

[Through a relationship of almost a half century, Jack has often played the role of the alter ego of Johnny Cash, the lighter side of the Man In Black. It unquestionably added to Cash's mass popularity, made him more accessible without diminishing his gravitas. Jack's songs break through the tension of Folsom Prison – comic relief that makes the heavy stuff stronger – like the goofy gravediggers tossing skulls around in Hamlet.]

1976 INTERVIEW

Q: What kind of personality do you think Shakespeare had?

JC: I'm not even sure that he was a person. He might have been a committee. And nobody can really prove he really existed.

Q: Kind of like Jesus Christ.

JC: Yeah... along those lines. I think it might have been Queen What's Her Name that hired some guy named Shakespeare to go down and put on her plays.... play the role of some guy named William Shakespeare. I just made that one up. (laugh) I'm more interested in things from the standpoint of how I would make a movie about it. If I was going to do a movie about Shakespeare I'd maybe start with the premise that he was a woman who hired this male actor to get out and play her.

Q: She'd stay at home and write it and send him out 'cause women didn't do stuff like that.

JC: Right, not if they're queens. Because Shakespeare took the tickets and everything.

Q: He did?

JC: So I heard ...I wasn't there, you know. Second-hand information ... but I hear he would take up the tickets as the show starts. He was the director, an actor...not as good an actor as he was the other things.

Q: So you can kind of identify with him?

JC: In the sense of the show goes...you know... put on a show. If you have to write the thing. That's the reason I wrote songs in the first place ... because you need a song.

Q: To do a record?

JC: Yeah. I could figure that one out when I was still in the Marine Corps. See I planned to go right to the Grand Ole Opry when I got out of the Marine Corps. Didn't work out quite that way. But anyway, even back in the Marine Corps, I knew that I needed some songs to sing ... original things ... so where are you going to get some? So I started writing them. Now I got a whole lotta songs and books here so I don't need to write any more songs ... sing them now... I got plenty of songs to sing. (laugh)