



First charting just one month after Buddy's tragic death in 1959, *It Doesn't Matter Anymore* spent 20 weeks in the UK Top 20

It Doesn't Matter Anymore

BUDDY HOLLY

CORAL (1959)

Written for Buddy Holly by his friend Paul Anka, the song would give the Lubbock-born singer a posthumous No.1 in the UK...

WORDS BY STEVE O'BRIEN

For a man known for writing achingly sweet ballads, Paul Anka was, according to those that knew him early in his career, “a brat”. In an article written by Jeff Meshel, Buddy Holly’s rhythm guitarist Niki Sullivan said: “All the time he was getting into trouble, or doing something wrong. He just couldn’t sit still – a thousand, billion volts of energy.”

According to Sullivan, it was when Anka apologised to Holly after accidentally cutting the power to the onstage mics on a bill they were sharing, that their friendship blossomed. “From that incident, Buddy and Paul became very close,” stated Sullivan on the website Jeff Meshel’s World.

Paul Anka was, in every sense of the word, a prodigy. He recorded his first song at just 14 years old and scored his debut hit in 1957 at 16 with the self-penned *Diana*, which to this day is one of the best-selling singles by a Canadian artist. Other hits followed – *You Are My Destiny*, *Crazy Love*, *Lonely Boy*... this wunderkind from Ontario was a considerable chart rival to Holly at the time.

Which is what makes their friendship even more sweet. They should have been competitors, these two charismatic writer-performers, but formed a bond that remains rare among artists. So it was, that one of the last songs ever recorded by Buddy Holly, would be one penned for him by his teenage friend. *It Doesn’t Matter Anymore* may not, like *Peggy Sue* or *Words Of Love*, have a Buddy songwriting credit, but it’s still one of his defining tracks, and would make history as the first posthumous UK No.1, hitting the top spot as it did just a couple of months after Holly’s tragic death on 3 February 1959.

It Doesn’t Matter Anymore was laid down on 21 October 1958 as part of Buddy’s final studio session at New York’s Pythian Temple, alongside *Moondreams*, *True Love Ways* and *Raining In My Heart*. Known by fans as “the string sessions”, it would be the first and only time Holly worked with an orchestra, in this case an 18-piece ensemble composed of former NBC Symphony Orchestra members under the conductorship of Dick Jacobs.

It’s been claimed in the decades since that it was producer Norman Petty who chose those four songs, as an attempt to break Buddy from his rock’n’roll roots. Certainly, they’re among the least rock’n’roll of Holly’s recordings, but Petty always denied



In 1957, still just 16, Paul Anka scored his breakthrough hit with the self-penned *Diana*

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that he had anything to do with the choice of tracks. “Buddy picked the four songs himself,” Petty told the International Songwriters Association. “It was fun to try and get sounds that were different. I accept that I was probably to ‘blame’ for most of the changes, but it was always with the thought in mind to build something nice around Buddy, that was tasty in the way I viewed music, and yet acceptable in the way in which Buddy viewed music.”

By all accounts, it was a straightforward session, lasting just three-and-a-half hours, with Holly completing *It Doesn’t Matter Anymore* on his first attempt. Though its strings-backed sound was new to fans, the subject matter wasn’t. A classic tale about moving on from a relationship after suffering from a broken heart, it was written specifically for Buddy. As Anka recalled to RAM Entertainment, Holly told his friend he “wanted to do something like I did with *You Are My Destiny* with the violins.”

The song was delivered to Holly on the day of the recording itself. Presented to the session director Dick Jacobs, with barely any time to coordinate the violins or add any complex string elements, the orchestrator penned a pleasing pizzicato arrangement that perfectly complimented the singer’s evocative vocal. *It Doesn’t Matter Anymore*

was issued by Coral Records as a single, with Felice and Boudleaux Bryant’s *Raining In My Heart* as its flip, in January 1959, less than a month before Holly’s death. It would make it to No.13 on the US Billboard chart, yet would reach No.1 in the UK in April 1959, remaining there for three weeks. It also hit No.1 in both Canada and Ireland, and peaked at No.2 in the Australian charts.

“*It Doesn’t Matter Anymore* has a tragic irony about it now,” Anka was quoted by the *NME* at the time. “But at least it will help look after Buddy Holly’s family. I’m giving my composer’s royalty to his widow – it’s the least I can do.”

Anka would go on to cover the song on his 1963 album *21 Golden Hits*, while other versions have been waxed by artists as diverse as Wanda Jackson, Linda Ronstadt, Don McLean, Hank Marvin, Waylon Jennings and New Zealand singer-songwriter Mark Williams, who took the track to No.1 in his home country in 1977. One of the more notable covers is indie band Lucius’ stripped-down version recorded in 2014 with rockabilly guitarist JD McPherson.

Just four months after recording *It Doesn’t Matter Anymore*, Holly was dead. But this warm and gentle earworm’s success would be a fine tribute to the singer and remains one of his best-loved songs.

He may not have written it, but it’s every inch a Buddy Holly number – and one that’s never been surpassed by the dozens of covers that have followed. *

