fossil fuel and draw the line / Before we build one more pipeline".

In addition to directly criticizing members of the oil industry, Young has also focused blame on the actions of the Canadian Government for ignoring the conclusions regarding the environmental impacts of climate change. He referred to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper as “an embarrassment to many Canadians ...[and] a very poor imitation of the George Bush administration in the United States”. Young has also been critical of Barack Obama’s government for failing to uphold the promises made regarding environmental policies during his election campaign.

New performances (2010s)

On January 22, 2010, Young performed "Long May You Run" on the final episode of The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien. On the same night, he and Dave Matthews performed the Hank Williams song "Alone and Forsaken", for the Hope for Haiti Now: A Global Benefit for Earthquake Relief charity telethon, in response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Young also performed "Long May You Run" at the closing ceremony of the 2010 Olympic winter games in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. In May 2010, it was revealed Young had begun working on a new studio album produced by Daniel Lanois. This was announced by David Crosby, who said that the album "will be a very heartfelt record. I expect it will be a very special record." On May 18, 2010, Young embarked upon a North American solo tour to promote his then upcoming album, *Le Noise*, playing a mix of older songs and new material. Although billed as a solo acoustic tour, Young also played some songs on electric guitars, including *Old Black*. Young continued his *Twisted Road* tour with a short East Coast venture during spring 2011. Young also contributed vocals to the Elton John–Leon Russell album *The Union*, singing the second stanza on the track "Gone to Shiloh" and providing backing vocals.

In September 2011, Jonathan Demme's third documentary film on the singer songwriter, Neil Young Journeys, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. Like Demme's earlier work with Young, most of the film consists of a simply filmed live performance, in this case, Young's homecoming show in May 2011 at Toronto's Massey Hall, four decades after he first played at the iconic venue. Playing old songs, as well as new ones from Le Noise, Young performs solo on both electric and acoustic instruments. His performance is a counterpoint to Demme's footage of Young's return to Omemee, Ontario, the small town near Toronto where he grew up, which has now become physically unrecognizable, though he vividly recalls events from his childhood there.

As of 2008, Young lives near La Honda, California, on his Broken Arrow Ranch, named after one of his early Buffalo Springfield songs. The original 140-acre (0.57 km²) parcel was purchased in 1970 for US\$350,000 cash and has grown to thousands of acres.

On January 22, 2012, the Master Class at the Slamdance Festival featured Coffee with Neil Young & Jonathan Demme for their new film Neil Young Journeys. A report from the event by Bob & Kim C. revealed that Neil Young has been recording with Crazy Horse. One album is complete and they are working on another.

Neil Young and Crazy Horse performed a full-on grunge version of the Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There" for Paul McCartney's MusiCares Person of the Year dinner on February 10, 2012, in Hollywood.

Neil Young with Crazy Horse released the album Americana on June 5, 2012. It was Young's first collaboration with Crazy Horse since the Greendale album and tour in 2003 and 2004. The record is a tribute to unofficial national anthems that jumps from an uncensored version of "This Land Is Your Land" to "Clementine" and includes a version of "God Save the Queen", which Young grew up singing every day in school in Canada. Americana is Neil Young's first album composed entirely of cover songs. On June 5, 2012, American Songwriter also reported that Neil Young & Crazy Horse would be launching their first tour in eight years in support of the album.

On August 25, 2012, Young was mistakenly reported dead by NBCNews.com, the day when astronaut Neil Armstrong died.

Neil Young with Crazy Horse launched a new tour on August 3, 2012, in anticipation of their second album of 2012, *Psychedelic Pill*, which was released in late October.

On October 3, 2012, the apparent third installment of the "Rust Trilogy" (Essentially 1979's *Rust Never Sleeps* and 1991's *Weld*) was announced. The album, tentatively titled *Alchemy*, appears to follow Neil Young and Crazy Horse through their 2012 North American tour.

On September 25, 2012 Young's autobiography *Waging Heavy Peace: A Hippie Dream* was released to critical and commercial acclaim. Reviewing the book for the *New York Times*, Janet Maslin reported that Young chose to write his memoirs in 2012 for two reasons. For one, he needed to take a break from stage performances for health reasons but continue to generate income. For another, he feared the onset of dementia, considering his father's medical history and his own present condition. Maslin gives the book a higher than average grade, describing it as frank but quirky and without pathos as it delves into his relationships and his experience in parenting a child with disabilities as well as his artistic and commercial activities and associations.

In November 2013, Neil Young performed at the annual fundraiser for the Silverlake Conservatory of Music. Following after the Red Hot Chili Peppers, he played an acoustic set to a crowd who had paid a minimum of \$2,000 a seat to attend the benefit in the famous Paramour Mansion overlooking downtown Los Angeles.

Due to be released in October 2014, Pono is a "high-resolution" digital music-download service, and music player being developed by Young, designed to compete against the MP3 and other formats. Pono promises to present songs "as they first sound during studio recording".

The album *A Letter Home* was released on April 19, 2014, and his second memoir, entitled "Special Deluxe" is tentatively scheduled for a late 2014 release. He appeared with Jack White on *The Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon* on May 12, 2014.

The 2014 debut solo album by Chrissie Hynde, entitled *Stockholm*, featured Young on guitar on the track "Down the Wrong Way".

Young released his thirty-fifth studio album, *Storytone* on November 4, 2014. The first song released from the album, "Who's Gonna Stand Up?", was released in three different versions on September 25, 2014. This was followed in 2015 by his concept album *The Monsanto Years*. "The Monsanto Years" is scheduled for release on June 16th. In April 2015 it was announced Young will begin a tour titled the *Rebel Content Tour* to support the new album. Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real are set to be special guests for the tour. The tour will run from July 5th to July 22nd.

Archives project

As far back as 1988, Young spoke in interviews of his efforts to compile his unreleased material and to remaster his existing catalog. The collection was eventually titled the Neil Young Archives Series. The first installment, titled The Archives Vol. 1 1963–1972, was originally planned for a 2007 release but was delayed, and released on June 2, 2009.

Three performances from the Performance Series of the archives were released individually before The Archives Vol. 1. Live at the Fillmore East, a selection of songs from a 1970 gig with Crazy Horse, was released in 2006. Live at Massey Hall 1971, a solo acoustic set from Toronto's Massey Hall, saw release in 2007. Sugar Mountain - Live at Canterbury House 1968, an early solo performance and, chronologically, the first disc in the performance series, emerged late in 2008.

In an interview in 2008, Neil Young discussed Toast, an album originally recorded with Crazy Horse in San Francisco in 2000 but never released. The album will be part of the Special Edition Series of the Archives. No release date currently exists for Toast. The album A Treasure, with live tracks from a 1984–85 tour with the International Harvesters, during a time when he was being sued by Geffen Records, was released in June 2011.

On July 14, 2009, Young's first four solo albums were reissued as remastered HDCD discs and digital downloads as discs 1–4 of the Original Release Series of the Archives.

Personal life

Young had a long-term relationship with actress Carrie Snodgress. The song "A Man Needs a Maid" from Harvest is inspired by him seeing her in the film *Diary of a Mad Housewife*. They met soon afterward and she moved in with him on his new ranch in northern California. The union produced a son, Zeke, who was born September 8, 1972 with what was thought to be cerebral palsy, but which doctors later attributed to a slight brain aneurysm before birth. They split up in 1975.

Young met future wife Pegi Young in 1974 when she was working as a waitress at a diner near his ranch, a story he tells in the 1992 song "Unknown Legend". They married in 1978 and have two children together, Ben and Amber. Ben has cerebral palsy. On July 29, 2014, Young filed for divorce after 36 years of marriage. The couple were musical collaborators and co-founded the Bridge School in 1986.

Instruments

Guitars

Young performing with Old Black in 2009

In 2003, Rolling Stone listed Young as eighty-third in its ranking of "The 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time" (although in a more recent version of the list, he has been moved up to seventeenth place), describing him as a "restless experimenter...who transform[s] the most obvious music into something revelatory." Young is a collector of second-hand guitars, but in recording and performing, he frequently uses just a few instruments, as is explained by his longtime guitar technician Larry Cragg in the film *Neil Young: Heart of Gold*. They include:

1953 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop. Nicknamed "Old Black", this is Young's primary electric guitar and is featured on *Rust Never Sleeps* (1979) and other albums. Old Black got its name from an amateur paintjob applied to the originally gold body of the instrument, sometime before Young acquired the guitar in the late 1960s. In 1972, a mini humbucker pickup from a Gibson Firebird was installed in the lead/treble position. This pickup, severely microphonic, is considered a crucial component of Young's sound. A Bigsby vibrato tailpiece was installed as early as 1969, and can be heard during the opening of "Cowgirl in the Sand" from *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*.

Martin D-45. His primary steel-string acoustic guitar, used to write "Old Man" and many other songs. It was one of four instruments bought by Stephen Stills for himself and his band-mates in CSNY in order to celebrate their first full concert at the Greek Theater in 1969.

Martin D-28. Nicknamed "Hank" after its previous owner, Hank Williams. Hank Williams, Jr., had traded it for some shotguns; it went through a succession of other owners until it was located by Young's longtime friend Grant Boatwright. The guitar was purchased by Young from Tut Taylor. Young has toured with it for over 30 years. A story about the guitar and the song it inspired, "This Old Guitar", can be seen about 50 minutes into the film Neil Young: Heart of Gold. It is Young's primary guitar for Prairie Wind(2005).

Vintage Martin D-18: Young used an old D-18 throughout his early days performing in coffee houses in Canada and on some early Buffalo Springfield work, before he received the D-45 from Stills. It can also be seen on unreleased footage from the Woodstock documentary, particularly on an exceptional acoustic duet of the Buffalo Springfield track "Mr. Soul" with Stills. The guitar has often been used to carry "dropped standard tuning" (DGCFA D) which Young often uses in concert. This allowed him to perform songs such as "Ambulance Blues" and "Don't Let It Bring You Down" live without having to tune all 6 strings onstage.

Other notable (or odd) instruments played by Young include:

Taylor 855 12-string, used in the first half of Rust Never Sleeps (1979).

1927 Gibson Mastertone, a six-string banjo guitar, a banjo body tuned like a guitar, used on many recordings and played by James Taylor on "Old Man".

Gretsch 6120 (Chet Atkins model). Before Young bought Old Black, this was his primary electric guitar during his Buffalo Springfield days.

Gretsch White Falcon. Young purchased a late 1950s model near the end of the Buffalo Springfield era; in 1969 he bought a stereo version of the same vintage guitar from Stephen Stills, and this instrument is featured prominently

during Young's early 1970s period, and can be heard on tracks like "Ohio", "Southern Man", "Alabama", "Words (Between the Lines of Age)", and "L.A.". It was Young's primary electric guitar during the Harvest (1972) era, since Young's deteriorating back condition (eventually fixed with surgery) made playing the much heavier Les Paul difficult.[133] This particular White Falcon is the stereo 6137, in which the signal from the three bass strings is separated from the signal from the three treble strings. Young typically plays this guitar in this stereo mode, sending the separate signals to two different amps, a Fender Deluxe and either a Fender Tremolux or a low-powered Tweed Fender Twin. The separation of the signals is most prominently heard on the Harvest (1972) song "Words".

Gibson Flying V, on the Time Fades Away tour.

Fender Broadcaster, on the Tonight's the Night (1975) album and tour.

Guild M-20, seen in the film Journeys.

Reed organ

Young owns an Estey reed organ, serial number 167272, dating from 1885, which he frequently plays in concert and which was recently restored. The instrument and its restoration are documented in *The Reed Society Quarterly* (30.1: 6ff); a photograph of the instrument is on the cover.

Amplification

Young uses various vintage Fender Tweed Deluxe amplifiers. His preferred amplifier for electric guitar is the Fender Deluxe, specifically a Tweed-era model from 1959. He purchased his first vintage Deluxe in 1967 for US\$50 from Saul Bettman's Music in Los Angeles and has since acquired nearly 450 different examples, all from the same era, but he maintains that it is the original model that sounds superior and is crucial to his trademark sound.

The Tweed Deluxe is almost always used in conjunction with a late-1950s Magnatone 280 (similar to the amplifier used by Lonnie Mack and Buddy Holly). The Magnatone and the Deluxe are paired together in a most unusual manner: the external speaker jack from the Deluxe sends the amped signal through a volume potentiometer and directly into the input of the Magnatone. The Magnatone is notable for its true pitch-bending vibrato capabilities, which can be heard as an electric piano amplifier on "See the Sky About to Rain". A notable and unique accessory to Young's Deluxe is the Whizzer, a device created specifically for Young by Rick Davis, which physically changes the amplifier's settings to pre-set combinations. This device is connected to footswitches operable by Young onstage in the manner of an effects pedal. Tom Wheeler's book *Soul of Tone* highlights the device on page 182/183.

Awards and recognition

Young's Star on Canada's Walk of Fame

2011 Juno Awards Artist of the Year, Adult Alternative Album of the Year, and Allan Waters Humanitarian Award

2011 Grammy Awards Best Rock Song "Angry World" written by Neil Young.

2010 Grammy Awards Best Art Direction on a Boxed/Special Limited Edition Package The Archives Vol. 1 1963–1972 – Neil Young, Gary Burden, Jenice Heo

Canadian Music Hall of Fame, 1982

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame He has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice: first in 1995 for his solo work and in 1997 as a member of Buffalo Springfield.

In 2006, Artist of the Year by the American Music Association.

As one of the original founders of Farm Aid (1985–), he remains an active member of the board of directors. For one weekend each October, in Mountain View, California, he and his wife host the Bridge School Concerts, which have been drawing international talent and sell-out crowds for nearly two decades with some of the biggest names in rock having performed at the event including Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie, The Who, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, Tom Waits, Thom Yorke of Radiohead, R.E.M, Foo Fighters, Metallica, Pearl Jam, Sonic Youth, The Smashing Pumpkins, Paul McCartney and Dave Matthews. The concerts are a benefit for the Bridge School, which develops and uses advanced technologies to aid in the instruction of children with disabilities.

Young's involvement stems at least partially from the fact that both of his sons have cerebral palsy and his daughter, like Young himself, has epilepsy.

Young was nominated for an Oscar in 1994 for his song "Philadelphia" from the film Philadelphia. Bruce Springsteen won the award for his song "Streets of Philadelphia" from the same film. In his acceptance speech, Springsteen said that "the award really deserved to be shared by the other nominee's song." That same night, Tom Hanks, when accepting the Oscar for Best Actor, gave credit for his inspiration to Young's song.

He was part owner of Lionel, LLC, a company that makes toy trains and model railroad accessories. In 2008 Lionel emerged from bankruptcy and his shares of the company were wiped out. He was instrumental in the design of the Lionel Legacy control system for model trains, and remains on the board of directors of Lionel. He has been named as co-inventor on seven U.S. patents related to model trains.

Young has twice received honorary doctorates. He received an honorary doctorate of music from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, in 1992, and an honorary doctorate of humane letters from San Francisco State University in 2006. The latter honour was shared with his wife Pegi for their creation of the Bridge School. In 2006, Young was given Manitoba's highest civilian honour when he was appointed to the Order of Manitoba. In 2009, he was appointed to Canada's second highest civilian order, the Order of Canada.

Rolling Stone magazine in 2000, ranked Young thirty-fourth in its list of the 100 greatest artists of all time, and in 2003, included five of his albums in its list of 500 greatest albums of all time.[140] In 2000, Young was inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame. In 2006, when Paste magazine compiled a "Greatest Living Songwriters" list, Young was ranked second behind Bob Dylan. (While Young and Dylan have occasionally played together in concert, they have never collaborated on a song together or played on each other's records.) He ranked thirty-ninth on VH1's 100 Greatest Artist of Hard Rock that same year. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame explained that while Young has "avoided sticking to one style for very

long, the unifying factors throughout Young's peripatetic musical journey have been his unmistakable voice, his raw and expressive guitar playing, and his consummate songwriting skill."

Young's political outspokenness and social awareness influenced artists such as Blind Melon, Phish, Pearl Jam, and Nirvana. Young is referred to as "the Godfather of Grunge" because of the influence he had on Kurt Cobain and Eddie Vedder and the entire grunge movement. Vedder inducted Young into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1995, citing him as a huge influence. Young is cited as being a significant influence on the experimental rock group Sonic Youth, and Thom Yorke of Radiohead. Yorke recounted of first hearing Young after sending a demo tape into a magazine when he was 16, who favourably compared his singing voice to Young's. Unaware of Young at that time, he bought *After the Gold Rush* (1970), and "immediately fell in love" with his work, calling it "extraordinary". Dave Matthews lists Young as one of his favorite songwriters and most important inspirations and covers his songs on occasion. The British indie band The Bluetones named their number one debut album after the song "Expecting to Fly" (written by Young when still with Buffalo Springfield) and have covered the song while touring. Young also inspired the singer-songwriter Noel Gallagher of Oasis, who covered "Hey Hey, My My (Into the Black)" on the live album *Familiar to Millions* (2000).

The Australian rock group Powderfinger named themselves after Young's song "Powderfinger" from *Rust Never Sleeps* (1979). The members of the Constantines have occasionally played Neil Young tribute shows under the name Horsey Craze.[143] While in Winnipeg on November 2, 2008, during the Canadian leg of his tour, Bob Dylan visited Young's former home in River Heights, where Young spent his teenage years. Dylan was interested in seeing the room where some of Young's first songs were composed.

Jason Bond, an East Carolina University biologist, discovered a new species of trapdoor spider in 2007 and named it *Myrmekiaphila neilyoungi* after Young, his favorite singer.

In 2001, Young was awarded the Spirit of Liberty award by the civil liberties group People for the American Way. Young was honored as the MusiCares Person of the Year on January 29, 2010, two nights prior to the 52nd Annual Grammy Awards. He was also nominated for two Grammy Awards: Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance for "Fork in the Road" and Best Boxed or Special Limited Edition Package for Neil Young Archives Vol. 1 (1963–1972). Young won the latter Grammy Award. In 2010, he was ranked No. 26 in Gibson.com's Top 50 Guitarists of All Time.

Juno Awards

Year	Category	Nominated work	Result
2011	Artist of the Year	Neil Young	Won
	Adult Alternative Album of the Year	Le Noise	Won
2008	Adult Alternative Album of the Year	Chrome Dreams II	Nominated
2007	Adult Alternative Album of the Year	Living With War	Won
2006	Adult Alternative Album of the Year	Prairie Wind	Nominated
	Jack Richardson Producer of the Year	"The Painter"	Won
	Songwriter of the Year	"The Painter",	
		"When God Made Me",	
		"Prairie Wind"	Nominated
2001	Best Male Artist	Neil Young	Won
	Best Roots & Traditional Album – Solo	Silver & Gold	Nominated
1997	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1996	Best Rock Album	Mirror Ball	Nominated

	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1995	Songwriter of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Won
	Entertainer of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1994	Single of the Year	"Harvest Moon"	Nominated
	Album of the Year	Harvest Moon	Won
1993	Songwriter of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1991	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1990	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1989	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1986	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1982	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1981	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated

1980	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1979	Male Vocalist of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated
1975	Composer of the Year	Neil Young	Nominated

Discography

Neil Young (1968)

Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere
(1969)

After the Gold Rush (1970)

Harvest (1972)

Time Fades Away (1973)

On the Beach (1974)

Tonight's the Night (1975)

Zuma (1975)

Long May You Run (1976)

American Stars 'n Bars (1977)

Comes a Time (1978)

Rust Never Sleeps (1979)

Hawks & Doves (1980)

Re-ac-tor (1981)

Trans (1982)

Everybody's Rockin' (1983)

Old Ways (1985)

Landing on Water (1986)

Life (1987)

This Note's for You (1988)

Eldorado (1989)

Freedom (1989)

Ragged Glory (1990)

Harvest Moon (1992)

Sleeps with Angels (1994)

Mirror Ball (1995)

Broken Arrow (1996)

Silver & Gold (2000)

Are You Passionate? (2002)

Greendale (2003)

Prairie Wind (2005)

Living with War (2006)

Living with War: "In the
Beginning" (2006)

Chrome Dreams II (2007)

Fork in the Road (2009)

Le Noise (2010)

Americana (2012)

Psychedelic Pill (2012)

Storytone (2014)

A Letter Home (2014)

The Monsanto Years (2015)

Pono

Young and his company PonoMusic are developed Pono a music download-service and dedicated music player focusing on "high-quality" recorded audio. The service and the selling of the player launched in October 2014.