

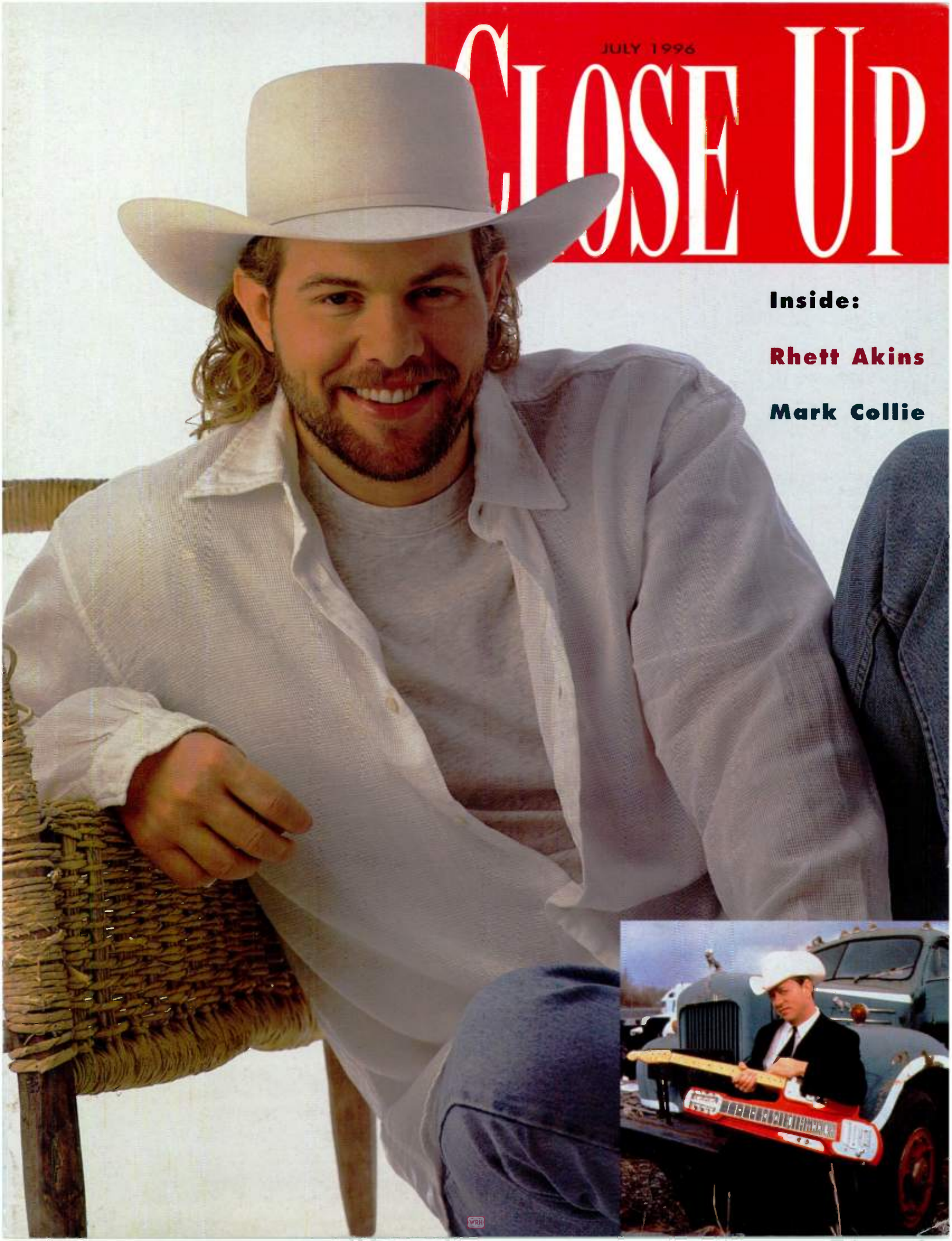
JULY 1996

CLOSE UP

Inside:

Rhett Akins

Mark Collie



"...I like to have all the different styles on my records."

**-Rhett Akins
page 24**



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Separations and Film: **COMMERCIAL ENGRAVING**
Printing: **HARRIS PRESS**

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CLOSE UP MAGAZINE (ISSN 0896-372X) IS THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION, INC., ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203-4312. (615) 244-2840. AVAILABLE TO CMA MEMBERS ONLY. CLOSE UP'S SUBSCRIPTION PRICE OF \$18 PER YEAR IS INCLUDED IN MEMBERSHIP DUES. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO CMA CLOSE UP, ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203.

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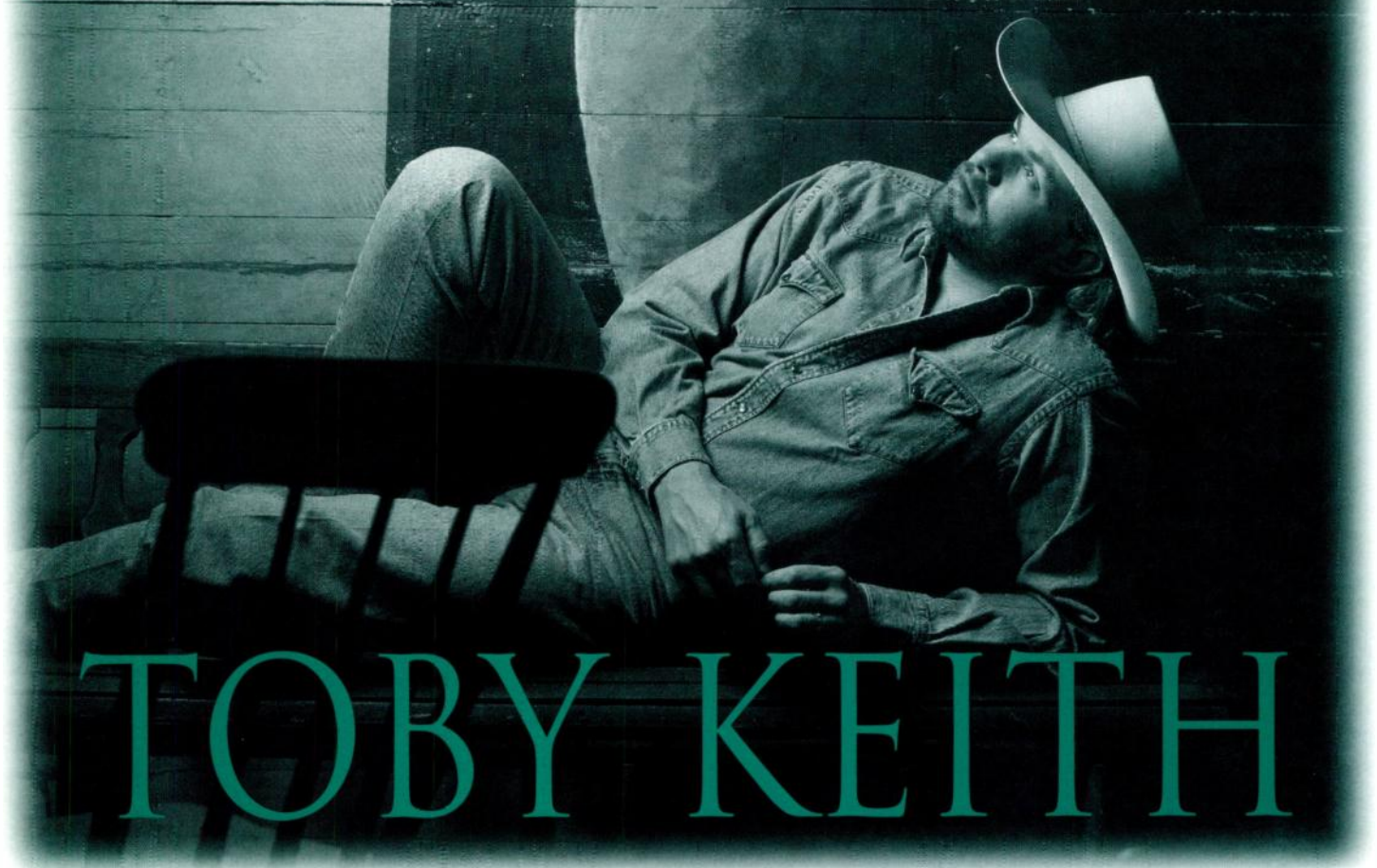


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TOBY KEITH

With *BLUE MOON*, his latest recording effort, Toby Keith demonstrates once more his exceptional vocal prowess and cleverly crafted songwriting abilities. He also takes on a new role - co-producer of the project with veteran Nelson Larkin. The lp has garnered rave reviews and has already generated a chart-topping hit, "Does That Blue Moon Ever Shine On You". Toby simply states his belief as to why this album is already doing so well by saying, "I was more prepared for this one than I was the last one."

He understands the value of evaluating his musical evolution project by project. "On the very first one. I had tons of material written, just stockpiled. Harold (Shedd) and Nelson were producing, so I really didn't know too much about any of it. We just picked out seven or eight things that we agreed on and that we all thought were hits, and they ran it through. The second time we went in was during the transitional period where Harold was going from vice president (of Mercury Nashville) to president of Polydor (now A&M Nashville). I was on my third single from the first album, and everybody was trying to figure out who the guy was singing the cowboy song ('Should've Been A

Cowboy'). Doing five or six interviews a day, touring a different town every night, I wasn't used to any of it at the time, 1993. Then they said hey, you need a new album. We had a five-month window to work in and be ready. The whole process was pushed and forced and hurried. As soon as I got done with the mastering on *BOOMTOWN*, I knew that I wasn't prepared (for the next album). And I started on *BLUE MOON*. I started on that album in '94."

"THE MORE SUCCESSFUL YOU GET, THE MORE YOU OPEN YOURSELF UP."

Many of the songs Toby wrote for *BLUE MOON* are about lost love or recovering from lost love, a rather odd topic for someone as happily married as he is. "I think they were just written more about

relationships as opposed to dialing in on advice or love. The last album was kind of blue collar. There was a place on *BOOMTOWN* where I said I wish I had a good strong love ballad to throw out right now. And I didn't have one on the album to go to. Subconsciously I maybe leaned that way a little more while I was writing this one. Every album has had a little bit of a different theme to it. Your fans remember your album more if it has a kind of theme, a kind of character and personality."

Fortunately for Toby, writing is a natural process. "I think I just happen to write in a somewhat commercial zone. There's a song on here called 'A Woman's Touch'...there aren't songs like that on the radio. They're different enough, but yet there's something still commercial about them. I'm thankful for that. I don't have to worry about getting airplay. If someone says, 'We don't care about radio airplay,' that's because they aren't getting any airplay. So I'd rather be honest about it and say that I'm thankful that my stuff is what radio likes to play."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22...



The setting is Green's Grocery, a little club in the town Leiper's Fork, just 45 minutes outside of Nashville. It's early morning, and the club is closed for business when Giant recording artist Mark Collie walks in with the owner, his friend Aubrey Preston, and helps himself to a glass of iced tea before pulling up a chair to talk.

With the sound of Hank Williams wafting through the speakers over the stage in the center of the room, Mark explains that he lives just a few minutes down the road, so it's become a favorite hangout for him and other singer/songwriters like Rodney Crowell and Guy Clark who've recently performed during one of the club's weekly Tuesday and Friday night showcases.

Mark points to old instruments and other reminders of days gone by adorning the walls. Yet with each showcase, the club attracts a packed house of patrons who discover something new each time they visit.

And as he talks about his music and his career, it's easy to see why Mark feels so at home. A native of Waynesboro, Tennessee, Mark grew up playing Country Music in honky-tonks along the Alabama state line and later added rockabilly to his style after playing road houses around Memphis. Through it all, he's

maintained an appreciation for his musical roots while constantly trying to add something new.

His latest lp, TENNESSEE PLATES, is filled with characters in search of themselves and dreams never realized. With each song, Mark is careful to consider how his delivery will affect what each listener gains from the performance. He's found that simplicity is the key.

"Our first responsibility is to make original records with the songs that we write and songs that we choose to interpret."

"This year in my show I'm trying to do some things that I haven't done in a while, like stripping it back to just me and a guitar. I want to get more in touch with the listener. Sometimes shows now are so big and grandiose with lights and bombs bursting in air that they become more of a circus experience than a musical experience. I'm trying not to be sucked into the superficial end of things."

Creatively, Mark feels that TENNESSEE PLATES is one of his best works to date. He penned seven of the 11 songs on the album.

"Making a Giant record was a great opportunity for me because it put me in a situation where I could work with James Stroud, somebody whose instincts I greatly respect. He makes a lot of good records.

We've been friends for several years, and we've talked about making a record together. It just seemed like an opportunity to me to do something different that would stimulate me and make me go for new music. Our first responsibility is to make original records with the songs that we write and songs that we choose to interpret."

Although he says he's not a very disciplined writer, Mark has learned to follow his instincts when it comes to his subject matter. Sometimes, he says, the inspiration is right there if you'll take time to listen.

"You have to get out and live a little bit in between writing. Or just be quiet. In my business, when I have so many things to do from performing to interviews, you really don't spend any time listening to anybody else or to your own inner voice.

"I have to find time to do that. I think that's one of the great things about being out like this. I like to get in the truck and just drive. Driving makes me relax enough to think clearly. I'm in a writing mode most of the time, and as I get ready to make a record, I'll bring in the songs that I've written and sit down and listen to them. Sometimes I'll work them up and start doing them live with the band.

"If there's something that I really believe in and have expressed properly, then I'll lobby for it on the record. At the same time, I'm always listening to other writers like Trey Bruce and John Hiatt and Tony Joe White and people who've done new material and make suggestions. I consider those and try to see how they fit with where I am now as a recording artist."

Sometimes, it's the songs themselves that help Mark measure where he's at personally and professionally.

"Life, as we all know, continues to change for all of us. Our opinions change. That's kind of what we have to find as songwriters - what our point of view really is.

"The title cut, 'Tennessee Plates', is a brilliant piece of work from a songwriter standpoint. It was written by John Hiatt and Mike Porter and draws a really complete picture of several characters. It really stimulates your thinking. For some people, it's just a party record about a guy and a girl out stealing cars and robbing banks. It's kind of a satirical look at a crime spree. But it's also a pretty close observation or expression of romance and danger and what people will do for love. Sometimes people will break the law for love or satisfaction or for lust. To me, it's a fresh and original idea that deserves to be heard.

"It's the same way with 'Spirit Of A Boy, Wisdom Of A Man', written by Trey Bruce. That song provides a very unique perspective of how a man sees himself and wrestles with the decisions that we make and how we live with those decisions. It's the evolution of the life experience."

At the beginning of the year, Mark says he made a decision to slow down the pace of his schedule in order to make time for other things.

"One of the greatest dangers we have is becoming complacent and repetitive."

a book on his experience.

"In Bosnia, we would perform at base camps. That's 100 - 125 people. Sometimes they'd be in a bombed out area or a building that they had patched together to make a shelter or a barracks. Sometimes it would be in a tent or a bunker. We played in a tent across the border. There was barely enough room for Lisa and I to stand. It was basically a briefing tent with a big map on the back where they would come up with their strategies. Guys would come off their tanks to listen to a few songs and then go get back on. It was every circumstance you can imagine.

"I was totally inspired and uplifted to see our men and women do the kind of job they can do in the most difficult of circumstances and realize that we bring hope to people that have very little of it in their lives. That is an important responsibility that I think few of us as Americans realize. I'm as guilty as anyone of waking up everyday and taking for granted that I was born by the grace of God in the state of Tennessee as a free American citizen.

"To see the countries torn by civil war and oppressed by other things out of their control is so moving that it's really beyond description. I tried to write it into some songs. Coming away from the Bosnia experience was enlightening, sobering and inspirational."

Back in Nashville, Mark is also involved in other good causes. After being diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 20, Mark decided to use his talents to educate others about the disease. The Mark Collie Race for Diabetes Cure combines music and racing to raise money for diabetes research. Last year's event raised over \$400,000.

"The race provided a vehicle that would allow me to invite my friends to do something they don't get to do. They wouldn't be required to sing or bring a band. It provided an opportunity to raise the level of awareness very quickly among Country Music listeners and racing fans and make them aware that diabetes is one of the leading causes death in this world."

Ever on the go, Mark looks at his watch and realizes he's late for an appointment with another notable songwriter. So even though he's vowed to slow down, his need to constantly be challenged doesn't leave much of a chance for that.

"One of the great dangers we have is becoming complacent and repetitive. I try to be aware and not let it happen to me. It's very easy to do. So I keep looking for ways to stay in touch with that and the songs. I want to communicate." **CU**

"You have to get out and live a little bit in between writing."

- Mandy Wilson

AUSTRALIA COMES TO MUSIC CITY

The Australian music market is "wide open" to taking in some of America's Country Music artists as well as sharing some of its own talented stars, experts said during an Australian Music Seminar hosted by Warner/Reprise Nashville on June 7. Led by AristoMedia's Jeff Walker (a native of Australia), representatives of Australian radio, publishing, record labels and other music-related executives shared their knowledge with a packed house of Nashville movers and shakers.

"The door's wide open. We're keen as a bean. Let's just get the communication going," said Trevor Smith, an acclaimed radio programmer who recently helped launch KICK AM in Sydney. "Australian's aren't fickle. Once they develop an interest and relationship with an artist, they will stick with him through thick and thin. The mindset of some radio, label executives and the media is that Country is Country & western, hay bales and so on. Once that is overcome, we will succeed."

Gina Mendello, a Los Angeles native who now works for Sony Music in Australia, agreed that there is a market for U.S. Country artists down under. "What needs to happen is for artists to

get interested in Australia. They make so much money in the U.S., it's tough to interest them to leave. But the minute they come to the country, sales go from 5-10,000 to gold and beyond," she said. The best time to make an Australian foray is in January, February and March, when the weather is nice and touring in the U.S. is slow, she suggested.

Trisha Yearwood's success is a good example, said Jeff Chandler, who handles Yearwood's Australian career as well as manages some of the country's biggest artists. Yearwood recorded a duet with Lee Kernaghan - Australia's king of Country - and the song went to number one. "Because of that, she is well-accepted," Chandler pointed out. "It likely tripled her album sales there."

Australian artists performed during the seminar as well as at a standing-room-only showcase at Ace of Clubs, hosted by Yearwood. Several of the performers remained in Nashville to write with local songwriters and introduce their material to the Nashville industry.



Above: Troy Cassar-Daley demonstrates his vocal and songwriting prowess for the Music City audience. Below left: Trisha Yearwood joins Australia's Lee Kernaghan for a duet. Below right: Gina Jeffries performs some of her hits from down under



International Press Reception

CMA and BMI hosted a reception for international media representatives during Fan Fair. Numerous artists and industry executives gathered to welcome the worldwide press to Music City.

-Photos by Chris Hollo



Linda Davis and Australian artist Mark O'Shea enjoy a chat while an Australian film crew catches the action.



Clay Walker and Georges Lang of Radio-Tele-Luxembourg enjoy a spirited conversation.



BMI's Roger Sovine and CMA's Ed Benson welcome the international media to a special reception held at BMI.

INTERNATIONALUPDATE

✦ Mary Chapin Carpenter and Lyle Lovett will co-headline a major arena tour of the U.K. in September. Stops include Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham, London and Dublin. They will work separate sets with their own groups; Lyle working with his Large Band. Carpenter most recently toured the U.K. in May 1995, selling out 11 shows. Lovett last toured there in September 1994, including two sold-out shows at London's Royal Festival Hall.

✦ CMT: Country Music Television is now available in 17 cities throughout South Africa, including Cape Town, Johannesburg, East London and Pretoria. The network will be available as part of the MultiChoice DSTV (digital satellite television) bouquet from Pan Am Sat's PAS-4 satellite. CMT also recently reached an agreement with Cablevision de Espana to launch in Spain.

✦ After a performance in Germany as part of a CMA-organized delega-

tion to Europe, John Berry was invited to participate in one of area's largest rock festivals featuring artists such as Sting, Alanis Morissette and Bryan Adams. Berry was the only Country artist at the festival outside of Cologne, Germany. CMA board members and staff as well as representatives from various aspects of the music industry traveled to London, Zurich, Amsterdam and Hamburg to meet with retailers, corporate executives and members of the music industry from those countries.

BACK·TO·BACK

Grammy-nominated performer Junior Brown first got his start playing in bands in Austin before going solo in the '80s. It was then that he invented his own guitar hybrid, the "guit-steel", a double-necked instrument combining the standard six-string guitar with a steel guitar. The "guit steel" has become Junior's trademark, enabling him to dazzle audiences everywhere from the Grand Ole Opry to rock showcases on the West Coast.

Most recently, Junior has been on tour with the Mavericks. He says the band is fun to work with, and he feels lucky because both of their styles appeal to a wide variety of people.

"I have a lot of fans with different musical tastes. The crowd that the Mavericks and I attract are sort of intermingled. A lot of them come to see me because they're yelling the words to my songs."

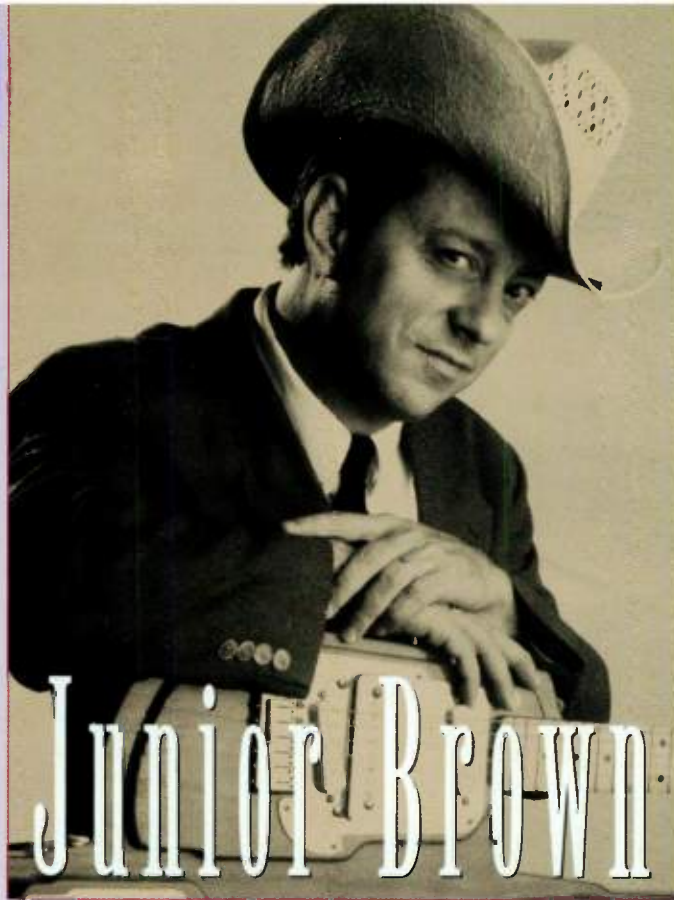
A large part of Junior's appeal lies in his musical dexterity. The idea for the "guit steel" came to him in a dream.

"I just always liked to have the guitar and the steel. I used them in just about every song I play, so it was difficult to plug one in and unplug the other and sing at the same time. I got the idea to make an instrument that I could switch back and forth during the song.

"I hear people saying that they would like to have one. But I've been so busy that I can't get into any type of marketing."

Junior has just released his third lp, *SEMI-CRAZY*. He wrote seven out of 10 cuts.

"When I started writing songs in the mid-'80s, I realized that if I had enough songs that I could integrate with my steel style, I could really have something. Before that I didn't really have any songs that I'd written. I think that is what gave me the confidence. I could record them rather than doing covers."



Along with his instrumental prowess, Junior's sense of humor also adds to musical appeal. His song "My Wife Thinks Your Dead" puts a new twist to the tale of meeting up with an old flame.

"That one really catches on. I wrote that in about 15-20 minutes. I had that really funny title, and I thought I could write a story around it."

Junior is also an accomplished producer and admits he enjoys the creative control.

"I've had a lot of trial and error spending money in the studio trying to get some good sounds. That's how you learn. By the time I did my first Curb lp, *TWELVE SHADES OF BROWN*, I had it figured out. Every

time you go in, you learn a little bit. I've got a pretty good handle on things, but it's taken me a while."

Junior's wife Tanya Rae plays rhythm guitar and sings backup vocals in his band.

"If I listen to too much stuff, it distracts me, and I don't come up with original ideas."

"It makes the travel workable in many ways because I'm not missing my wife. She takes care of all the business and everything. She's got a lot of computer skills so she oversees all of that. That's good too. She enjoys that.

"We haven't written songs together, but I'm always asking her opinion. I want to know what she thinks."

Ernest Tubb and Jimi Hendrix are also sources of inspiration, though Junior says he wants to remain true to himself.

"They're two of many, many influences. I've kind of cut the umbilical cord on a lot of these influences because I'm trying to be myself and do things my own way. But Tubb and Hendrix are definitely two people I revere musically.

"If I listen to too much stuff, it distracts me, and I don't come up with original ideas. I know that sounds odd, but I find the less that I listen to, the more I can write. It's just a big computer in your mind, and whatever finds its way in is going to find its way out. I'm trying to make the things that come out come more from me." **GU**

-Mandy Wilson

The second ballot for the 30th annual CMA Awards will be mailed to all individual CMA members on July 8. Any act, record or song receiving 10 or more nominations on the first ballot will appear on the second ballot.

Upon receiving the second ballot, members vote for their top five choices in each category. After these results are tabulated, the five receiving the most votes in each category will be announced at a press conference on August 13 and will appear on the final ballot, which will be mailed on August 22. On this final ballot, members vote for one nominee in each category.

The eligibility period for all 12 award categories runs from June 1, 1995 through May 31, 1996.

Winners will be announced during the live broadcast of "The 30th Annual CMA Awards" on Wednesday, October 2. The gala telecast will begin on CBS-TV at 8 p.m. EDT.

The entire balloting process is conducted and certified by the international accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche.

Staff members of CMA do not vote for the awards, nor do they handle or tabulate any of the three ballots.



Second CMA Awards Ballot Set To Mail On July 8

CMA AWARDS BALLOTING SCHEDULE

July 8	Second ballot mailed to all CMA members in good standing
August 8	Deadline to return second ballot to Deloitte & Touche
August 13	CMA Awards finalists announced at press conference
August 22	Final ballot mailed to all CMA members in good standing
September 25	Deadline to return final ballot to Deloitte & Touche
October 2	Winners announced on live CMA Awards telecast, CBS-TV, 8 p.m. EDT

CMA AWARDS TICKET INFORMATION

Ticket order forms for the 30th Annual CMA Awards were mailed to CMA's sterling and organizational members on July 1. The gala event featuring Country Music's most popular entertainers will be broadcast live on CBS Television from Nashville's Grand Ole Opry House on Wednesday, October 2.

If you have not received your order form by July 15, contact CMA's special projects department at (615) 244-2840.

Remember: CMA Awards tickets are for use by CMA members only. Tickets to the private event are not sold to the general public.



MARKETING

with Country Music

The first annual Marketing With Country Music conference, held May 8-10 at Nashville's Opryland Hotel, was a resounding success according to panelists, registrants, sponsors and organizers. The three-day seminar, sponsored by CMA and ADVERTISING AGE, brought hundreds of marketing and advertising executives to Music City to familiarize them with the selling power of Country Music.

Keith Reinhard, CEO of DDB Needham Worldwide, kicked off the agenda with a rousing keynote address, showing examples of how his agency has utilized Country Music and its entertainers for over 25 years. "Country Music is a unique and powerful resource for marketers who know how to use it," Reinhard affirmed. After showing numerous examples featuring artists such as Reba McEntire, Loretta Lynn, Mark Chesnutt, Trisha Yearwood, Tom T. Hall, Hoyt Axton and others, Reinhard stressed, "Country Music artists are clear, concise communicators...Mainstream consumers connect with Country artists more and more every year." He also stated, "There is no better medium than Country Music."

In-depth panel sessions provided numerous forums for registrants to learn about the various aspects of implementing marketing programs with



Lorrie Morgan puts Wrangler's Jonathon Agin in her show at the Ryman Auditorium.

Country Music. CMA Executive Director Ed Benson launched the sessions with a look at the Country Music audience, hosted by Bob Lobdell of The Cold Spring Harbor Group. After Lobdell familiarized attendees with the strength and scope of Country Music consumers, panel topics included a variety of subjects.

During "Corporate Success With Country Music", moderated by Mike Martinovich of Mansfield/Martinovich Associates, panelists Roger Blankstein of Fruit of the Loom, Stephen Dessau of Track Marketing and Rich Reider of Miller Brewing Company outlined the success stories they've experienced by integrating Country Music into their brand marketing objectives.



Conference registrants pause for a brief pitch in between panel sessions.

(l to r) Billy Montana, BlackHawk's Henry Paul, Ed Erhardt of ADVERTISING AGE, CAA's John Huie and CMA's Ed Benson kick off the Marketing With Country Music conference aboard the General Jackson.



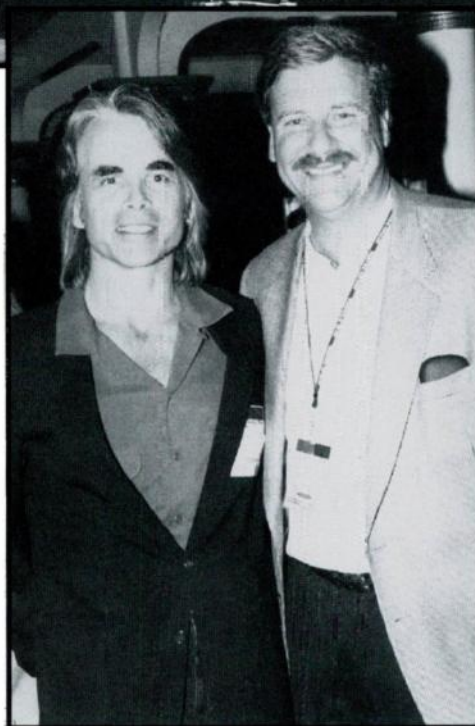
(l to r) Lee Roy Parnell, Suzy Bogguss, Mark Collie and Steve Wariner were part of the Marketing With County Music entertainment.



Country Music Marketing Strategy: Driving Sales and Traffic with Country Music". After presenting an historical overview of Country artists and their corporate ties (dating back to Hank Williams selling flour and Flatt & Scruggs acting as pitchmen for Martha White), McCullough stated, "The process is part creative, part

Dessau summarized Frito-Lay's three-year sponsorship of Reba McEntire, explaining that Frito was seeking far more than sponsorship. The company "was looking for excitement at the retail end." McEntire shared Frito's goal, seeking a longterm marketing relationship. As the program expanded, Dessau pointed out, Frito actively worked toward involving all of McEntire's partners including MCA Records and Bantam Books. He concluded by stating that Frito has seen dramatic results in each market in which McEntire appears, where sales of Frito products increase 40 percent on the average.

Dick McCullough, president of E.H. Brown Advertising, moderated "The Anatomy of a



Hal Ketchum (left) greets Ed Erhardt, publisher of The Ad Age Group, during a welcome reception aboard the General Jackson.

business." He mentioned three key elements to a successful promotion: interest, credibility and association. "Keeping a lot of balls in the air at the same time is the secret to successful integrated marketing," McCullough said.

Panelist John Davidoff of DDB Needham Chicago offered the concept of "better ideas, better results", adding, "Sponsorship is a powerful means of persuasion." He provided six elements essential to success: 1) using the artist as a means to achieve marketing objectives; 2) opening new channels through cross-promotions, creating a win/win situation; 3) building the value of the artist; 4) incorporating innovative public



Wynonna greets registrants just prior to her show at Starwood Amphitheatre.

relations; 5) flexibility of planning; and 6) having a good legal agreement which spells out the expectations of both parties.

Bill Lardie, president of Anderson Merchandisers, set a lofty goal for his company, which sells Country Music to Wal-Mart. With approximately 30 percent of Country Music sales to its credit, Wal-Mart wants to double those sales in the next two to three years. "I need your help," Lardie stated. "I need you to be more creative so we can sell more Country Music."

Registrants were particularly interested in learning who in the Country Music industry to contact in order to get an artist involved in their product. Moderator Stan Mores brought together a panel of Country Music "heavyweights" to address the issue. Gary Borman, manager of Dwight Yoakam, Mary Chapin Carpenter and Faith Hill, among others, advised, "Call anyone connected to the artist who ultimately will lead to the manager." He cautioned that marketers should identify their needs

before making contact, taking into consideration compatibility and having a sensitivity to the artist's image. "With a music artist, maintaining an image is one of the most crucial things you can do," Borman advised. "Get in and plan early... Sit down with the appropriate personnel and talk to them before you do your media plan." He concluded with, "It's when you call and why you call that's really important."

Booking agent John Huie of CAA also advocated preplanning

from the corporate level. He cautioned that a grocery list (meet & greets, front row tickets, etc.) doesn't always implement artistic ideas. He reminded marketers not to overlook the creativity available from the artist. "There needs to be a shopping list of what the product line wants, but also, does the artist have any ideas the product can benefit from?" Huie also pointed out that not all deals are based on dollars. "There are things we look at that just enhance the artist's image. It's not all about money."

Randy Goodman, RCA Label Group Nashville, helmed a panel featuring representatives from sponsorship and promotional agencies. Panelists Lee Heiman, Track Marketing, Steve Knill, GMR Marketing, and Brian Murphy and Marc Oswald, both of Warner/Avalon, presented the four key components of the agent/client relationship. Heiman discussed the initial dialogue, in which the client's goals and objectives come to light. Oswald examined project development, during which the agency team puts together a presentation for the client.

Following this step, Knill explained how a project is executed. "The event marketing agency is the central communication resource", he stated, adding that the agency works with all entities involved in the deal. The final evaluation examines a multitude of areas, Murphy explained, including on-site factors such as signage, ticket giveaways, etc.; advertising and promotion in radio, print and tv; and in-store efforts, point-of-sale programs, etc.

The conference was concluded with a closing keynote presented by Bill Farley, Chairman/CEO of Fruit of the Loom. In his remarks, he outlined current Fruit of the Loom campaigns in which



Bryan White makes an early morning appearance for a special acoustic set.

Marc Oswald (center) answers a question from the floor as (l to r) moderator Randy Goodman and panelists Lee Heiman, Steve Knill and Brian Murphy listen in.



BlackHawk's Henry Paul welcomes these Marketing With Country Music registrants to Music City.

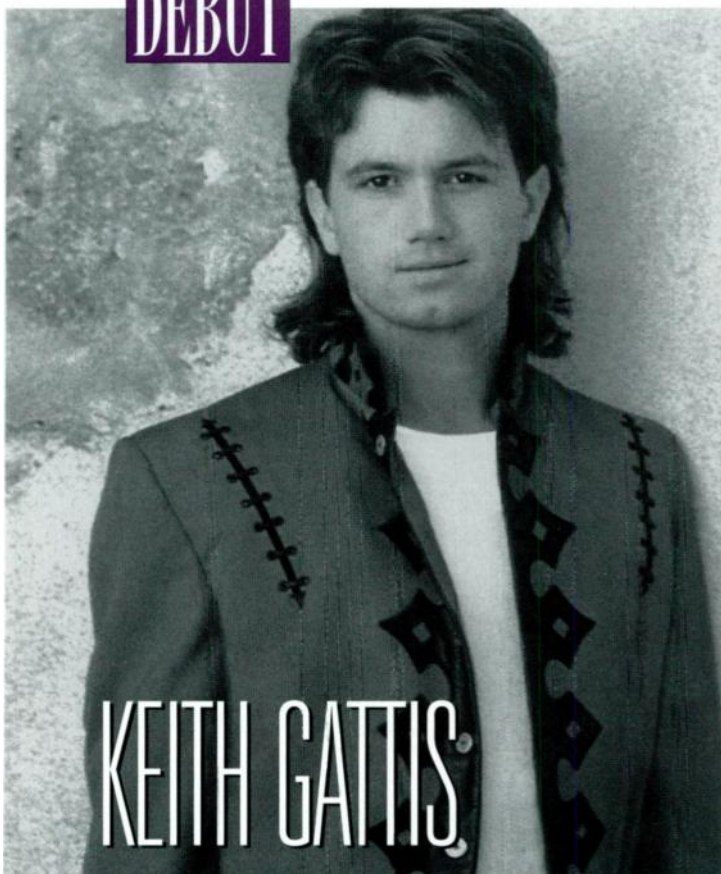
Country Music plays a key role, including the July 13 CountryFest to be held in Atlanta.

Registrants were also treated to numerous musical performances. Following a welcoming reception aboard the General Jackson which was attended by Bryan White, Hal Ketchum, Mark Collie, BlackHawk's Henry Paul, Billy Montana, Mindy McCready, Davis Daniel, The Cox Family, newcomer Ray Vega and other artists, Lorrie Morgan entertained during a special show at Nashville's famed Ryman Auditorium. Registrants also saw BlackHawk and Wynonna at Starwood Amphitheatre. During the conference, Bryan White entertained with an acoustic set, and Lee Roy Parnell, Steve Wariner, Suzy Bogguss and Mark Collie conducted a guitar pull.

Warner/Avalon's Brian Murphy (standing) gives an overview of the Fruit of the Loom Country Comfort Series during a panel session.



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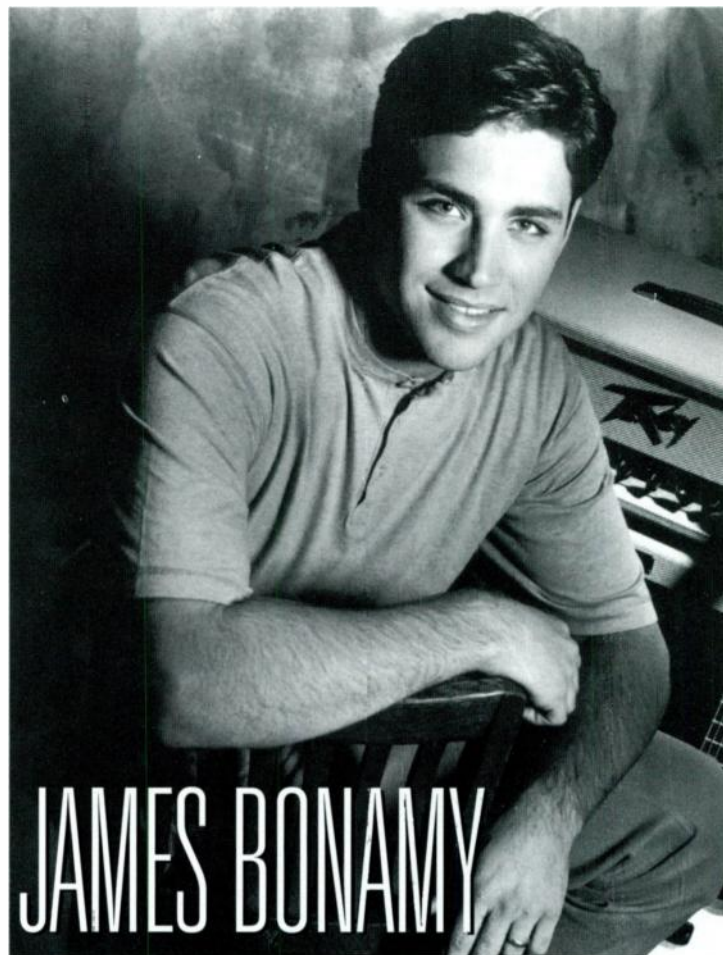


RECORD LABEL: RCA Records
DEBUT ALBUM: KEITH GATTIS
SINGLE: "Little Drops Of My Heart"
MANAGEMENT: James Dowell Management
INFLUENCES: Ray Price, Johnny Bush, The Osborne Brothers, Buck Owens

This Austin, Texas native started playing music at age 16, when he put together a Country band and entered a Future Farmers of America competition. The group won the Texas State Finals and went on to headline at the FFA Nationals in Kansas City for a crowd of 26,000.

During college, Keith began writing songs and honing his guitar skills. "I'm a realist," he has said. "I like having a plan - a realistic way to achieve goals." To that end, he majored in Performing Arts Technology, studying subjects that included video production and studio technique. "On my own time, I used the school's studio and started recording the songs I was writing, always with a move to Tennessee in the back of my mind."

Keith arrived in Nashville with \$800 and an invitation to stay at an aunt's home. On his first day in town, he landed a job at a steel guitar shop. "I felt lucky to get the job. I made some good contacts and got some great experience." Soon, he was playing gigs around town and eventually found himself on the road playing guitar for Johnny Paycheck. His debut project is a prime example of first class Country writing, clean and uncluttered production and powerful vocal performances. "This is a singer who doesn't want to make cookie cutter music," says producer Norro Wilson. "We set out to make a record that would stand out in a crowd."

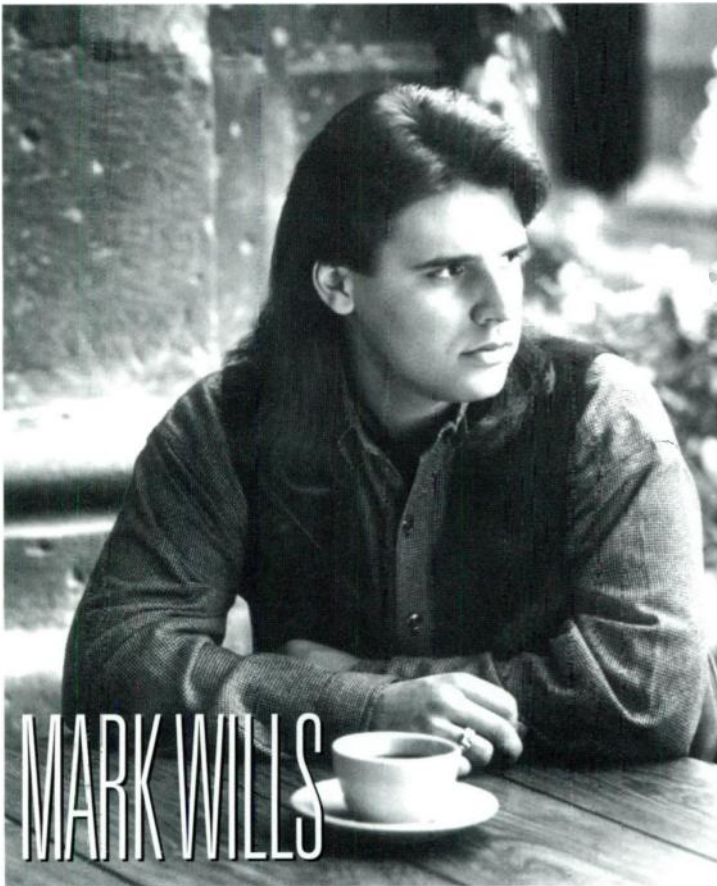


RECORD LABEL: Epic Nashville
DEBUT ALBUM: WHAT I LIVE TO DO
SINGLE: "I Don't Think I Will"
MANAGEMENT: Hallmark Direction
BOOKING AGENCY: Monterey Artists
INFLUENCES: Johnny Paycheck, Bobby Bare, Moe Bandy, Conway Twitty, Charlie Rich, George Jones

The son of a car dealer and a housewife, James Bonamy focused on sports more than music during his high school years. He earned four letters each year, playing football, soccer, tennis and track. He played football during his freshman year at the University of Alabama, but quickly realized that music - not sports - was his true calling.

One of this Florida native's first gigs was "The Country Boy Eddie Show" in Birmingham, Alabama. "I had to get up at 2:30 a.m. for a 3:30 a.m. audition for the show, which went on the air at 4:30 in the morning," James remembers. "It went on the air and gave the farm reports, that kind of thing. And some of the people told me that Tammy Wynette started there when she was doing hair in Birmingham."

He quit school to work at Orlando, Florida's famed Church Street Station, paying his bills by toiling in the gift shop and singing with the house band whenever they'd let him. A strong audition at Opryland USA Theme Park led to a slot in one of the park's summer reviews, and James found himself headed to Music City.



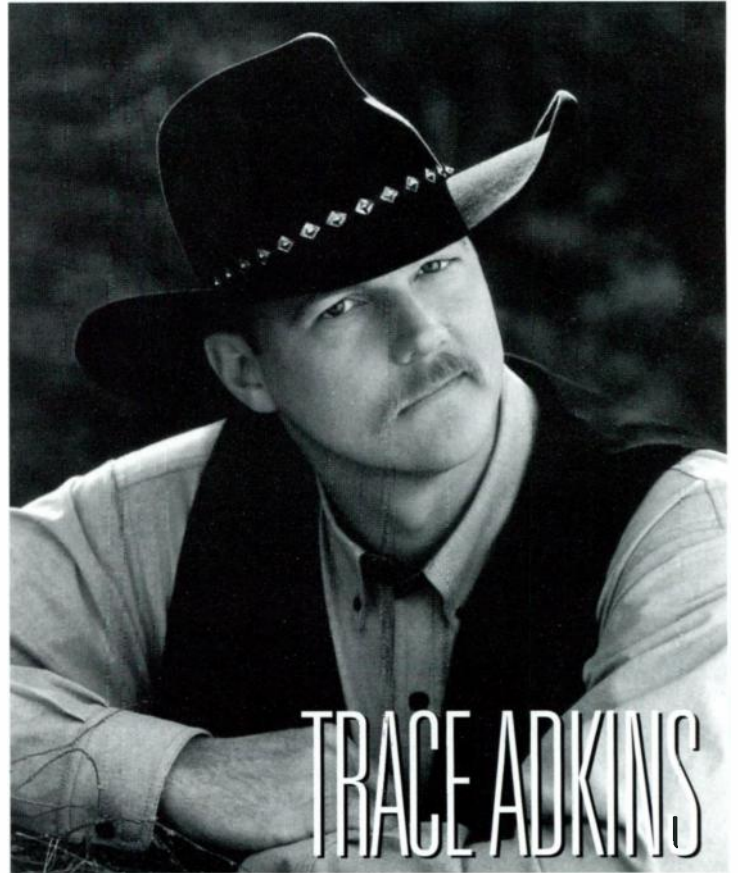
MARK WILLS

RECORD LABEL: Mercury Nashville
DEBUT ALBUM: MARK WILLS
SINGLE: "Jacob's Ladder"
MANAGEMENT: Star*Ray Management
INFLUENCES: George Jones, Bon Jovi

Growing up in Blue Ridge, Georgia, Mark Wills learned to love music at an early age. With the encouragement of his parents, Mark entered a talent contest at the Buckboard Country Music Showcase in Marietta, Georgia. Mark not only won the contest, he also landed a regular job playing at the club.

One evening while he was playing, Mercury Nashville VP of A & R Keith Stegall was in the audience. He had heard some of Mark's demos and wanted to see him perform live. Soon after that, Mark was signed to a recording contract.

Now that his dream has come true, Mark is quick to talk about the values he was taught as a child and the desire he has to share them through his music. "I knew that if I ever landed a record deal, I'd have a responsibility to the people. I want to set a good example as a person and as an artist. I want people to know that I have a reason for doing what I love. Music is my way of communicating."



TRACE ADKINS

RECORD LABEL: Capitol Nashville
DEBUT ALBUM: DREAMIN' OUT LOUD
SINGLE: "There's A Girl In Texas"
MANAGEMENT: Borman Entertainment
BOOKING AGENCY: William Morris Agency

A native of Sarepta, Louisiana, Trace Adkins began his performing career singing gospel music while in high school. Of his quartet years, he says, "You're with three other guys, and the only accompaniment you have is a piano and bass guitar. You just stood up there and let the harmony do the work."

Studying petroleum technology at Louisiana Tech University, Trace continued to sing. "I became fond of Hank, Jr. My buddies on the football team would come to my room and listen to me play 'Whiskey Bent And Hell Bound'. I liked rock, but Country was just me."

After working as a derrickman and pipefitter, Trace traded in his tools for a guitar and began playing over 300 club dates a year. "The music I did in the clubs I called 'combat Country'. You've got to go in those clubs - especially in Texas, where I spent so much time - and play for fairly jaded audiences. You're not going to blow them away unless you do something different. That's the way I tried to do it."

Looking to the future, Trace says, "It's almost as if my job on this earth is to make other people smile, think, dance, laugh, cry. Sometimes it seems like singers and songwriters take emotions and turn them into a few moments of entertainment. It's a heavy load."

AWARDS

Martina McBride and Joe Diffie co-hosted the **Third Annual Country Radio Music Awards**, sponsored by Entertainment Radio Networks, on June 12. McBride was named *Best Female Artist*; Tim McGraw, *Best Male Artist*; Brooks & Dunn, *Best Group or Duo*; Bryan White, *Best New Artist*; Brooks & Dunn's **WAITING ON SUNDOWN**, Album of the Year; Bryan White's "Rebecca Lynn", Single of the Year; George Strait's "Check Yes or No", Song of the Year; and Reba McEntire was named Entertainer of the Year. Loretta Lynn was honored with the Legend Award, which her sister Crystal Gayle accepted in her absence.

MEDIA

Barry Amato, dance instructor/choreographer for **The Wildhorse Saloon Dance Show** on TNN: **The Nashville Network**, has released his debut instructional video. For more information, call (615) 298-1122; fax (615) 256-5661.

◆ ◆ ◆

Robert K. Oermann has compiled a colorful and personal history of Country Music entitled "**America's Music: The Legends Look Back**", a companion piece to the TBS miniseries "America's Music: The Roots Of Country". The 224-page volume contains 200 photographs to enhance this oral history featuring the words of Country artists from yesterday and today. For more information, call (404) 885-4676.

Jeff Foxworthy calls on

Alan Jackson to guest

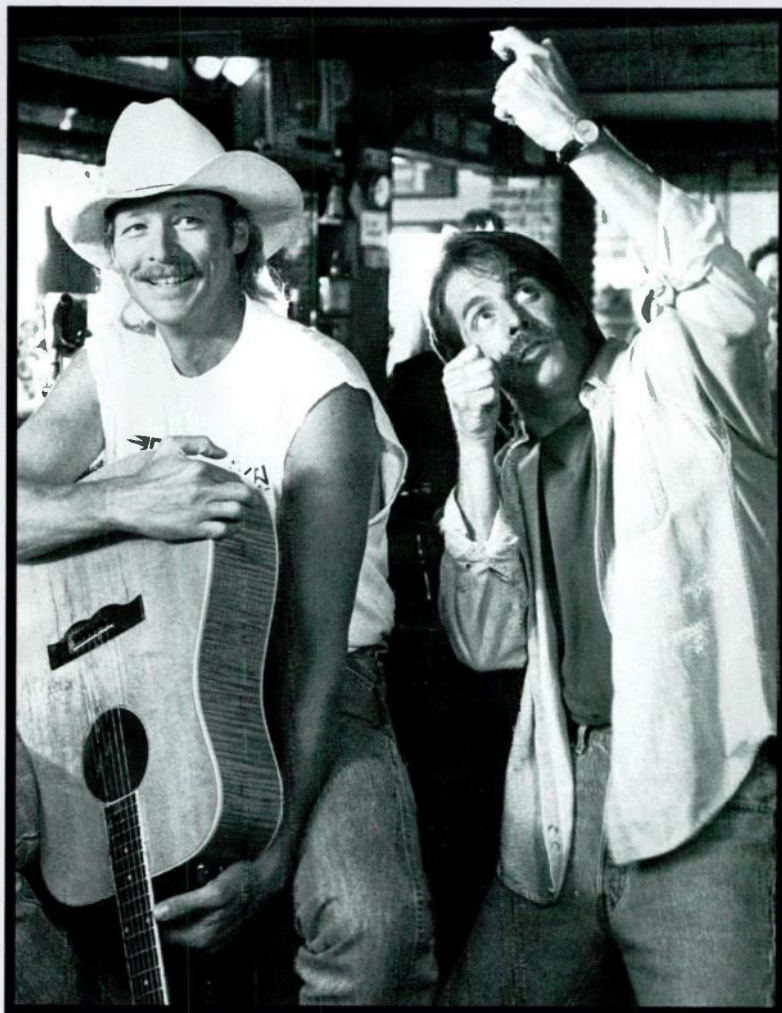
in "Redneck Game",

his latest Warner Bros.

video. Coke Sams

directed the clip for

Studio Productions.



NEW COMPANIES

Angelo Bennetti, former owner of Dangerous Threads, has opened **Sparkle Plenty, The Music City Collection**. The store is located at 325 Broadway, Nashville, TN 37201; (615) 259-3495.

◆ ◆ ◆

LVR, a full service video, audio and lighting equipment rental company out of New York City, opened a satellite office in Nashville on June 1. The office is located at 750 Cowan Street, Nashville TN 37207; phone (615) 254-1145.

NEWSLINE

Panhandle Productions will present **The 1996 Big Valley Jamboree**, August 2-4, in Camrose, Alberta,

Canada. Among the artists featured during the three-day event will be: **George Fox, Terri Clark, Mark Chesnutt and Alabama** on Friday; **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Chris LeDoux, Toby Keith and Michelle Wright** on Saturday; **Charlie Major, Paulette Carlson and Highway 101** and **Randy Travis** on Sunday. For ticket information, call toll free (888) 404-1234; fax (403) 672-9530.

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The Woodshed Recording Studio has expanded to offer a lounge area, recreation room and kitchen facilities with in-house catering, in addition to its rehearsal space. Also available is an in-house pro shop that offers a complete selection of guitar and bass strings, drumsticks and heads and other various items. The studio is located at 821 Woodland Street, Nashville, TN; phone (615) 226-4492.



The members of Lonestar spent some time comparing notes with Mick Fleetwood (third from left) of Fleetwood Mac during a recent trip to Los Angeles.



Red Steagall will host the **6th Annual Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering**, October 25-27 at the Ft. Worth Stockyards in Ft. Worth, TX. The event, presented by the **Texas Agricultural Extension Service** will feature music, food, cowboy poetry, ranch rodeo and dancing. For information, call (817) 884-1945 or (800) 433-5747.



The Bellamy Brothers will present their 7th annual benefit concert, **The Bellamy Brothers' Snake, Rattle & Roll Jam**, October 19 in San Antonio, FL. **Ken Mellons** and **The Smokin' Armadillos** will also perform at the benefit. For information, call (904) 588-3054.



Michael Martin Murphey helps keep the spirit of the American frontier alive with the 10th anniversary of the **Michael Martin Murphey's Westfest**, which includes stops in Copper Mountain Resort in Colorado from August 31-September 2 and Mammoth Ski Area in California from August 16-

18. For more information on the Copper Mountain event, call (800) 458-8386; for Mammoth Mountain, call (800) 228-4947.



The Mercer Group, Inc. has moved to 3322 Fairmont St., Suite 20, Nashville, TN 37203; (615) 383-5032; fax (615) 383-5015.



Big Tractor Music has moved to 1503 17th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212; (615) 292-5100; fax (615) 292-2934.



CCE, The Dance Card, Keller Jackson Productions, Kaleidoscope Media, and Donna L.Kelly CPA, P.C. have moved to 2602-B Westwood Drive, Nashville, TN 37204; (615) 383-4000; fax (615) 383-4434.

ON THE MOVE

Harold Shedd resigned as president of **A&M Records Nashville**. Shedd, who started with Polygram in 1988 as creative vice president of Mercury/Nashville before opening the A&M Nashville (formerly Polydor) office in 1993 and one of Country Music's most successful producers, has signed and produced such acts as **Alabama, K.T. Oslin, Kentucky HeadHunters, Shania Twain, Toby Keith** and **Billy Ray Cyrus**. No replacement has been named.



Asylum singer **Mandy Barnett** ran into rock 'n' roll legend **Jerry Lee Lewis** during intermission at a recent concert at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium. Barnett performed in the legendary venue during the state of Tennessee's Bicentennial celebration. - Photo by John Lee Montgomery III

Steve Tello has been named president of **Speer Communications, Ltd.** Tello, previously president of Speer-owned Professional Video Services International Media Center, will oversee the strategic development for the company's nine divisions.



Norbert Nix has been promoted to vice president of national promotion and artist development for **Mercury Nashville**. **Pat Surnegie** was promoted to vice president of West Coast promotion for the label. Both joined the promotion staff of Mercury Nashville in 1991.



Eric Beggs has been promoted to director/national promotion for **RCA Records**. Beggs was previously mid-Atlantic promotion manager for the label. Replacing Beggs as mid-Atlantic regional manager is **Tony Benken**, the former promotion coordinator for BNA Records.



John Condon has been promoted to director of A&R for **Asylum Records** and **Elektra Entertainment Group**. Condon has been with Asylum since the label was reactivated as a Country division of Elektra in 1992. **Mary Martin** has joined Asylum and Elektra as an A&R consultant to the labels. Martin, who has been instrumental in the careers of **Emmylou Harris**, **Vince Gill** and **Bob Dylan**, was most recently executive director of Earth Communications Office following a multi-year tenure with RCA.



R.G. Jones has joined **BNA Records** as administrator of national promotion. Jones is a 22-year veteran of Country radio, spending the last nine years as music director and program director of WQBE in Charleston, WV.



Patty Loveless takes a break to confer with director Nigel Dick while filming her latest video, "A Thousand Times A Day". The Epic clip, produced by Squeak Pictures, was shot at The Mermaid, a historic site in Los Angeles.

- Photo by Karen Miller



Claudia Wagner has joined **Group W Satellite Communications** in the newly created position of manager, international press. Wagner, recently manager/publicist at Herbert H. Breslin Inc., will manage the public relations activities for CMT's international markets, particularly Latin America..



Steve Stewart has been promoted to director, network administration for **TNN: The Nashville Network**. Stewart, who began with the network in 1993, will oversee production agreements, budgets, cost performances, as well as music and ancillary clearances.



Shelly Maxwell has been named executive producer at **WNAB-TV Channel 58**, Nashville's new Warner Bros. affiliate station. Maxwell was previously executive producer of Later Today Television News Group at MGM Studios.



Randy Wilkes has joined **CMT: Country Music Television** as operations director. Wilkes, a five-year veteran of Gaylord Entertainment Television, was formerly program director of KHTV in Houston. **Cecilia Walker** has been promoted to programming manager-Europe at the network. She was previously programming coordinator. Walker will be responsible for programming CMT's network in Europe, as well as liaison with the London based record companies.



Reggie Mac has joined **Associated Talent, Inc.** as an agent. Formerly with The Talent Agency, Mac has been responsible for booking George Jones, Janie Fricke and Tom T. Hall.



Sean Brennan has been promoted to senior director of operations for **Country Club Enterprizes (CCE)**. Brennan, who has been with the company for two-and-a-half years, will oversee all aspects of daily operations for CCE.



John Lomax III has accepted a new position as A&R consultant with London-based **Demon Records**. Demon is active in reissues and contemporary music and is owned, in part, by **Elvis Costello**.



LaTricia Allen has been named creative manager for **Muy Bueno Music Group**. Muy Bueno Music Group has catalogs of Venada Music, **Clay Walker's Lori Jane Music**, **Sondaddy Music** and **Sondaddy songs** for administration.



Willis Jones has joined **Copperfield Music Group** as a songplugger. Jones has replaced **Greg Becker** who has left the company. Willis is a recent graduate of the **Mike Curb School of Music Business** at **Belmont University**.



Dave Nicholson has been promoted to the newly-created position of general manager of **The Real Country Network**. Nicholson previously was operations manager at **WNOE-AM/FM** in **New Orleans, LA**.



Paul Randall has joined **Datatek International** as public relations and marketing director. Randall recently retired from being the long-time radio co-host and sidekick of **Gerry House** on **WSIX-FM**.

Ellen R. Zucker has been appointed to the position of songplugger for the publishing division of **Stoney Lonesome Music**. Zucker reports over 14 years of experience in the **Country Music industry**.



Kyle T. Jones has joined **The New Company** as a songplugger. Jones was most recently the road manager for **The Delevantes**.

SIGNINGS

MUSIC PUBLISHING: **Craig Carothers** to **Crossfire Entertainment/Almo-Irving/Rondor...The Thompson Brothers** to **Sony/ATV/Cross Keys...Jimmy Melton** to **Castle Street Music...Anthony Little** to **Zataway Music Inc...Chuck Jones** renews with **Hamstein Cumberland Music Group...**

RECORDING: **Roger Brown** to **Decca Records...Dean Miller** to **Capitol Nashville...Billy Joe Shaver** to **Justice Records...Okemah** to **Comstock Records...Linda Bailey** to **Playback Records...Steeplejack** to **DejaDisc...BOOKING:** **George Jones** and **Janie Fricke** to **Associated Talent...Chris Cummings** to **Buddy Lee Attractions, Inc.**

VIDEO

Keith Gattis dared to ride a 2,000-pound bull during filming of his latest **RCA** video, **"Real Deal"**. **Thom Oliphant**, who directed for **The Collective**, reports getting enough footage of Gattis bullriding that he did not need a stunt man.

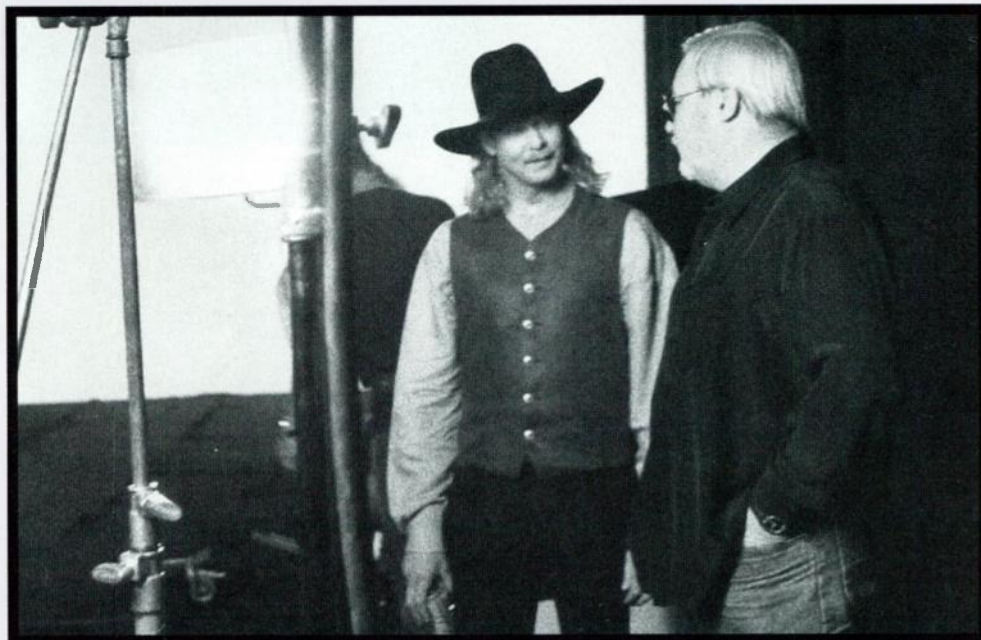
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BlackHawk's members and their sons collaborated on their new video for their upcoming **Arista/Nashville** single, **"Big Guitar"**. **Jim Shea** directed the clip which was the group's fifth single off their latest album, **STRONG ENOUGH**.



Mandy Barnett cruised through her latest video of her **Asylum** single, **"Maybe"**. **Norman Jean Roy**, director for **Notorious**, had Barnett driving **Hollywood's** **Sunset Boulevard** in a vintage convertible.



Bobbie Cryner used an intimate, sophisticated nightclub setting to shoot her latest **MCA** video, **"I Didn't Know My Own Strength"**. **A.V. Squad** director **John Lloyd Miller** selected **Nashville's 328 Performance Hall** to create the scene, which also utilized a **WWII Bell & Howell** hand crank camera..



Tracy Lawrence and director Marc Ball review some upcoming scenes while filming "Stars Over Texas". The Atlantic clip was produced by Anne Grace for Scene Three.

Jason Petty

"Lost Highway: The Music And Legend Of Hank Williams", Ryman Auditorium

Manchester, Tennessee native Jason Petty plays Hank Williams in "Lost Highway: The Music And Legend Of Hank Williams" at the Ryman Auditorium. After several years of musical production experience doing singing impersonations at Opryland Park, the lanky entertainer was destined for the part.

"Singing at Opryland made my voice strong, especially doing 500+ shows a season. Two years ago I went up to Ted Swindley (writer/director) and said 'Hi, my name is Jason Petty. So when are you gonna do a Hank Williams show?' I'm now honored to be playing him this year at the Ryman, and at the same time, I'm a little awestruck about walking around in his shoes on that legendary stage."

The show opens with a backlit silhouette figure of Williams, transporting the audience to another time. Jason's resemblance to the late Country legend - a lean physique and similar facial features - is uncanny.

"There's a spiritual air about the Ryman Auditorium."

"There's a spiritual air about the Ryman Auditorium. It's an adrenaline rush. You hear the crowd and you want to bust, but you can't bust out of character. The audience is part of the show, and I think, 'Let's get 'em into this right now.'

"Immediately after the opening, 'Hey Good Lookin'" (which for me is all mannerism and vocals), is over comes on the speech about how Hank Williams passed away. As you are hearing that, that's when it soaks in that for the next two hours, I am this man they're talking about. To the audience, I am Hank Williams. Being in the Ryman makes it very easy for me to slip into his character. I hope it's believable. I've researched, and I try as awfully hard as I can."



To give prudence to his portrayal, Jason traveled to Alabama to explore Williams' personal life and world.

"I tried to draw on who he was when he wasn't on stage being a singing star."

Jason feels a kindred spirit to the legend and the man he portrays in "Lost Highway".

"We both were influenced by strong women who were solid mother figures. I've busted my butt for years trying to make it here in the music business, and it's a real easy flow from me, Jason Petty, to Hank. It's probably 50-50 in that I'm half acting the character of Williams and half I feel the humanity of Hank and relate. Hank attacked his audience in a good way. He sang to them. He didn't sing above them. He looked them all right square in the eye and made them feel they were part of his

show. I've had people that saw Hank in concert come up to me after a show and say, 'Wow, I saw that thing you do with your eyes, and Hank did that!' Hank connected with the audience, and that's what I go out there to do. I take great pride in that."

"Part of my role is impersonation, and part is interpretation."

Playing a real-life icon is a multi-dimensional task. Jason knows full well he can't present an accurate picture of Williams without offering the less-positive aspects of his life.



"You can't tell the Hank story honestly and truthfully without delving into his dark side. There was the lighter side of Hank, his banter with the band, the early years of his innocence and then, of course, he started that slow decline. All I want to do is make people familiar with Hank Williams, the man. Not Hank Williams, the icon. Not Hank Williams, the legend. Not Hank Williams, the drunkard. Everyone has a preconceived

continued on page 22...

Country Music
Association
presents



N A S H V I L L E

October 3-5, 1996

Nashville
Convention
Center

INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT EXPO

featuring:

12 hours of showcases;

full-service exhibit marketplace;

panel sessions and more!

Registration information available in July

TOBY KEITH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3...

"Does That Blue Moon Ever Shine On You" is a good example. It's one that Toby wrote in the late '80s and has quickly become a favorite of his fans in the '90s. "It's just a real simple love song with power lyrics. Vocally it's in my range where I can really sing as hard as I can sing. I think it's the delivery of the song more than anything. It's not like the greatest piece of work that I've ever done, but it just wouldn't die."

He's yet to tire of life on the road. "I love it. If I'm on the road working, I'm about as happy as I am

anywhere. It hasn't gotten to be a grind yet. The other stuff that becomes a grind to me is the stuff where I don't have any focus. Songwriting, recording, singing every night, my band, my road crew, my family, all of that is in focus to me. Anything that you take on outside of that gets to be a little bit of a grind."

Still, there aren't many days when he has a true day off. "You don't get to many of those. This business is day-to-day. If you're a superstar, like Garth Brooks, you've got everybody in the world taking potshots at you. If you're Shania or Tanya or somebody like that, you have these rag mags on you all the time. The more successful you get, the more you open yourself up. Not just open criticism, but it's like open season. You wonder sometimes is that why you're striving to be as good as you are. As a writer, I'm trying to write the best songs. As an artist, I'm trying to present the best song that I've ever done, all the time. Trying to always go and outdo yourself.

"But if you accomplish that goal, all of a sudden you've taken on more of a load into your personal life and your life in general. Being open season to your people who want to tear you down. They love a hero, and they love an underdog. But once you've been there a little while, they decide that your time is up. They love to tear you down. It works at every level like that. No matter where you are in your career, there's days where you're just riding on cloud nine, and then there's days where you can't understand what's going on. This is my third album and third year, and it took me the first two years of that to put everything into the proper perspective and say this is what you worry about and this is what you don't. I've learned to settle down with it pretty good." **CU**

- Janet E. Williams

Jason Petty

...continued from page 20

notion of who Hank Williams is. We simply hope to remain as close to the truth of Hank Williams as we can and let people draw their own conclusions."

The educational aspect of "Lost Highway" is not lost on Jason.

"I take pride in this because I'm teaching something, it's been 43 years since Hank died, and I'm teaching the audience something new

about somebody they thought they knew everything about. Something fresh. A new outlook on the most influential man in Country Music ever, period. Part of my role is impersonation, and part is interpretation. You have to pick and choose. That's acting. If impersonating the greatest singer/songwriter ever is all I do, well, I've got a great story for the grandkids."

Jason has a deep respect for Williams, not the usual star-struck admiration, but more of a mutual understanding.

"Hank was a searcher. He was searching for something, and I don't think he found it in life.

We make the presumption that he found it in death, which I think he did because he was very God-oriented. He had a 'Luke the Drifter' side to him. He was very spiritual, and he was searching for something that he never could find here on Earth. It tore him inside. Only in death did he find it. It's kind of sad in a way, but not. As sad and somber as life can be, that's reality. That's gonna happen. I, like Hank, am very spiritual, and I think we all look for that great end where we'll find eventual happiness. I think that's what we show. Hey, the Ryman was a church first." **CU**

-Hugh Waddell

Critique/BMG artist

M.C. Potts listens

attentively while director

Marc Ball goes over some

last minute instructions for

her video, "Put Me Out Of

My Misery". Scene Three

produced the clip on

location in

Columbia, TN.



THANKS!

CMA thanks the following members who recently recruited new members:

Chris Caravacci, Nuno Ferreira, Wayne Halper, Lon Helton, Bob Lobdell, Jean Jacqu Kuhn, Gilbert Rouit, Ed Shane and Troy Tomlinson.

"TNN MUSIC CITY NEWS COUNTRY AWARDS" SET THREE-YEAR RATINGS RECORD

The annual "TNN Music City News Country Awards", broadcast live via TNN: The Nashville Network on June 10, set a three-year ratings record by scoring a 3.5 rating, representing more than 3.6 million viewers in 2.3 million households, according to A.C. Nielsen Media Research. Hosted by Mark Miller, Lorrie Morgan and Martina McBride, the special is the network's highest-rated entertainment program of the year.

Alan Jackson earned Entertainer of the Year honors, dedicating his award to his parents, who celebrate their 50th anniversary this year. Upon receiving the Male Artist award, Jackson quipped, "I got to hug Shania!" Following up with his Entertainer trophy, the lanky Georgian beamed, "I got to kiss Tammy Wynette!"

After opening the telecast with a performance with the Beach Boys, Sawyer Brown took home Vocal Band honors. "Hopefully, we can trade one of these in for some long pants," joked Hobie Hubbard, referring to bandmate Mark Miller's shorts. Miller acknowledged the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, the Charlie Daniels Band and Alabama for "knocking a big hole through this door so group's like us could come through."



Terri Clark shows off her Female Star of Tomorrow Award at the backstage press conference.



Lorrie Morgan took home honors as Female Artist of the Year. "My fans have kept me here and blessed me with a dream I've had since I was a small, small child," she said after getting over her initial surprise at hearing her name announced.

Willie Nelson received the Living Legend Award from longtime friend Waylon Jennings. "It's nice to receive the Living Legend Award as opposed to the other one," Nelson said with a smile.

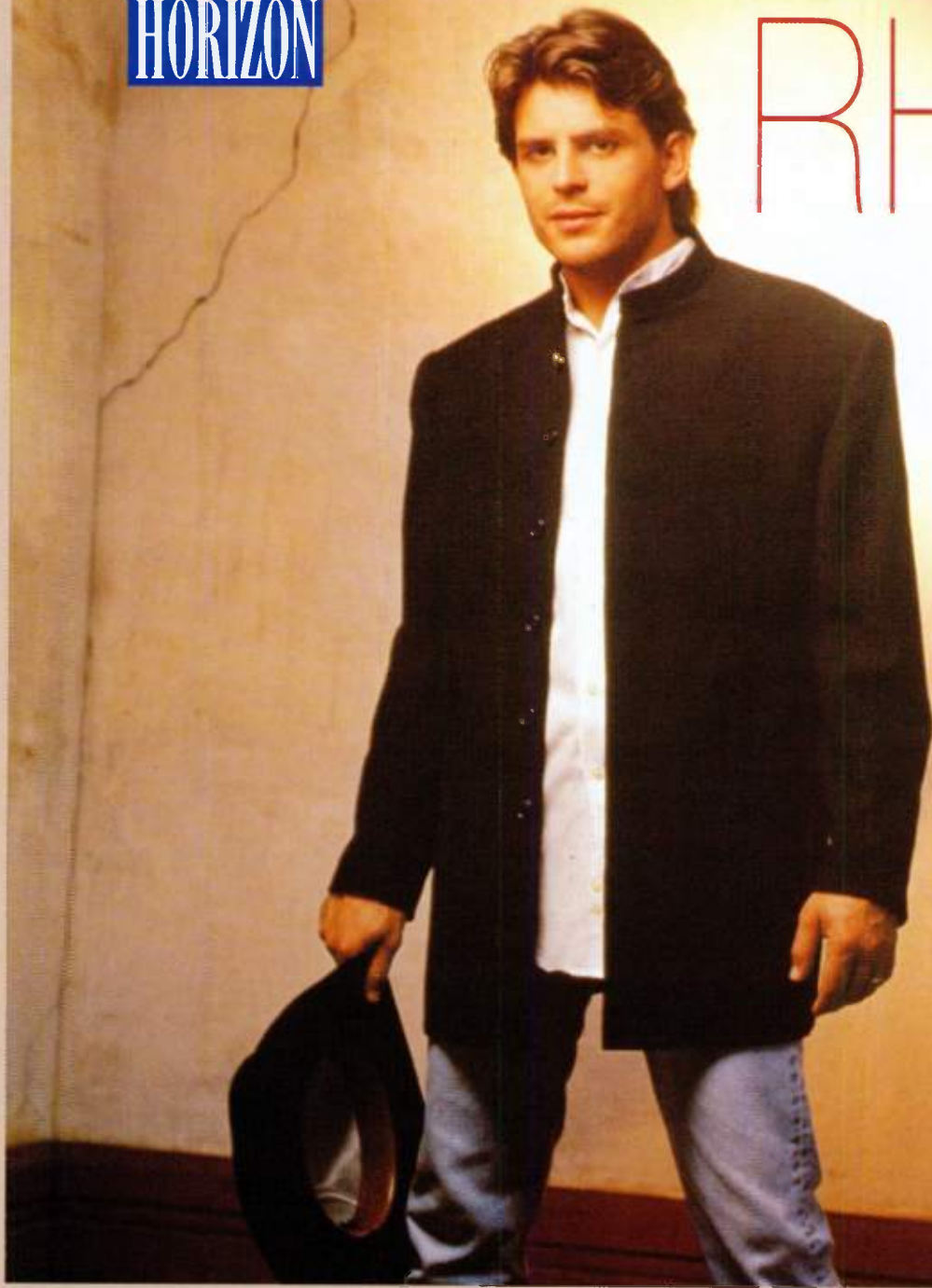
An absent George Strait was honored with three awards, picking up trophies for Album of the Year (LEAD ON), Single and Video of the Year ("Check Yes Or No").

Other winners included Terri Clark, Female Star of Tomorrow; Bryan White, Male Star of Tomorrow; Statler Brothers, Vocal Group; Brooks & Dunn, Vocal Duo; and Jeff Foxworthy, Comedian of the Year. In addition, Ricky Van Shelton was named Christian Country Artist of the Year, and Vince Gill, Patty Loveless and Ricky Skaggs shared Vocal Collaboration for "Go Rest High On That Mountain". Amy Grant was honored with the Minnie Pearl Award.



Chet Atkins joins Les Paul to mark the 20th anniversary of their Grammy Award winning album, CHESTER AND LESTER.

The legendary guitar twosome commemorated the anniversary with a shot at New York's Iridium Club.



RHETT

AKINS

To talk to Rhett Akins is to talk to a man who believes in old-fashioned family values like honesty, hard work and integrity. So just what's he doing singing about Clay Walker's wife on his newest release for Decca? Well, it's like this...

"I need to call Clay and ask him if it's all right to tell this story," Rhett begins earnestly. "I've met Clay three or four times, but I've never met his wife. I hope she's not offended by this song. It's really a compliment."

The tune is "Every Cowboy's Dream", a song Rhett cowrote with Kim Williams and Randy Boudreaux. The trio was struggling to come up with a song idea and decided to call it a day. As they were leaving Williams' office, Rhett noticed a picture of Clay Walker. "I knew Kim and Randy had been out on the road with Clay, and I asked him how the songwriting was going. He said, 'It's going great. We have a good time...Clay's there and Lori Jane, his wife, is out there

on the bus with us. He says she fits in with the band and everything. She's as sweet as she can be, but at the same time she's tough, she's got some spunk.' He said she rides horses and hunts and fishes. I said, 'Man, that sounds like a great idea for a song, that's what we've been looking for.'

"I think being on the road really helped me to decide what kinds of songs I wanted to sing."

"I don't know anything about Clay's wife," Rhett explains, "Kim just gave me those descriptions, and we went off with it. At least she gave us the inspiration to write this song, so I hope she's not mad at that...That description fits a lot of girls. All you've got to do is go to Billy Bob's or Rodeo's here in Nashville and see the kind of girl that we're talking about in the song."

Rhett cowrote five of the songs on *SOMEBODY NEW*, including the first hit, "Don't Get Me Started". Because his touring schedule was hectic, he invited songwriters to join him on the road.

"I wanted to write as much as I could and hope that something came out of that. I had seven songwriters come out within four weeks. They'd stay with me three or four days and then get on a plane and then the other guys would be flying in why they were leaving out. We'd write on the bus and write backstage. I had two reasons for them coming out; number one was that hopefully writing that song with them, but if not, hearing the great songs that they had written."

The variety of styles on the sophomore project reflects his experiences during the past year.

"I think being on the road really helped me to decide what kinds of songs I wanted to sing. We didn't play in just one type of venue all year. We played in every one you could think of. We played in the honky tonks from Texas to Oklahoma, where swing is real big and traditional Country Music is real big. When you hear 'Every Cowboy's Dream' and 'Too Much Texas', you can tell that I'm in a honky tonk during this period of the tour. Then, you hear songs like 'Love You Back' and 'Don't Get Me Started', which I think sort of represent me when I was with Reba with large, large crowds - 15,000 to 20,000 people - where the excitement level is big... I like all that kind of music, so I like to have all the different styles on my records."

Not only did he tour with Reba last year, but he also shares her management team at Starstruck Entertainment.

"Everytime I get around Reba I learn something new. She doesn't just go out there and sing the song, she lives the song. She makes it come alive. You can just look at the people in the audience, and you can tell that they are just so into what she is saying and what she is doing. She acts like that song is happening to her right then at that moment...I don't have the fiery red hair and all the stage show and everything that she's got to make my songs real, real exciting in a visual sense, but I can take what Reba does, with her facial expressions and her hand movements and how she acts singing just the right word and the right sentence and hopefully make my songs come just a little bit more to life like she does when she's on stage. That's the biggest thing I learned there."

A constant influence in Rhett's life is his family.

"My family has always thought I was gonna do something. They knew what I had an interest in, and they pushed me to go for it. When I was in high school and wanted to be the quarterback, we had two senior quarterbacks. My granddaddy was just so sure that I could be the starter in ninth grade. I said, 'You're crazy.' He said, 'Don't think that way. I don't care if you don't end up being it, but go out there and try.' He encouraged me by saying, 'Quit playing all those cover songs. Write them yourself.' I was always encouraged by my family to take the extra step, to go for it, to quit laying back and being scared of it."

Though he now lives in Nashville with his wife and children, his family in Georgia is a constant part of his life.

"I grew up with everybody in my family living on the same farm. There was ten of us kids out there, my grandma and granddaddy, my mom and daddy, my two aunts and uncles all lived on the farm. As far as family goes, I don't

think I'm like a normal family where you talk to your grandma, see her on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and you call once a month. My family is really involved in what I'm doing. They know everything I'm doing every day."

Rhett's Southern roots have led him to become a Civil War buff.

"I've always just liked history...My granddaddy was in World War I, but it happened in Europe and it's hard to really get into. When I started reading about the Civil War...Atlanta, the biggest city in the South, was completely in ashes. And Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States was captured about 50 miles from my home town. Actually, people in my family fought in the war. I think just being from Georgia and my family members participating in it and having a love for history too I just couldn't help but be interested in the Civil War."

His favorite war hero is Robert E. Lee, someone he would like to emulate.

"He was everything a man should be, I think...very strong, very classy, very mannerly. It seems like today that more and more kids today are getting away from the old style of nice manners and standing up for stuff you believed in or standing up for what you believed is right, even if it's not something you believe in, which is something that is very hard to do these days. It seems like morals and stuff just go by the wayside. From what I've read about Robert E. Lee, he was always the perfect gentleman. Even though he didn't believe in the South leaving the Union, he wasn't really an advocate for slavery. He couldn't turn his sword against his home state of Virginia and think that he would be fighting against his own family. So even though he didn't really believe in what he was fighting for, he could not fight against his own state. I just think he was just a great man."

"I may be going too far in saying this, but there's something about George Strait that's kinda got this Robert E. Lee thing to me. You know when you think of George Strait, a bad thought never comes to your mind. Everybody loves him. He's the ultimate gentleman. Everything he does is just smooth and inoffensive to anybody. I feel like he's sort of like Robert E. Lee in that sense. And he believes in traditional Country Music. Regardless of the styles that change over the years, George sticks with what he wants to do. That's what Robert E. Lee always did."

So what would a song about Rhett be like?

"I guess I'm pretty light-hearted a lot of times, just kinda free for all, whatever goes...I don't know how you would write a song about me. I just like so many different things. I mean, you'd really have to write about the Civil War in it, you'd have to write about Redman, fried chicken. Just go buy a Jeff Foxworthy tape, and that's me probably."

"Jeff Foxworthy says a lot of things, and I think a lot of people laugh at him because they're true. If you call yourself a redneck, I don't think it's in a derogatory way. I've said 'yawntoo' my whole life, but I didn't realize it until Jeff said it. When you think of redneck, you think of this big guy with chewing tobacco in his mouth wearing a rebel flag T-shirt and drinking beer. But I think just being Southern and the little quirks we have is being a redneck too, so I guess I'll be that type." **CU**

-Shannon Heim

Everytime I get
around Reba I learn
something new.

...there's something
about George Strait that's
kinda got this Robert E.
Lee thing to me.

GAMES, MIND-BENDERS & BRAIN-TEASERS

Looking for a way to beat the summer heat? Put your feet up, sip on a cool glass of lemonade and let your brain do all the work solving these Country quizzes.

COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME

Match the birthplace with the correct member of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Jim Reeves | a. <i>Ryan, Oklahoma</i> |
| 2. Johnny Cash | b. <i>Nashville, Tennessee</i> |
| 3. Little Jimmy Dickens | c. <i>Berea, Kentucky</i> |
| 4. Roy Rogers | d. <i>Kingsland, Arkansas</i> |
| 5. Kitty Wells | e. <i>Saratoga, Texas</i> |
| 6. Lester Flatt | f. <i>Cincinnati, Ohio</i> |
| 7. George Jones | g. <i>Glendale, Arizona</i> |
| 8. Red Foley | h. <i>Galloway, Panola County, Texas</i> |
| 9. Marty Robbins | i. <i>Overton County, Tennessee</i> |
| 10. Floyd Tillman | j. <i>Bolt, Raleigh County, West Virginia</i> |

U.S.A.

Alabama isn't the only group to take its name from a location. Trivia experts will recall the groups who charted with the following tunes. All contain either the name of a city or state.

1. "Atlanta Burned Again Last Night" (1983)
2. "The Shoe's On The Other Foot Tonight" (1981)
3. "You're A Pretty Lady, Lady" (1979)
4. "You And Forever And Me" (1992)
5. "Big Like A River" (1981)
6. "Dumas Walker" (1990)

THAT'S MY KID!

Match the Country artist whose child/children are listed at right.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Aaron Tippin | a. <i>Jamie, Matthew, Nathaniel</i> |
| 2. Reba McEntire | b. <i>Morgan, Jesse</i> |
| 3. Barbara Mandrell | c. <i>Mattie, Ali</i> |
| 4. Mark Collie | d. <i>Shelby</i> |
| 5. Pam Tillis | e. <i>Molly, Eric</i> |
| 6. Alan Jackson | f. <i>Eli, Hannah</i> |
| 7. Emmylou Harris | g. <i>Charla</i> |
| 8. Billy Dean | h. <i>Hallie, Meghann</i> |
| 9. Lorrie Morgan | i. <i>Ben</i> |
| 10. Kix Brooks | j. <i>Nathan</i> |

SINGING SIBLINGS

What are the first names of the siblings who make up each group?

1. The Forester Sisters
2. The Marcy Brothers
3. The Osborne Brothers
4. The Browns
5. The Vega Brothers
6. The Hagers
7. The Goldens

OTHER WALKS OF LIFE

Numerous entertainers, celebrities and athletes have taken a shot at Country Music fame and fortune. Can you name the "singer" who released the following songs which charted on the **BILLBOARD** Country Chart? (The year is provided as a hint.)

1. "Rest Your Love On Me" (1978)
2. "Brass Knuckles" (1975)
3. "Until You" (1980)
4. "I Wish I Was Eighteen Again" (1980)
5. "You Oughta Hear The Song" (1977)
6. "Sweet Sweet Smile" (1978)
7. "It's Too Late To Love Me Now" (1979)
8. "Just Out Of Reach" (1976)
9. "Painted Lady" (1977)
10. "Baby It's You" (1980)
11. "Deck Of Cards" (1959)
12. "I Started Loving You Again" (1969)
13. "Lonely But Only For You" (1983)
14. "Gallant Men" (1967)
15. "Let Me Take You In My Arms Again" (1978)
16. "Let's Find Each Other Tonight" (1983)

CHALLENGER: SINGING SONGWRITERS

Many of Country Music's most renowned songwriters started out as performers. Can you name songwriter who charted with the following tunes?

1. "Come On Home", "Sure Thing" (1984-5)
2. "Boomtown", "Under The Light Of The Texaco" (1989-90)
3. "Ain't Gonna Worry My Mind" (1983)
4. "You're The One Who Rewrote My Life Story" (1979)
5. "A Little At A Time", "Brave Heart" (1983)
6. "Cowboys Are Common As Sin", "Heaven On A Freight Train" (1980)
7. "Long Arm Of The Law", "The Diplomat", "Friday Night Fool" (1980)
8. "Barstool Mountain", "Bugle Ann" (1976-77)



SOLUTIONS:

COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME

1.H; 2.D; 3.J; 4.F; 5.B; 6.I ; 7.E; 8.C; 9.G; 10.A

THAT'S MY KID!

1.g; 2.d; 3.a; 4.j; 5.i; 6.c; 7.h; 8.f; 9.b; 10.e

OTHER WALKS OF LIFE

1. The Bee Gees
2. Barbi Benton
3. Terry Bradshaw
4. George Burns

5. Ruth Buzzi
6. The Carpenters
7. Cher
8. Perry Como
9. Chuck Woolery
10. Pia Zadora
11. Wink Martindale
12. Al Martina
13. Sissy Spacek
14. Senator Everett Dirksen
15. James Darren
16. Jose Feliciano

SINGING SONGWRITERS

- 1.Tony Arata ("The Dance",

- "Holding My Own")
2. Jeff Stevens ("Reckless", "I Fell In The Water")
 3. Richard Leigh ("Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue", "Somewhere In My Broken Heart")
 4. Don Schlitz ("The Gambler", "I Feel Lucky")
 5. Thom Schuyler ("16th Avenue", "I Fell In Love Again Last Night")
 6. Max D. Barnes ("Chiseled In Stone")
 7. Roger Bowling ("Lucille", "Blanket On The Ground")

8. Wayne Carson ("Always On My Mind")

SINGING SIBLINGS

1. June, Kim, Christy and Kathy
2. Kevin, Kris & Kendal
3. Bobby and Sonny
4. Jim Ed, Maxine and Bonnie
5. Robert and Ray
6. Jim and John
7. Rusty and Chris

CLOSE UP

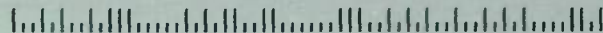
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DATEBOOK



CMA Executive Director Ed Benson (right) welcomes Curb singer Jo Dee Messina to CMA's Nashville office for a musical introduction to the staff. Guitarist Tony Obrohta was on hand to provide accompaniment. - Photo by Beth Gwinn

* denotes international telephone number with country code in parentheses

JULY

17-18 CMA Board of Directors Meeting /
Memphis, TN

AUGUST

13 CMA Awards Press Conference /
Nashville, TN

SEPTEMBER

9 Canadian Country Music Awards /
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

20-21 Country Night Gstaad 1936 / Gstaad,
Switzerland

27-29 Bluegrass Fan Fest / Owanboro, KY /
International Bluegrass Music Association /
(502) 684-9025

OCTOBER

2 30th Annual CMA Awards / Grand Ole Opry
House / Nashville, TN

3-5 SRO / Nashville Convention Center /
Nashville, TN

20 8th Annual Country Gold Festival / Aspects /
Kumamoto, Japan / Contact Judy Seale,
Refugee International at (615) 256-6615

NOVEMBER

1 Nashville Unplugged '96 / Grand Saconnex
Town Hall / Geneva, Switzerland, Contact
Roger Lehmann at (41) 22-786-8839;
fax (41) 22-786-8922; or 9255;
Sharon Eaves, (615) 322-3255,
fax (615) 322-9500