

*Tracy Chapman becomes first
Black woman to write top U.S.
country song*



A version of Chapman’s song Fast Car – which she solely wrote – has reached number one on US country chart, making history.

New York, July 9 (RHC)-- “You’ve got a fast car. I want a ticket to anywhere.” So goes the opening line of U.S. singer Tracy Chapman’s 1988 hit song Fast Car, a wistful and terse folk ballad about breaking out of bad situations.

More than 35 years later, the song has offered another breakthrough, making Chapman the first Black woman to have a sole writing credit on a number-one country song – a genre that has only recently seen

a limited increase in diversity in its mainstream.

On Monday afternoon, the song reached the top of Billboard's definitive Country Airplay chart, albeit a version recorded by country star Luke Combs. Rolling Stone reported that Chapman is only the fourth Black woman to have a writing credit of any kind on a top country song.

Billboard, meanwhile, noted that Chapman is only the second Black songwriter to have a sole writing credit on a number on Country Airplay since it was launched in 1990.

Sam Cooke's 1964 song Good Times had previously reached the top spot when covered by Dan Seals in 1990.

The country chart accession is the latest recognition of Chapman's intimate writing on Fast Car, which American Songwriter describes as "a subdued acoustic ballad about a young woman trying to escape the cycle of poverty."

That attempt at escape – "leave tonight, or live and die this way" – leads to a dead-end job and a dead-end relationship. In a final rejection, or reclamation, Chapman writes: "Take your fast car and keep on driving."

For her part, Chapman has generally avoided discussing the meaning of specific songs. She has also not publicly commented on the latest rise of Combs's version. But Fast Car has continued to show its staying power. Rolling Stone recently ranked it at 71 out of the 500 greatest songs of all time.

The song reached sixth on the Billboard Hot 100, considered the definitive United States music industry chart, following its 1988 release. Its popularity was boosted by Chapman's performance that year at Nelson Mandela's 70th Birthday Tribute at London's Wembley Stadium.

Fast Car went on to top the charts throughout Europe, and Chapman won the Grammy for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance. Regular covers of the single have seen Fast Car – including Chapman's version – reappear on the charts throughout the last three decades.

Meanwhile, Chapman's original version of the song has also been embraced as an LGBTQ anthem. "The way Chapman sings about a genderless couple leaving town to find a home in a city nearby is something all queer people can relate to," wrote Trish Bendix for the Into news site in 2018.

Amid the latest surge, some fans were quick to voice their preference for Chapman's original version over the version released by Combs.

"Fast Car loses all of its depth and meaning being covered by a white male HOWEVER, she's likely laughing all the way to the bank," wrote one Twitter user under the handle Mother Nature's Muse.

Combs must pay royalties to Chapman for use of the song. "You can always hope that it exposes more folks to her genius."

Canadian legislator Janis Irwin wrote: "Anyone who knows me knows that Fast Car by Tracy Chapman is one of my favourite songs of all time." "Anyway, I love that a new generation gets to experience her music," she added.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/cultura/327914-tracy-chapman-becomes-first-black-woman-to-write-top-us-country-song>



Radio Habana Cuba