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Singer-songwriter-producer Lee Hazlewood defied categorization and convention while creating a prickly desert sound best known in his song "These Boots Are Made For Walkin'," a 1966 hit for Nancy Sinatra. Mr. Hazlewood died Aug. 4 after a three-year battle with kidney cancer. He was 78.

Mr. Hazlewood also wrote the hits "Summer Wine" and "How Does That Grab You, Darlin'?" for Nancy Sinatra. He appeared as himself in the tripped-out 1967 Nancy Sinatra video "Some Velvet Morning."

Mr. Hazlewood and Sinatra were a darker version of Sonny and Cher.

He liked to call his sound "Cowboy Psychedelia."

Barton Lee Hazlewood was born in Mannford, OK. but began his musical career as Arizona disc jockey Eb X. Preston. In 1958 he became the first producer for the late guitar slinger Duane Eddy. Mr. Hazlewood and Eddy co-wrote the Eddy hits "Moovin'

and Groovin,’” “Rebel Rouser” and Shazam!” Mr. Hazlewood’s assignment was to think up the song titles.

It was also Mr. Hazlewood’s idea to overdub Los Angeles-based rhythm and blues saxophonist Plas Johnson onto “Moovin’ and Groovin’.”

“Lee really learned about sound,” Eddy told me in 1994. “That’s why some of my early records still hold up. He knew what he wanted to hear over Top 40 radio. I wanted to experiment and fool around with stereo. He didn’t like that at all. He said it took the guts out of it.”

Such aggressive minimalism is what endeared Mr. Hazlewood to Arizona compatriots in the band Calexico, who appeared on the 2002 tribute album “Total Lee,” and Sonic Youth drummer Steve Shelley, who began reissuing Mr. Hazlewood’s solo albums in the late 1990s.

At first, Mr. Hazlewood was reluctant to work with Nancy Sinatra.

"I didn't do second-generation artists," he told me in a 1995 interview before he appeared with Sinatra at the Park West in Chicago. "Her dad was around, but only in the terms of us recording in one studio and him being in another. Once Nancy walked in and said, 'Pops, I don't know what you guys are doing, but we're cutting hits on this side of the studio.' It broke the whole damn place up."

Mr. Hazlewood told me how they shaped Nancy Sinatra’s sassy image. “Her singing was a little too girlish for me,” he said. “The only thing I did was work on the lower part of her voice. For the lack of a better word, we made her a ballsy little girl. Nobody minds ballsy little girls. They hate ballsy big women. Then I started writing (songs) in that image for her. People give me credit for creating that image, which I did not.

“She took ‘Boots’ and ran with it.”

With Mr. Hazlewood as songwriter and producer, and Wrecking Crew guitarist Billy Strange (Beach Boys, Everly Brothers) arranger, ‘Boots’ climbed to No. 1 in February, 1966. The magic followed with her candy pop hit “Sugar Town” and the bluesy “Love Eyes.”

Mr. Hazlewood enjoyed writing with double entendres. The 1966 hit "Sugar Town" had goofy lyrics like "I never had a dog that liked me some . . .," but Mr. Hazlewood later told the Independent he wrote the song after watching kids drop LSD at a Los Angeles folk club.

Mr. Hazlewood's Park West appearance turned out to be his final Chicago gig, and it was memorable. He earned two standing ovations after stepping out of the shadows to join Sinatra for a half-hour set of duets that included "Sugar Town" and Dolly Parton's "Down From Dover," a compelling ballad about a woman whose man leaves before their stillborn baby arrives. Sinatra and Mr. Hazlewood recorded the song in 1972.

On her www.nancysinatra.com, Sinatra posted of Mr. Hazlewood, "He was my friend and my mentor. I will miss him terribly." Her remark is accompanied by an extensive Lee Hazlewood photo gallery.

Country music producer Jimmy Bowen (Garth Brooks, Merle Haggard) initially put Mr. Hazlewood together with Sinatra. Mr. Hazlewood also wrote the Dean Martin country hit "Houston," but Bowen knew Mr. Hazlewood for producing more than 20 of Eddy's hits and Mr. Hazlewood's nearly impossible task of producing the teen group Dino, Desi and Billy for Reprise Records, owned by Frank Sinatra. Mr. Hazlewood actually scored a 1965 hit, "I'm a Fool," with the trio that featured Dean Martin Jr. and Desi Arnaz Jr.

Mr. Hazlewood lasted one year with Dino, Desi and Billy, canceling his option by saying, "I didn't want those little leg-biters around me anymore. One was 13 years old, the other two were 12. It was hell on earth." Also in the 1960s Mr. Hazlewood formed his LHI label, which released the debut album from Gram Parsons' International Submarine Band. Mr. Hazlewood also released his own projects on LHI, including a duet album with Ann-Margret.

Mr. Hazlewood's final record, "Cake or Death," was released in January. One of the most endearing tracks is "T.O.M." (The Old Man)," which Mr. Hazlewood wrote for his wife. In his dusty baritone, Mr. Hazlewood sings, "*They still hug the snow / And have you seen the Old Man? / He's ready to go . . .*"