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The year 1969 was golden for Kris Kristofferson, who wrote three iconic songs that year. "Sunday Morning Coming Down" became an anthem for Johnny Cash, Janis Joplin had her final hit with "Me and Bobby McGee," and Ray Price's remorseful take on "For the Good Times" remains timeless.

Here's Kristofferson talking about how he wrote each song:

"Sunday Morning Coming Down":

"I was writing about what I was living at the time," Kristofferson said. "I was living alone in a condemned apartment that cost \$50 a month, right on Music Row in Nashville. It was a dump. If you didn't have a family, Sundays were a pretty lonely time on Music Row. Everything was shut. The bars weren't even open.

"The song's form was probably helped out by my relationship with Mickey Newbury. I know the 'wishin' lord I was stoned' sounds like a Mickey Newbury line.

"John Cash always said I flew it in to Cash's backyard in a helicopter. But that wasn't the song I had at the time. As long as John cut it later and did me such a good turn by doing that, I'm willing to go along with whatever he said. But I had been pitching songs at John a long time. Every song I wrote I'd give to June Carter Cash or Cash's guitarist Luther Perkins to give to him. He knew who I was and he was very encouraging to me as a songwriter, but he never cut anything of mine. Luther told me he liked 'Best of All Possible Worlds,' and he was singing it on the way to a plane, but he never cut it.

"I don't know how he got 'Sunday Morning Coming Down.' Ray Stevens cut it first and made a beautiful record, but they never marketed it because it wasn't in the novelty field of the stuff he was doing. But I really did fly into John's yard, and I should have been shot out of the sky.

"I was trying to attract his attention. I had an old National Guard helicopter. He probably thought he had to record one of my songs or I'd blow them all up or something. I read somewhere he said, 'Kris got out of the helicopter with a beer in one hand and a tape in the other.' Never in my wildest dreams would I have flown a helicopter and drunk a beer at the same time. In fact, it's a physical impossibility. You gotta use both hands and both feet to fly a helicopter. But I would never dispute anything John Cash said."

"Me and Bobby McGee": "

"This is probably not the story everybody would like to hear. This was written on assignment which he doesn't like to do. Fred Foster (the founder of Monument Records, Kristofferson's label at the time) was acting like Fred Rose that is, being bossy. I used to work every other week in the Gulf of Mexico flying people on helicopters on the offshore rigs. Right before I left, he called and said, 'I got a song

title for you. It's 'Me and Bobby McKee.' Well, I thought he said 'McGee.' But songwriter Boudleaux Bryant had a secretary named Bobbi McKee so Fred said, 'Here's the hook: Bobby McGee is a she.' I thought, 'Oh, Jesus, I can't write this song.'

"I was flying around Baton Rouge at the time. The words came together over a couple of months. There was a Mickey Newbury song going through my head called 'Why Have You Been Gone So Long?' I kind of used that rhythm. Vince Matthews the Nashville songwriter and former Chicagoan who died earlier this year at age 63 tried to get me to change the line 'freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose' because he thought it didn't fit in with the great concrete imagery of the rest of the song.

"But we all used to tear apart songs to see what made them tick.

"I probably wrote the most when I was flying around by myself in the Gulf. He wrote 'Help Me Make It Through the Night' while sitting on an oil platform in the Gulf. I remember Bob Beckham (head of Kristofferson's Combine Music Publishing company) saying, 'Maybe you should go back out there in the Gulf.' I said, 'Maybe you should. It's just like prison out there.' I'm sure the isolation of flying made for a creative atmosphere."

"For the Good Times":

"That was a song about a relationship ending that was ending for me," he said. "It was a milestone for me, because producer Don Law had never cut anything of mine. Or Ray Price, who was worshipped by the guys I was hanging out with. He was a musician's musician. Guys like Willie and Roger had worked for him. He was recording with a big orchestra. I knew if he cut it with all those strings, 'For the Good Times' was going to be a hit. And it was."