

FEBRUARY 1997

Close Up

Marty Stuart
Mindy McCready
Sam Hogin

Ty Herndon

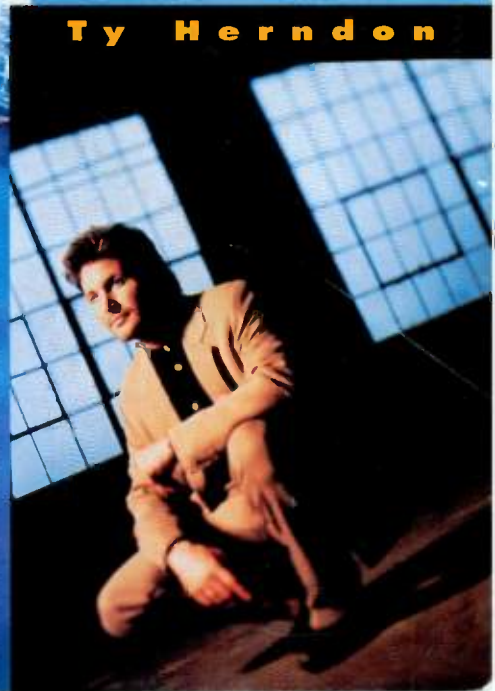


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CLAY WALKER

on the cover

Giant recording artist Clay Walker has a lot to be happy about.

The Texas native's third LP, HYPNOTIZE THE MOON, has been certified platinum, he's selling out shows all across the country, and he's just announced a major tour in which he'll be joined by Emilio, Terri Clark and James Bonamy. Clay spoke with CLOSE UP while he was in Nashville to perform at the Christmas for Kids benefit and to work on his upcoming album project.

As he sat in his Nashville hotel room with his wife Lori nearby and his infant daughter MaClay in his lap, Clay's mood was one of appreciativeness and reflection.

"I do have a lot of fun. This isn't just a part of my life. Music is my life. My family has always come first for me, and it's been great being able to incorporate my family into what I do. I don't have to be two different people. I don't have to be the husband when I'm at home and a daddy when I'm at home. I'm a husband and a father all the time. And I'm always a Country Music singer. There's no separation between what I do and who I am."

Clay and Lori live on a ranch in Brenham, Texas, between Houston and Austin. "We have several quarter horses, cows, goats and a couple of border collies. It's such a peaceful place. We did a show with Leeza Gibbons not too long ago. We filmed the whole thing out there. That was a special time for me because it also allowed viewers to see how serene it is out there. It's good for me whenever I do come off the road to have several acres to be able to roam and not have to worry about anything."

When asked about his wife Lori, Clay is quick to point out the contributions she's made to his life. An animal lover herself, Lori and Clay share a great interest in the ranch.

"She's participated in showing horses ever since she's been a little tot. She's always had horses and always been very active with animals. She was a rodeo queen from our hometown. She was also the runner-up for Miss Texas Rodeo. Lori is so diverse. I don't think there's anything that she can't do. That's one of the great things about our marriage. It's never boring. She's done everything from driving our bus to helping put out ranch fires. She's a very talented person.

"We didn't grow up together. I had a crush on her before she knew that I knew her. We met later on about four years after the first time that I had seen her. She was crazy about me. She just couldn't resist. Don't print that. That's a joke. Actually, I chased her pretty hard. We met before I had a record deal. I really didn't have any money or anything. That's part of the beauty of it too. The first question that people ask her whenever we meet somebody new is how long



we've known each other. People think she liked me because I had a record deal. I actually had nothing before that. She had a really nice truck, so things evened out.

"We celebrated our fourth anniversary in October 1996. MaClay is almost a year old. We've had a very prosperous and fun marriage. We plan on having another child. Right now, we have our hands full with MaClay. We're both pretty practical, rational people, and we just take things one step at a time. We know that we both need to be on the same track.

Just as he takes great pride in his family, Clay has always tried to set certain standards for his career. During his early years as a performer, he served as his own accountant and agent. Though things didn't always go

"She's done everything from driving our bus to helping put out ranch fires."

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Marty Stuart

A photograph of Marty Stuart, a country music artist, playing an acoustic guitar. He is wearing a black jacket with white diamond-shaped studs on the shoulders and sleeves. He has long, dark, wavy hair and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a textured, reddish-brown color. The guitar is a light-colored acoustic with a dark pickguard.

It's mid-January, and Marty Stuart, like many other artists, is enjoying some time off the road. Seated in front of his fireplace with a cup of coffee to sip on, Country Music's "Renaissance Man" seems content to simply "lay around the house".

With its Southwestern touches and framed portraits of Indian leaders by famed 19th century photographer Edward S. Curtis, Marty's abode has a distinctive yet homey feel. "Houses," he says, "are like art collections. They're always evolving."

The same could be said of the artist himself. Since hitting the road with Lester Flatt at the age of 13, Marty has a slew of accomplishments. Yet he's still excited about new ventures, such as his feature film debut with Steven Seagal.

"It won't take you long to watch it," he says of his small role in the upcoming "FIRE DOWN BELOW". "I had never seen one of Seagal's movies, but we had played a show together. He was on the NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) show last year as a guitar player. I heard he was doing a movie, heard a lot of Country people were in it (Mark Collie, Kris Kristofferson). I went up there to Kentucky (where the movie was being shot), and we wrote a couple of songs. It wound up he liked them and asked me to put together a bluegrass band for the movie. Since then I've watched one or two of his movies, and they all kind of have the same form. There's always a music scene of some kind. I guess I'm the 'some kind' of music scene in this one. I'm the leader of a fearless bluegrass band. It was a big stretch.

"We filmed at night out in the mountains around southern California, and it was cold. We went to two or three in the morning, and you have to put on that happy grin each and every time. Those folks earn their money. I think it's twice as tedious as a video. A video, you have a three-and-a-half minute work to deal with. In movies, it's just scene after scene and take after take, angle after angle.

"I'll tell you what's a kick. Seagal, I understand, makes zillions of dollars for his company, so they've awarded him planes and helicopters, so you're definitely into the big time. It's great to know that Lear jets and helicopters and trinkets are at your command. I got a kick out of it."

Seagal projects a certain arrogance and swagger when he makes public appearances. Marty, however, had the opportunity to see past that public persona.

"The most honest, vulnerable spot I've found in Steven is when he picks up a guitar. When Steven puts a guitar in his hand, he's totally accessible, totally vulnerable and totally honest. That other character just fades off into the distance."

It's precisely that experience with Steven Seagal which endears the art of music to Marty. "We make product a lot, but sometimes we forget about making music. That is the most important reason we're here, I think."

"The other night I was at home watching the Kennedy Center Honors. I watched Johnny Cash and Jack Lemmon and the ballerina Maria Tallchief, Benny Carter and the playwright

"You go out of style or you come back in style, but good songs always last."

"...what we do comes from a soulful place, and it has a soul factor that can't be denied."

"Sometimes it takes the rock 'n' rollers to reset our watch."

Edward Albee. I really thought about what I'm doing right now. I thought whether you get to this honor or not, this is the way you should make music or do songwriting or make videos or whatever it is that we do around here. I understand that it's always been a struggle between commerce and art, but I think that you just have to realize that what we do comes from a soulful place, and it has a soul factor that can't be denied."

As president of the Country Music Foundation, Marty has made a huge commitment to preserving Country Music's heritage. "That's the equivalent of the Kennedy Center. I really think that the ultimate accolade that any artist could have as a Country performer is not how much money they have in the bank or how many records they've sold...winding up in the Country Music Hall of Fame is the ultimate Country Music honor.

"I went to the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame last year. I'm interested in seeing us having one better than theirs. I just believe in the program. I don't know why I do, but I believe in all those old things. Sometimes people criticize you for hanging out with the older cats too much. Well, it's just as easy for me to go and hang out with Keith Richards or Rick Rubin or Don Was as it is Hank Thompson or Porter Wagoner or Grandpa Jones. Both sides are my friends. It's like family.

"A real wake-up call came to me when Jerry Rivers, Hank Williams' fiddle player, and Faron Young passed away. Those were people that really made a difference. It's a shame that everybody around here wasn't schooled or remembered the things that Faron and Jerry contributed. There's not a lot of dignity to die as an old hillbilly singer anymore. Living or dying is hard if you're an older Country singer, and as this industry has progressed, that is one thing that we forgot to develop. I hope that we get to that soon. The Hall of Fame is one of those places...I've taken so many rock 'n' rollers and pop singers there, and they seem to get it more than some of the Country people do.

"I was going through a period years ago where I was really lost and troubled musically and personally, and I didn't know why I played Country Music. I spent the afternoon down there. I hung out with films and songs and costumes, and it realigned my spirit and my soul toward why I played Country Music, why I was called to play Country Music and chose to play it. It got me back in gear. It's a source of inspiration for me. It's a place that I totally believe in."

What else does he believe? "I believe Tom T. Hall's hot again! It's a good case in point. Just do what you do. You go out of style or you come back in style, but good songs always last.

"Sometimes it takes the rock 'n' rollers to reset our watch. Back in the early '70s when Country Music's soul kind of slipped away, the Dirt Band came into town, did the first version of WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN album. They

continued on page 23...

Can't Tell A DVD From A BVD? MINT Has The Answer!

Excited but confused by the ever-changing world of technology?

Concerned about protecting your intellectual property on the Internet?

MINT: Music Industry & New Technologies has the answers.

CMA has developed this event to bring music industry insiders up to speed in just one day about the latest developments in technology. MINT is the first Nashville conference to untangle the web of using the Internet, websites, on-line transactions, hardware and other technologies to successfully market Country Music.

With a diverse range of topics, MINT offers something for anyone contemplating selling music on-line, using e-mail to take care of business while on the road, or other ways to travel down the information superhighway. In addition, experts will lead explorations of technological developments ranging from enhanced CDs and DVDs to virtual radio stations and digital cable radio.

The conference, hosted by Nashville's Cumberland Science Museum, takes place on Thursday, March 20. Registration is \$150 until February 7 and \$200 thereafter. Due to space limitations in some meeting rooms, registration will be capped at 200 participants.

"CMA is really proud to offer this exciting new professional development event to members of the Nashville music community," said Ed Benson, CMA executive director. "With experts in the fields of tech-

nology and the music industry, we will explore the many rapidly evolving ways to make our business more efficient and profitable. MINT will really provide the community with invaluable insight about where we are headed, both culturally and economically."

In addition to numerous panel sessions and exhibits, MINT will provide registrants the opportunity to log some hands-on experience on the Internet in the museum's new "Century Computer Lab." The lab includes 30 PowerMac Computer Systems, all linked to the Internet and capable of video teleconferencing.



Several companies already are planning to participate in the conference including: Adobe Systems, Apple Computers, ASCAP, BellSouth, BILLBOARD, BMI, First American Bank, Ingram, Intel, InterMedia, Microsoft, Music Row Publications, NationsBank, RADIO & RECORDS, SESAC, StarWorks, SunTrust, Walcoff & Associates and others.

MINT was organized by CMA's Future Markets Task Force led by Eddie Reeves, executive vice-president/general manager of Warner/Reprise Nashville.

Presentations will include a variety of marketing and technical topics.



GENERAL SESSIONS

CREATING SUCCESSFUL WEBSITES & WEBCASTS

When and why to build a site. How to measure and generate traffic and publicity. Appraising your site's value to prospective advertisers. Group exploration of excellent sites - both inside and outside the music industry. Creative and technical requirements, costs, complications and benefits.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNET (BEGINNER)

SHARPENING YOUR INTERNET SKILLS (ADVANCED)

The Introduction session teaches how the Internet and World Wide Web work, various modems, getting on-line, browsers, familiarization of on-line services, search engines, various music-related websites. The Advanced session tackles audio/ video streaming, downloading zipped files, uploading information and more. (Each session is presented twice: Computer lab seats 30.)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS & ISSUES

Attorneys, legal experts and business executives discuss watermarks, encryption and other forms of copyright protection, legislative efforts, on-line distribution as mechanical vs. performance, and more.

IT'S O.K. - I'M WITH THE BANDWIDTH

Plugging into new technology offers more and more options. Find out which is right for you - WebTV, cable modems, Intellicast and more.

PERFORMING RIGHTS & THE INTERNET

Performing rights society executives and music publishers discuss their on-line services, as well as their methods of tracking Internet transmissions and payment structures.

SUMMIT CAUCUS / OPEN FORUM

Top technology thinkers and business leaders discuss the state of music and new technology, problems and opportunities, risks and rewards, forecasts and warnings, where we're headed culturally and economically.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS

WEB CONSTRUCTION DEMONSTRATION & WORKSHOP

Building your own site with Adobe Pagemill 2.0 and other construction software, presented in a demonstration at 8:30 a.m. and a "hands-on" workshop at 4 p.m. (Workshop seats 30.)

DVD DEMONSTRATIONS

Continuous demonstration and discussion of Digital Versatile Disc technology and its likely impact on the music business.

DIGITAL MUSIC VIDEO EDITING DEMONSTRATION

Adobe Systems presents its technology for editing and enhancing music videos on your computer.

MARKETING SESSIONS

DOING BUSINESS EASILY WITH E-MAIL

Artists join industry experts in discussing how they use e-mail at work and on the road for business, media and fan-related communications.

EXPLORING MULTIMEDIA CARRIER TECHNOLOGY

Enhanced CDs, CD-ROMs, DVDs and their current/potential value to the industry and general public.

EXPLORING TRANSMITTED MEDIA SERVICES

Virtual radio stations, on-line radio stations, digital cable radio, DAB and consumer response to these services.

ON-LINE TRANSACTION TECHNOLOGY

Protecting and maintaining confidentiality, digital IDs, firewalls, establishing secure financial transaction systems with technologies such as Digicash, Cybercash and others. (Presented twice.)

SELLING MUSIC ON THE 'NET

Sampling and selling music and multimedia on-line: strengths and weaknesses, advantages and drawbacks. The changing environment between on-line specialist dealers and existing retailers.

MINT AGENDA (subject to change)

8 a.m.	Registration Opens
8:30 - 9:20 a.m. (Concurrent sessions)	Introduction To The Internet Web Construction Demonstration
9:30 - 9:40 a.m.	Welcome & Introduction
9:40 - 10:20 a.m.	Keynote: Taking Future Markets To The Bank
10:30 - 11:20 a.m. (Concurrent sessions)	Sharpening Your Internet Skills Exploring Transmitted Media Services On-line Transaction Technology
11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. (Concurrent sessions)	Exploring Multimedia Carrier Technology Selling Music On The Net It's O.K. - I'm With The Bandwidth
11:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.	Open computer lab
Noon - 2 p.m.	Cybercafe Lunch & Exhibits DVD Demonstrations
1:15 - 2:05 p.m. (Concurrent sessions)	Doing Business Easily With E-Mail Introduction To The Internet Performing Rights & The Internet
2:10 - 3:20 p.m. (Concurrent sessions)	Creating Successful Websites & Webcasts Digital Music Video Editing Demonstration
2:40 - 3:30 p.m.	Sharpening Your Internet Skills
3:30 - 4:45 p.m. (Concurrent sessions)	Intellectual Property Rights & Issues On-line Transaction Technology
4 - 4:50 p.m.	Workshop: Building Your Own Website
5 - 6 p.m.	Summit Caucus / Open Forum
6 - 7 p.m.	Cocktail Reception / Exhibits

Mindy McCready

If Mindy McCready's skyrocket to stardom seems like a fairy tale, wait till you hear who she'll be sharing the stage with on Valentine's Day. None other than Country Music's Prince Charming, George Strait!

Mindy recently took a break from a recording session at Starstruck Studios to visit with CLOSE UP. As she sat cross-legged on the soundboard counter in jeans and hiking boots, the Florida native seemed to prefer the title of protagonist to princess. The 21-year-old was most anxious to talk about setting a positive example for her young fans.

"I kind of thought for the second record, either I can take responsibility for what's happening with these kids following me or I can ignore it and just do whatever it is that I want to do. I decided to take responsibility. I have a 17-year-old brother that works on my conscience in that area."

"The last record (TEN THOUSAND ANGELS) I was singing for the women to the men. I kind of sing this record for the women to the women. It's still very, very much a strong woman's record, but at the same time a lot of my songs are more realistic. There's a song called 'When Nobody's Watching' talking about how this person has been in a relationship, and the relationship is over and how they cry, but they do it when nobody is watching. Which is my personality - I would never cry in front of somebody. So, it's like you can be a strong woman, but it's OK to cry about it. I feel like a lot of the opinions little girls have formed about things have been kind of misleading about how relationships really are. I wanted to make sure the kids out there know I'm real.

"As far as the songs go, they're still a representation of my personality. All the songs I chose for this record, I wanted to make sure they were kind of in the same theme. And I don't want to tell you what it is yet, but you'll



"I realized people are listening to the things I have to say, so I'm going to say something."

know as soon as you hear the record. They're all kind of talking about the same thing in a round about way, which is something that I feel like Country Music doesn't really deal with."

Barely old enough to cry into a beer, does Mindy think she has the experience to be a Country Music role model?

"It's a really big responsibility. But I think an artist that ignores that responsibility is extremely stupid. No matter what people say and no matter what people do, in this business, you are going to make an impact by the songs that you sing. And how you use that is up to you. You can use it for good, or you can use it for bad. Or you can ignore it. I've chosen to make the most of it. I realized people are listening to the things I have to say, so I'm going to say something."

So where did she learn to be so wise for her years?

"My mom. My mom and dad divorced when I was pretty young, and she went through a whole mess of stuff through my younger years growing up. I just kind of watched and listened. I think that's probably one of my best attributes. I'm really good at listening. So, I paid good attention and learned a lot of things."

The RCA artist says she's also learned a lot from her fans.

"You never quite understand the impact that you will make, but I guess I'm seeing it as a bigger picture now because I'm reading the fan mail and I'm talking to the fans themselves. You can't really, really know how it feels until a fan comes up to you and says my boyfriend used to hit me and your song 'Guys Do It All The Time'

made me realize I don't have to take that. When things like that happen, you realize people are reading into the songs a lot deeper than what Country radio means it to be... People out there listening to the radio are real people with real feelings and real problems....

"'Guys Do It All The Time' was meant to be a fun, fun song, but still - the girl didn't know this - but the reason I cut it was because to me that song was saying if a guy does something you don't like, you don't have to take that. You're just as important as he is."

Is there a moral to this fairy tale story?

"I kind of have one golden rule that is really hard for me as a person because I'm very, very strong, and I'm the kind of person that can take charge and fix things, whatever it may be. That's just my personality. I have a tendency to get into a relationship with a person who has problems and try to change them. And it's become my motto in life that I can't change things. So if I can't love it for the way that it is, don't love it. It took 20 years to learn that."

-Shannon Heim

mark your calendar: SRO '97 set



SRO '97, CMA's International Entertainment Expo, will take place Monday, September 29 - Wednesday, October 1 at the Nashville Convention Center. The annual event, which formerly began the day following the CMA Awards, moves to the week following that gala.

SRO is an all-encompassing music industry conference designed for professionals in the live entertainment and touring business. Panel discussions are combined with open forums, a comprehensive exhibit marketplace and talent showcases in order to bring participants a well-rounded look at the touring industry.

This pro-active learning environment addresses the current industry status and the direction it's headed, allows industry leaders to share and explore their views on the trends, issues, opportunities and challenges facing Country Music and encourages the industry to strengthen and improve the profitability of Country Music.

One of the most respected and diverse conferences in the industry, SRO is attended by more than 1,000 domestic and international talent buyers, promoters, managers, agents, record label executives, concert producers, media representatives and support services companies. SRO brings together the infrastructure that keeps Country Music at the head of the box office, the top of the charts and in the hearts of fans worldwide.

CMA's SRO committee, chaired by Ten Ten Management's Barry Coburn, has already begun discussions regarding this year's SRO agenda. Stay tuned to CLOSE UP in the coming months for updates.

Country Music lovers gear up for Fan Fair

Country Music fans across the nation have begun planning their annual trek to the International Country Music Fan Fair, as tickets for the 26th annual event went on sale in early January. Sponsored by the Country Music Association and the Grand Ole Opry, Fan Fair brings devoted Country Music fans from around the world together with their favorite artists. This year's event takes place June 16-21 at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in Nashville.

"In 1996, Fan Fair tickets were completely sold out by February, making it the sixth consecutive advance sellout," said Ed Benson, CMA executive director. "This year's event promises to be bigger and better than ever."

A \$90 dollar Fan Fair ticket includes live stage shows featuring top Country artists; admission to the exhibit halls where artists sign autographs; one-day admission to the Opryland USA theme park, the Country Music Hall of Fame and the historic Ryman Auditorium; plus two meals prepared on-site by the world famous Odessa Chuck Wagon Gang from Odessa, TX. Attendance is capped at approximately 24,000 each year.

Net proceeds from Fan Fair go into a special fund used by CMA to advance the growth and popularity of Country Music. The first Fan Fair was held in 1972. The event also attracts more than 600 media representatives from around the world.



The preliminary Fan Fair show schedule follows. Plans for shows on Monday and Friday will be finalized shortly.

TUESDAY, JUNE 17

10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Curb Records and MCG Curb Records
2:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Mercury Nashville
7 - 10 p.m.	MCA Records and Decca Records

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18

10 a.m. - Noon	Capitol Nashville
2 - 4:30 p.m.	Warner/Reprise and Giant Records
7 - 10 p.m.	RCA Records and BNA Records

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Atlantic Records and Asylum Records
2:30 - 5 p.m.	Arista Nashville and Career Records
7 - 10 p.m.	Columbia/Epic Records

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

10:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.	Grand Masters Fiddling Championship (Opryland USA)
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Agenda (subject to change)

All activities take place at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel unless otherwise noted.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

10:30 - 10:40 a.m.

Welcome - Ed Benson, Executive Director, CMA

10:40 - 11 a.m.

Keynote Address

11 - 11:30 a.m.

PANEL: FROM PICKUPS TO PERRIER: WHO IS THE COUNTRY MUSIC AUDIENCE? This look at the changing demographics of today's Country Music consumer will examine the diverse characteristics of Country Music listeners and buyers. How is that audience changing? What age ranges prefer Country Music over all other formats, and where do they live?

11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Panel: Case studies

1 - 3 p.m.

Luncheon/Performance
(Wildhorse Saloon)

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

PANEL: MUSIC INDUSTRY YELLOW PAGES:

An overview of how the numerous music industry players interrelate and how to integrate with an artist development team to maximize your promotional opportunities. Corporate decision makers benefit from this first-hand look at the basic functions and economic considerations for record labels, music publishers and touring specialists.

4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

PANEL: USING PERSONALITIES AS PITCHMEN: THE ARTIST AS SALESMAN:

Once you've entered into a partnership with an entertainer, how do you most effectively utilize that artist? Are you meeting his goals as well as your own? How can you both increase the value of the relationship?

6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Dinner

8 - 10 p.m.

Trisha Yearwood & Friends - Ryman Auditorium

10:15 p.m. - Midnight

Club Crawl (downtown Nashville)

THURSDAY, MAY 15

8:30 - 10 a.m.

Breakfast Roundtables

(Rotating topics - 30 minutes each)

10:10 - 10:30 a.m.

The State of Entertainment Marketing: - Ira Meyer, Publisher, Entertainment Marketing Letter



MARKETING

with Country Music

RETURNS!

A Music Lesson For Marketers slated for May

Marketing With Country Music, presented by CMA in conjunction with ADVERTISING AGE, returns to educate corporate marketers and ad agency decision makers on opportunities available with Country Music to meet brand objectives. The conference, initiated in 1996, takes place May 14-15 at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel.

10:30 - 11 a.m.

Keynote

11a.m. - Noon

PANEL: SHARPENING YOUR SPONSORSHIP SAVVY:

This inside scoop will address the mechanics of a successful Country Music sponsorship. Learn how to maximize the return on your sponsorship investment, how to make the tour pay off in every market in product satisfaction, consumer awareness, brand imaging and media exposure.

12:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Lunch/Guitar Pull - Caffé Milano

3 - 4 p.m.

PANEL: KEEP THE CASH DRAWER RINGING: ROPING IN DISTRIBUTION WITH COUNTRY MUSIC:

A look at how effective regional and national integrated promotions can exceed brand marketing objectives. The bottom line of a successful campaign is the bottom line: how to translate your advertising and promotional dollars into retail success.

4 - 5 p.m.

PANEL: CARPETBAGGER OR CORPORATE GENIUS? INVESTING IN COUNTRY MUSIC:

Achieve corporate success by being a player, not a speculator. Learn how to assign a value analysis to a Country Music promotion and measure both tangible and intangible returns. Short-term investments might yield positive returns; long-term investments deliver a stable, secure portfolio.

5 - 5:15 p.m.

Closing Remarks - Ed Benson

8 p.m.

Closing Entertainment

CLOSE UP will present conference updates in the next few months.

“In my 15 years in marketing, never have I attended a conference in which the full integration of product knowledge - from theory to practice - was better. Quite simply the best conference I've ever attended in any marketing arena!”

- Brad Catherman
Senior Manager
MCI Prepaid Phone Cards

“This was a very important conference ...Country Music has become a growth opportunity for many industries. This conference can help dispel the negative image some people have who have not really been exposed to the category.”

- Robert P. Aliano
Vice President/Creative Services
Worldwide, Giorgio of Beverly Hills

“I'm much more inclined to do business with a Country Music star or stars after attending CMA's first Marketing With Country Music conference!”

- Kathie McCarthy
Executive Director/New Business,
United Media

“A great conference that presented the wide appeal of Country Music tie-ins and promotions.”

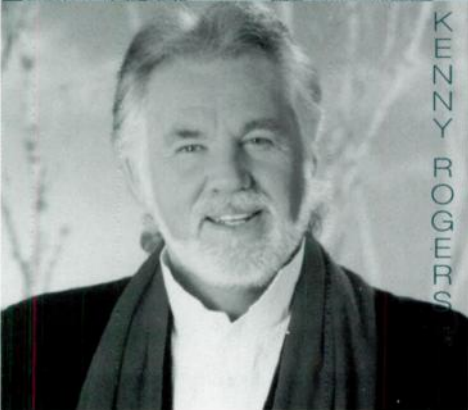
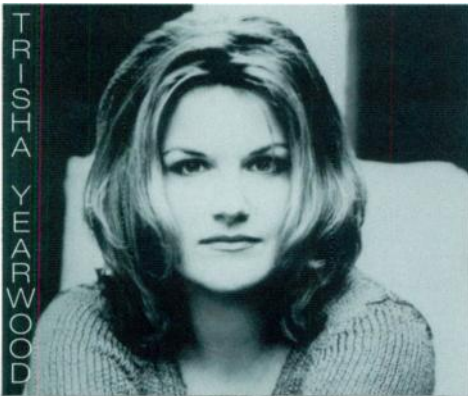
- David Peck
Marketing Specialist,
United Artists Theatres

NAMES IN THE NEWS-JANUARY

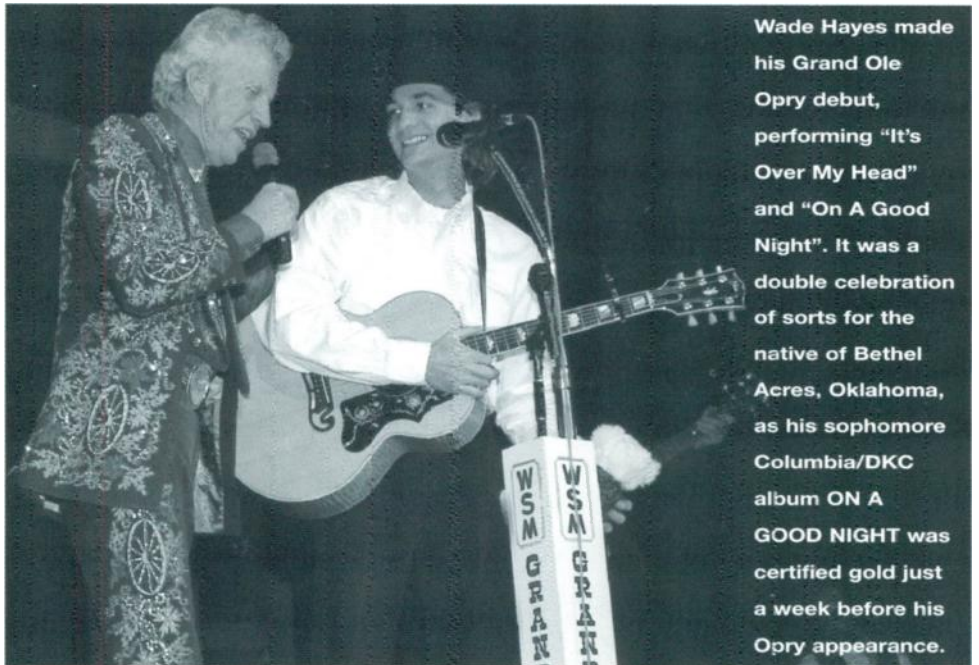
Did January fly by too quickly for you to keep up with Country Music happenings? Here's a quick review, in case you missed something!

NEWS MAKERS:

Trisha Yearwood and Kenny Rogers performed at the Presidential Inaugural Gala, joining for the duet "Together As One". Whoopi Goldberg, Michael Douglas and Candice Bergen hosted the event.



Garth Brooks and Reba McEntire were named Favorite Male Musical Performer and Favorite Female Musical Performer, respectively, at the recent **People's Choice Awards**. Garth was up against two other Country crooners, **Vince Gill** and **George Strait**, while Reba topped the competition from pop and rock, Whitney Houston and Alanis Morissette. Hobbling on crutches to get her award, she invited fans to come to her 1997 concerts, saying, "Crutches or not, I'm going to be out there!" The People's Choice Awards are selected by the American public through the Gallup Organization.



Wade Hayes made his Grand Ole Opry debut, performing "It's Over My Head" and "On A Good Night". It was a double celebration of sorts for the native of Bethel Acres, Oklahoma, as his sophomore Columbia/DKC album **ON A GOOD NIGHT** was certified gold just a week before his Opry appearance.

Toby Keith, former semi-pro football player, sang the national anthem at the NFC Championship game between the Green Bay Packers and the Carolina Panthers.

Reba McEntire unseated Frank Sinatra as America's favorite musical entertainer, according to the **Harris Poll**. The annual survey asks Americans to name their favorites, past or present, actively recording or not. Also making this year's list were **Garth Brooks** and **The Beatles**.

GOOD WORKS:

Mark Chesnutt raised over \$100,000 to offset medical expenses incurred by his longtime guitarist, **Glen Gordon**, who died in December of an inoperable brain tumor. A crowd of more than 10,000 turned out, enabling Mark to break **Garth Brooks'** attendance record at the Montagne Center in Beaumont, Texas. Fellow Texans **Clay Walker**, **Tracy Byrd** and **Doug Supernaw** also performed.

You can call him Lucky Lee Roy! When making a recent withdrawal from an ATM in Nashville, **Lee Roy Parnell** took a good look at the receipt to check his balance and discovered that the machine had accessed someone else's account. Honest to the core, he did what any upstanding Country singer would do - reported the mistake to the bank and made sure his withdrawal came from his own account. A bank employee blamed the incident on "computer error".

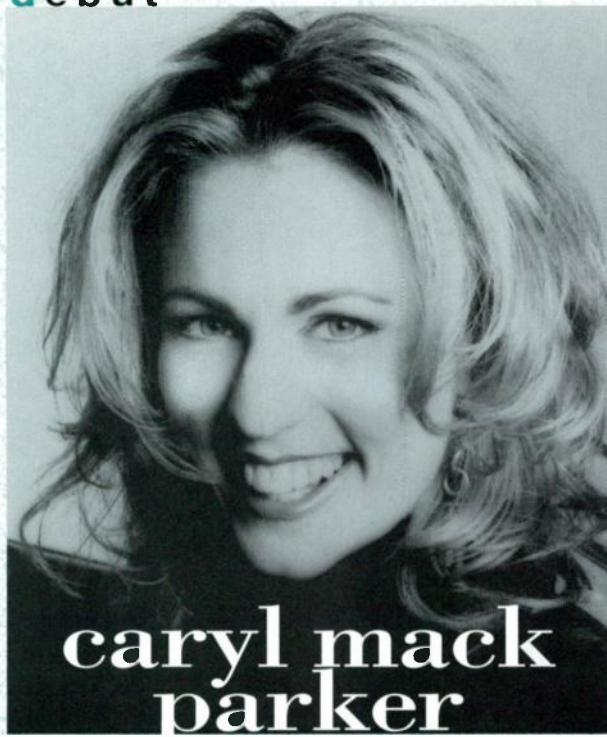
Mary Chapin Carpenter joined Carly Simon at a benefit launching the **Christopher Reeve Foundation**, founded by Reeve to help people who are victims of paralysis.

ALSO STARRING:

Terri Clark taped an episode of "Diagnosis Murder", starring **Dick Van Dyke**.

Tim McGraw played **Jeff Foxworthy's** nemesis on "The Jeff Foxworthy Show".

Clint Black joined **Tom Arnold** for an episode of ABC's "Politically Incorrect".

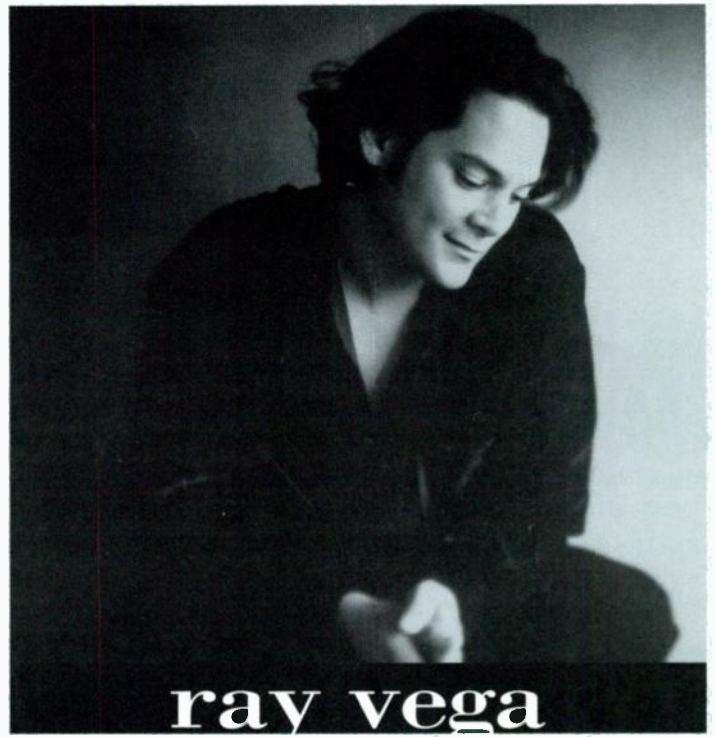


Record Label: **Magnatone Records/Square West Records**
 Management: **Square West Management**
 Album: **CARYL MACK PARKER**
 Single: **"Better Love Next Time"**

Caryl Mack Parker is still coasting after the tailspin which began in August 1996, when she signed her record deal. Her first single, "Better Love Next Time", was released in September. Radio played it, and **BILLBOARD** wrote, "Parker bows with an uptempo song about hope in the face of life's challenges. She has an edge to her voice that should help to set her apart from the pack." Parker's self-titled album produced a retro Country and high-powered folk instrumentation.

The Abilene, Texas native began her career in the Portland, Oregon music scene. Together with husband and cowriter John, she played the local night spots as well as touring with the USO.

The chemistry that the Parkers have in songwriting is reflected in the vocal phrasing that Caryl uses to portray true-to-life stories. "I write mostly about relationships, so it all comes from personal experience or from people very close to me," she explains.

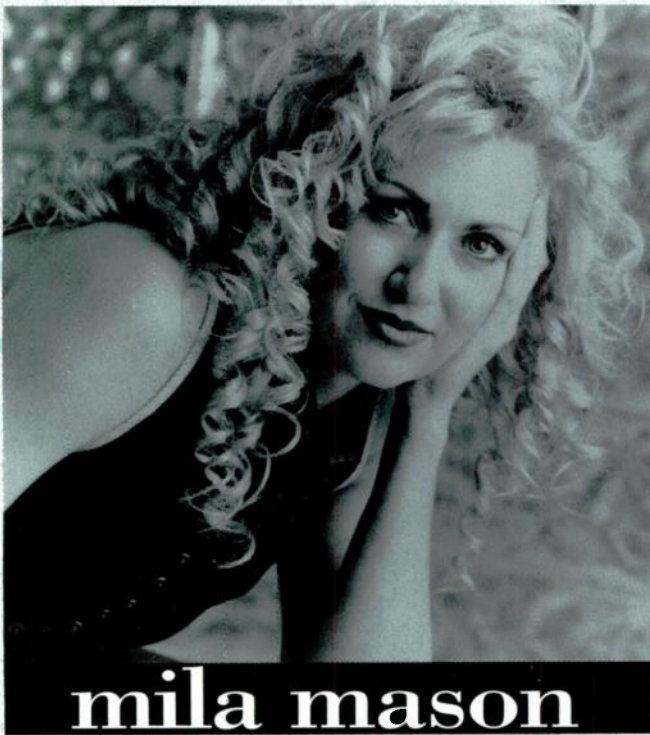


Record Label: **BNA Records**
 Management: **International Management Services**
 Booking Agency: **William Morris Agency**
 Album: **THE VISION**
 Single: **"Remember When"**

Ray Vega has captured the vocal sound that he dreamt of as a child in El Paso, Texas. As he grew up listening to music from the '50s and '60s, he knew that he had the ability to sing like the crooners he so admired. It's been said that he has the same passion and delivery as Roy Orbison or Marty Robbins.

Interrupting his studies at Berklee College, in 1987 he joined his brother Robert to record an album for MCA as The Vega Brothers. The Vegas toured for a while, but stopped recording and ended their alliance. "I was still just beginning to flourish as a writer, singer and performer." Vega then began to write and accumulate material for a solo career.

Ten years later, **THE VISION** is a direct result of Vega's love for vocal masters and the great musical groups of the '70s such as the Eagles. He was also influenced musically by his father, who would sing at church and encourage his boys to learn and love music. With that love for music, Vega's intention for his songs is to take the listener elsewhere. "Some people like to be transported by music every now and then," he says. "I prefer to be swept away every time."



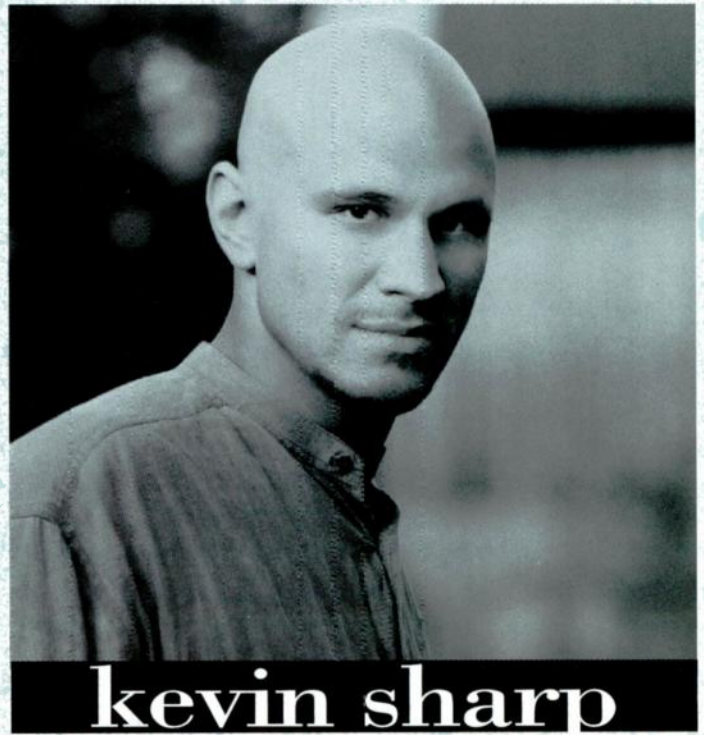
mila mason

Record Label: Atlantic Records
Management: Lapis Management
Booking Agency: William Morris Agency
Album: THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT
Singles: "I Do", That's Enough Of That"

Mila Mason was born with the passion of becoming a Country Music singer. Influence by her grandmother, who had a great love for music, and her mother, a touring singer, the Kentucky native began living her dream as an entertainer at the age of 6 when the Kenner Company used her picture on a toy jukebox.

Working in music videos and as a demo singer, Mason had the good fortune to place her demo tape in the hands of producer Blake Mevis. After signing with Atlantic Records, she began the search for the perfect songs to record. "Finding songs for this album has been a joy," she exclaims. "It seemed like everyone in town was searching for songs for me. There were people pitching songs that they thought were 'me' that they didn't even write!"

"Mila's voice is different and pleasing," Tracy Byrd said in TWANG Magazine. "She sounds breathy, and you can tell there's gonna be some great singing and a lot of potential ahead. The lady has got what it takes to be a huge rising star."



kevin sharp

Record Label: Asylum Records/143 Records
Management: Sound & Serenity Management
Booking Agency: Monterey Artists
Album: MEASURE OF A MAN
Single: "Nobody Knows"

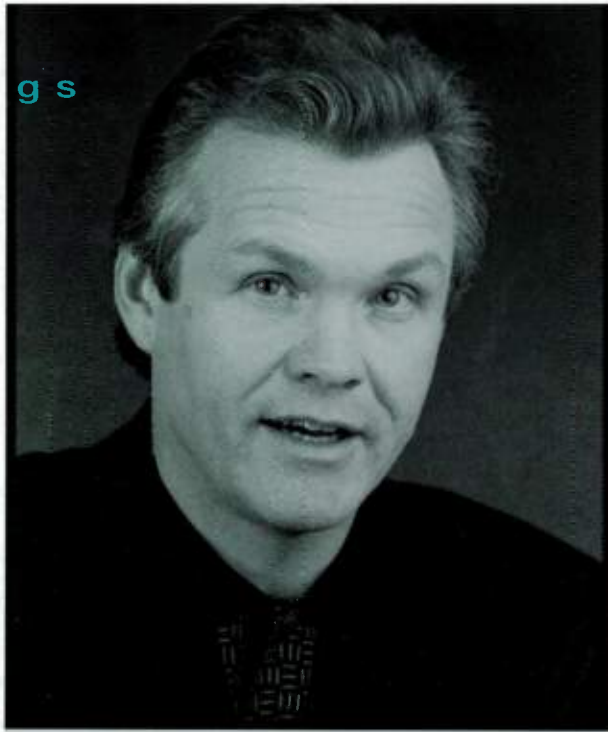
A deep appreciation of music has always lived inside of Kevin Sharp. Today, he lives with an immense appreciation of life. After being diagnosed with bone cancer at 18, Sharp began his battle for survival. His Make-A-Wish desire was granted, enabling him to develop a friendship with producer/composer/performer, David Foster.

Foster encouraged Kevin to continue with his struggle for life and to continue with his music. Kevin went into remission in 1991 after dangerous radiation treatments and an experimental drug. From then on, he put all his strength into his musical career and the relationship he enjoys with his new bride.

After showcasing for Asylum Records, the California native clinched a recording contract. "Music has made a difference every day of my life. Whenever I needed strength, there was always a song," he says. "I want to do that for someone else. I want to heal the world, I guess. I want to touch as many lives as I can. Because I will always sing."

Foster has watched and heard Kevin's improvements musically and emotionally, "Kevin's got talent, charisma and something to say. He has the tools to be around a long time."

-Lyn Aurelius



Sam Hogin

Songwriter Sam Hogin's credits include songs like Wade Hayes' recent hit "What I Meant To Say", the Lonestar smash "No News" and the Don Williams classic "I Believe In You". But as impressive as this list may be, what's really intriguing about the one time clothing store owner is that he doesn't fit the typical songwriter mode.

"Reba listens to songs better than any artist I've ever seen."

"I don't play, I don't sing, and I don't perform. I'm sort of a different kind of songwriter. I bring ideas to the table. I bring a lot of different things. I work at it as a business pretty much. I'm working on six or eight songs in different places with different people, so I depend all on my cowriters."

Those cowriters include top talents like Roger Cook, Mark D. Sanders, Phil Barnhardt, Gretchen Peters and Jim McBride among others. So what does Sam feel that he brings to the table?

"It's some sort of instant feel for observation in conversation. It's just sort of a knack I've seemed to have developed and actually just started out with. I've never written a song by myself. I've written some lyrics, I can do it, but it's a lot more special when you get the right combination of people together.

"I've had an interest for music always, but I performed way back when I was 14 or 15 in a band like a lot of us did. I wasn't very good, and I didn't stick with it. I always liked the radio as a kid. Then I met Johnny Christopher who wrote a lot of songs for Elvis, and he wrote 'Always on My Mind'. So he was the guy who started me out songwriting.

"I couldn't be a full-time A&R guy and a full-time songwriter."

"My first job was with Roger Cook. Roger's had more hits probably than anybody in Nashville if you look back at his career. I've just been around some great cowriters."

Together, Sam and Roger wrote "I Believe In You", which was first recorded by Don Williams. The song not only hit the Country charts, but also charted in the pop and r & b formats. More recently, Bette Midler recorded an updated version of the song for her latest lp, BETTE OF ROSES.

"It is an interesting story," Sam says. "I came home one day, and Bette Midler was on my answering machine. She is like the last person you'd expect to have a message from. She said, 'Hey, I like this song. Call me. I want to talk to you about

changing some lines.' So I did, and this led to a long series of rewrites over the telephone. Roger was back in England at the time, so I eventually went over there to work with him. We finished the song, and then she had another idea or two after that. I thought the song would have been a single, but it never was."

Sam has continued his working relationship with Bette, serving for a while as an A & R representative for her in Nashville. "I sent her a few things. She recorded a Mike Reid song called 'In This Life' that I was instrumental in sending from Nashville. She is just neat. We talk every now and then on the phone. To be such a big star, she is more earthy than I could ever believe - and real personable.

"Bette loves Nashville and Nashville songwriters. She knows all about Nashville. You'd be surprised. She is very song alert, song aware - who's writing and who's writing what."

Besides working with Midler, Sam also worked for a period of time as the director of A&R for Starstruck Music Group where he handpicked songs for artists such as Reba McEntire, Billy Dean, Linda Davis and Rhett Akins.

"If you sit in an A&R job, you're going to listen to song after song. Reba got songs from every writer everywhere. Reba listens to songs better than any artist I've ever seen. I could send her 50, and she would listen to all of them. You could send 10 to some people who wouldn't listen to any of them. It's a difficult job to find songs and help funnel them to people. Sometimes the song just needs to soothe the singer's voice."

Some people in Sam's position may feel that they need to think like an artist in order to pick songs for them, but Sam says he never wanted to fall into that trap.

"If you do too much, you lose what you're there for. You need to have that 'other side of the fence' look that they may not have in choosing songs for themselves. If the songs speaks to the artist, they know it because they have to sing it. It's an amazing business. I don't understand it myself sometimes. I've been pretty lucky to know what's right for people."

Even though Sam says he enjoyed his position at Starstruck, he spent so much time listening to other people's songs that he couldn't work on his own. So he decided to concentrate fully on his career as a songwriter with Sony/ATV Tree where he celebrated his seventh year in October 1996.

"I couldn't be a full-time A&R guy and a full-time songwriter. I couldn't fit it all in. I'd been a songwriter, so I wasn't really equipped for the onslaught of the music business world as it is today. I would get 75 messages a day from around town. It was incredible. Weeding out a lot of the unsolicited stuff was always hard. You want to leave the doors open and hear everything you can, but it was overwhelming. That wouldn't work for me.

"There's so much opportunity at Sony/ATV Tree to better your career as a writer in so many ways. Great songwriters and artists walk in the door all the time. So you have a lot of opportunity there. I try to make use of my opportunities with the people I've met since I've been there. I've got a great field of people I'm comfortable working with. I work really hard at this."

Sam's knack for observing and retaining conversation has not only served him well by helping him to write songs, he also learned one of his most important career lessons from a conversation at his first job. Since that time, it's become his philosophy.

"My first boss in the music business used to always say 'you must be present to win.' If you're not in there and actively doing what you do, you miss out on a lot of opportunity. You've kind of got to work out in the midst of the business flow."

"I've never written a song by myself."

"I came home one day, and Bette Midler was on my answering machine."

-Mandy Wilson



awards

Gene Autry's "Back In The Saddle" and a host of other great tunes will be inducted into the Recording Academy Hall of Fame during this year's annual Grammy presentation on February 26. Autry's famous cowboy song will join a total of 123 other hall of fame recordings.

Ray Charles and Louis Armstrong have three, and Gil Evans and George Gershwin have two each.

Chris Rogers has won two BILLBOARD Video Music Awards for directing LeAnn Rimes' hit debut video "Blue". Rogers received accolades for his direction by claiming *Best Country Music Video of the Year* and

William Lee Golden of the Oak Ridge Boys and Lionel Richie were presented the *Lifework Award for Performing Achievement* by the Alabama Music Hall of Fame on January 17 at the Von Braun Civic Center in Huntsville, AL. Golden has received numerous music awards over the years since first joining the Oak Ridge Boys in 1965. After pursuing a



1996 CMA Horizon Award winner Bryan White stopped by CMA in January to play a few tunes for the staff. Executive Director Ed Benson congratulated the Asylum artist on his recent appearance on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno".

Joining Autry's 1939 Vocalion recording are the Beatles 1965 Capitol recording "Yesterday", "Sketches of Spain" performed by Miles Davis & Gil Evans (Columbia, 1959), Ray Charles' *THE GENIUS OF RAY CHARLES* (Atlantic, 1960), Louis Armstrong & The Allstars' "Mack The Knife" (Columbia, 1955) and "An American In Paris" (Victor, 1929) featuring George Gershwin on piano, conductor Nat Shilkret and the Victor Symphony Orchestra. This is the second recording of Autry's to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. Miles Davis has four inductions, the Beatles,

Best New Artist Video of the Year. The video achieved crossover status on both VH-1 and MTV in the process.

Jerry Clower has been awarded the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame's *Distinguished American Award* to be presented on February 17 in Natchez, MS. Clower, a former Mississippi State defensive tackle, is a MCA recording artist and a member of the Grand Ole Opry. The Mississippi/Louisiana Chapter of the organization will present Clower during its annual awards banquet.

solo career, he returned to the acclaimed group last year. Above & Beyond Pictures received two awards in the Comedy Category at The WorldFest-Charleston Awards. The company was a Gold Winner for Cledus T. Judd's parody "If Shania Was Mine" and a Silver Winner for Music Video for Judd's "(She's Got a Butt) Bigger Than The Beatles". Judd records for Razor & Tie Records.

 **media**

Lisa Stewart and Steve Phillips have been named hosts of "This Week in Country Music", a new weekly series on TNN: The Nashville Network's. The duo made their debut on the program's premiere show January 11. The one-hour program recaps the week's top Country Music news and includes original features on Country's history and heritage. Stewart, who released a solo album in 1994, most recently hosted E! Entertainment Television's coverage of the 1996 CMA Awards. Phillips, an award-winning reporter, was previously an anchor and sports director at WKRN-TV in Nashville.

 **new companies**

Mike Hyland has opened **Full Court Press**, a full-service entertainment public relations agency in Nashville. Hyland, most recently public relations manager for Gaylord Entertainment in Nashville, joined Elektra/Asylum records when he moved to Nashville in 1979. His responsibilities with Gaylord included the Ryman Auditorium, the Wildhorse Saloon and the Nashville On Stage concert series. Full Court Press is located at 437 2nd Avenue South; (615) 244-7224; fax (615) 245-1120; e-mail Hylandpr@aol.com.

Sid Badger has formed **Stargazer Management**, which specializes in working with artists aspiring to obtain a recording contract. The company can be reached at 6501 Harding, Suite U5, Nashville, TN 37205; (615) 356-9351; fax (615) 356-5861.

 **newsline**

Mercury Nashville and Little Dog Records have entered into an agreement whereby Polygram Group Distribution will handle distribution of all Little Dog releases. The agreement covers the United States, with options to negotiate rights for other territories. Upcoming Little Dog releases include projects by the Lonesome Strangers, Joy Lynn White and Pete Anderson, president of the label.

Add Confederate Railroad to the steadily growing list of artists who have secured corporate sponsorship. Abilene Boots will sponsor select Confederate Railroad concerts and also plans to produce promotional items for "Gift with Purchase" promotions that will feature both the Abilene and band logos.

Johnny Cash and LeAnn Rimes were each named Best Country Artist in **ROLLING STONES' 1997 Reader's Choice** poll, with Deana Carter close behind. Readers of the magazine vote on their top musical choices.

Atlantic recording artist Noel Haggard has aligned with the **Abilene Boot Company** for a sponsorship. Haggard will be featured in Abilene's 1997 advertising campaign, which will include print media ads as well as autograph signings at various Abilene Boot outlets.

Joe Diffie will host his **Fifth Annual Country Steps In For First Steps**



Giant artist Daryle Singletary had some surprise guests at a recent concert in Anaheim, California. Dropping in for the show were (l to r) actor Jon Voight, Randy Travis and Elizabeth Travis, who manages both singers.

Concert at the Grand Ole Opry on February 9. Slated to join Diffie are Ty Herndon, Wade Hayes, Skip Ewing, Stephanie Bentley, Ty England and Sons of the Desert. Actor Wilford Brimley will make a special appearance. First Steps, Inc. is a preschool for children ages 6 weeks to 3 years that works to help these children and their families overcome the adverse effects of a handicap or circumstance. Tickets are on sale through Ticketmaster.

Jerry Crutchfield and Warner/Chappell Music Inc. have entered into a worldwide joint music publishing venture. Crutchfield is credited with establishing MCA Music Publishing as one of Nashville's major publishing catalogs. His production credits include more than 25 gold and platinum albums by artists such as Tanya Tucker, Tracy Byrd, Chris LeDoux and Lee Greenwood.

PRIMESTAR, a satellite television provider, is the sponsor of Clay Walker's **Four Star Blowout** tour which kicked off January 17 in Amarillo, TX. Terri Clark, James Bonamy and

Emilio round out the talent lineup for the tour. PRIMESTAR was launched in 1994 as America's first digital television entertainment service.

The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) will hold its next regional conference March 14-16 in Greensboro, NC. IBMA members will be receiving direct mail registration information in the mail. For more information on IBMA's Heartland Gathering, call (502) 684-9025.

River North Nashville has moved to a new location at 1222 16th Avenue South, 3rd Floor, Nashville, TN 37212. You may reach the company by phone at (615) 327-0770; fax (615) 327-0011.



on the move

Mike Dungan has been promoted to senior vice president/general manager for **Arista/Nashville**. Formerly senior vice president of sales & marketing,

utilizing sales strategies and ensuring their effectiveness in the retail marketplace. Libby began his career in Indianapolis at Father's and Son's One Stop before being appointed general manager of Vine Records in 1975. He joined Sony/CBS in 1977 in Cincinnati as field merchandiser. He was most recently sales manager for Sony Music in New York.

Susan Cooke has been promoted to member services director for the **International Bluegrass Music Association**. Cooke, formerly executive assistant for the association, will be responsible for member recruitment, retention programs and member and convention services.

Carolyn Rae Cole has been promoted to president of **Honest Entertainment**. Cole, formerly the independent record label's vice president of business and legal affairs, has managed television marketing campaigns for **Charley Pride**, **Alan Jackson** and **Foster & Allen**.

Welch and Woody, the hot drive radio team from Orlando, has joined **94.9 KSAN Radio** in San Francisco, CA as the morning drive team. John Welch and Steve Woods began their act 12 years ago at KWES in Odessa, TX. Since then they have had gigs in Philadelphia, New Orleans and Chicago, ending with a five-year stint at Orlando's WJHM-FM.

Laura Colvard has joined Nashville-based film and television production company **Scene Three** as account executive. Colvard, formerly systems representative for Ames Color File, will head up sales activities for the business communications and commercials divisions.



Decca newcomer Lee Ann Womack (second from left) was joined by Ricky Skaggs (left) and Sharon White in the studio while recording her debut project. Producer Mark Wright was on hand to guide the production. Womack's album is slated for June release.

Alabama recently celebrated the grand opening of their 14,000-square foot **Alabama Grill** in Pigeon Forge, TN. Joining the multi-platinum selling vocal group in the festivities were **Kenny Chesney**, **Louise Mandrell** and **T.G. Sheppard**. The dining facility is located on Music Road, which is also the home of The Dollywood Company's Music Mansion and the future home of a Louise Mandrell music theater. The Pigeon Forge location is the second of what CEO Steve Smith hopes will be a worldwide chain.

Dungan will oversee the activities of **Arista/Nashville**, **Career Records**, **Arista/Latin** and **Arista/Austin**. A one-time pop promotion representative for RCA, Dungan segued into sales in 1987. He joined the Arista/Nashville staff in 1990 following a stint as Arista's Midwest contemporary music marketing director.

Dale Libby has joined **Sony Music Nashville** as vice president/sales. He will be responsible for working with the Sony Music branch distribution team in

Winners Announced In Annual CMA Awards Point-Of-Purchase Contest

Winners have been announced in two divisions in the annual CMA Awards point-of-purchase display contest, held in conjunction

with NARM. Retail winners are: Tower

Records #113, Sacramento, CA,

first place; Disc Jockey #90, Aiken, SC, second place; Tower Records 3179, Cherry Hill, NJ, third place.

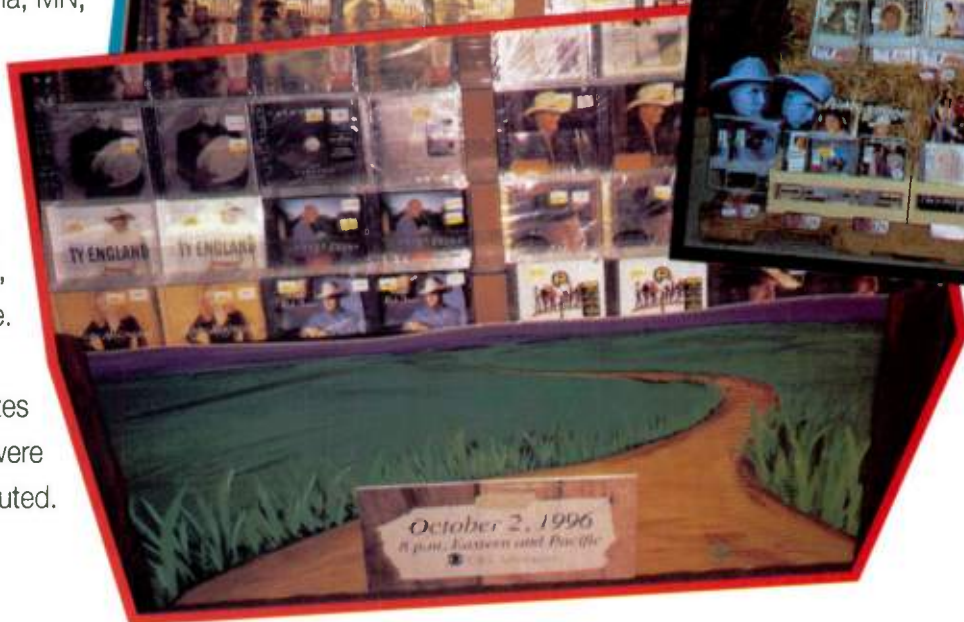
Claiming honors in the

Rackjobber division are:

Handleman Co. (Kansas City branch), KMart #7710, Branson, MO, first place; Handleman Co. (Chicago branch), KMart #1632, Alexandria, MN, second place

and Handleman Co. (Albany branch), Kmart #3202, Westwood, NJ, third place.

Cash prizes totalling \$2,000 were distributed.



FAR AWAY BUT NOT NECESSARILY FOREIGN

Nashville songwriter teams up with Dutch writers

Nashville songwriter Steve Seskin recently traveled a few thousand miles for a writing session. Seskin tells CLOSE UP about an international exchange program of sorts organized by Nashville's Little Big Town Music Group, the company for which Seskin writes, and BMG Music in Holland. During the 10-day trip, Seskin says he spent about a week collaborating with a few of Europe's top songwriters. Though he didn't know the writers personally before the trip, they soon formed friendships.

"It was a little different than I do it here in Nashville. Usually I try and get to know people before I go write with them. When it's good, it's a real intimate thing, you want to do it with people you really like hanging out with. But it was amazing, it worked out really well. They are great guys, and I had a great time."

The differences in the songwriters' background didn't stand in the way of creativity, he explains. "Well, first thing is they speak English there, so that's nice. And you find that just because the cultures are a little different, there is still a real sameness to the emotional experience that often goes into writing songs about places or love or all that stuff. Sometimes I'd say some things in phrases that are American kind of concepts and they'd say, 'What does that mean?' but not very often. Mainly they were in tune to our concepts."

Seskin, who has penned hits including "I Think About You" (Collin Raye), "Daddy's Money" (Ricochet) and "No Man's Land" (John Michael Montgomery), says he traditionally shies away from writing love songs. But during the trip, he found himself writing three tunes with that theme: "Speak To My Heart", "Once In A Million Years" and "One Lie". Seskin says his Dutch cowriters were particularly interested in the music writing side of things, leaving him to lead the way in the lyrics much of the time. They recorded demos of the songs, which he brought home.

"Marcel (Schimscheimer) is one of the leading producers there, so I thought we were gonna write songs for their artists. I think two out of the three songs may be considered more pop songs than Country songs, but I guess the interesting thing is they were just as interested in writing Country songs...When you look at the fact that people (in the Nashville) sell more records than almost anybody, it should have occurred to me that there would be an interest on their part to do what I do, but since I was going to their country, I felt like we were gonna do what they do. It was a combination of both."

Seskin was a guest of a popular radio show in the Amsterdam area during his visit.

"They had me on for like an hour, and it was amazing how much this guy knew about every last little thing...I was just tickled that here I am sitting in Holland, and this guy knows all these songs of mine, including really obscure ones."

While Seskin learned about Holland, his cowriters learned the Nashville tradition of making writing appointments.

"The more I go other places to write, I notice Nashville is the place where people book a time (to write), and these guys were so impressed with that, with the discipline that Nashville has.

"One of the guys had never done an 'OK, we're getting together Tuesday at 10:00, let's write a song' kind of Nashville thing. The first thing he wanted to do was take me down to where he was born in Rotterdam, to the harbor there where the ships haul in from and everything. We spend a whole day there, and he took me to the place where the Mayflower sailed from...We just had a great day, and we never wrote. But he says he'll come to (the U.S.), and we'll try it there."

Seskin said one of the reasons he agreed to go to Holland was a successful

writing trip to France a few years ago. "Paul Young, a British pop singer, cut one of my songs on his up-and-coming album that I wrote with him, and Peter Frampton did a song on his last album. So it was fun, and it yielded some cuts that I never would have gotten if I hadn't gone."

The rewards of such a trip are both tangible and personal, Seskin says.

"I wrote a song a couple of weeks ago with a woman from a group called Disappear Fear, kind of a folk group, and we wrote a song called 'Touch the Stars', which is really about Van Gogh. That totally came from me going to the Van Gogh Museum (in Amsterdam) on one of those days. That's something that happened, I mean directly happened, from that Holland trip that I can honestly say never would have happened.

"It's great to see what writers in other places think like and how they approach it. And then, who knows, maybe one of these songs will get recorded back here or maybe we'll plug into the artists that Marcel is producing there. I try and look at it like I care what happens to the songs but it was a good experience and if nothing happens with them I had fun and made three new friends. I feel good about having gone, no matter what happens."

- Shannon Heim



Left to Right: Edwin Schimscheimer and Marcel Schimscheimer, writers for BMG Music - Holland, join Steve Seskin, writer for Nashville's Little Big Town Music Group, and Bob Schimscheimer, a studio drummer in Holland, for writing in their homeland.



Howard and David Bellamy team up with some exotic birds while on location in Noumea, New Caledonia for the video shoot of "She's Awesome".

Marty Stuart

continued from page 5...

uncovered our local gems like Maybelle Carter and Doc Watson and Roy Acuff and Earl Scruggs and Vasser Clements, Roy Huskey, Jimmy Martin, people like that. It took a rock 'n' roll band to resurface the soul of Country Music and put it back on the tracks.

"We've kind of drifted again as far as heart and soul goes. Last January, we were in California doing those Johnny Cash sessions that are on American Recordings, so here you have a rap producer (Rick Rubin) and Johnny Cash. Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers and me are the band. Cash was singing songs by Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, Soundgarden and Beck. I was thinking, 'There's more Country Music going on in this room full of rock 'n' rollers than I've heard in Nashville in a long time, outside of Junior Brown and BR5-49. It's interesting that it takes outsiders sometimes to get it going."

As to his own evolution... "I think new songs determine that musically...and just trying to better what you do. Last year was an incredible year. I wound up on some cool outside projects like the Johnny Cash thing, played with John L. Hooker, me and Travis (Tritt) had a tour, had a gold record, a couple of TV specials, got a Martin guitar

named after me. There were all kinds of wonderful things to show for last year."

Marty celebrates a significant anniversary in 1997. "This Labor Day it will be 25 years (as a professional musician). That's hard for me to imagine."

"There's not a lot of dignity to die as an old hillbilly singer anymore."

Sinatra once sang, "Regrets...I've had a few..." Aside from taking back one or two things he might have said that hurt someone, what about Marty? "No. I'm at peace now."

Those 25 years have given him incredible memories, such as the night Roger Miller was inducted into the Hall of Fame. "Dwight and Merle and Willie and me were standing backstage. Dolly came up and talked to us and then walked away. Merle said, 'I believe she just gets prettier all the time, her waist just gets smaller and smaller and her top just gets bigger and bigger.' I said something about her lips being pretty, and Dwight took off on how beautiful and gorgeous she was. Willie was just standing there listening to all of us, and he finally looked at me and said, 'Do you think she's got any rolling papers?' I told that to Dolly and she loved it!"

- Janet E. Williams

CLAY WALKER

continued from page 3

smoothly, Clay says he's grateful for that time in his life.

"I feel very fortunate to have had the experiences that I have. Little did I know that they would pay off, because they were just hardships at the time. I think it's important for an artist to make their own decisions. Whenever I'm talking with Danny O'Brian or Erv Woolsey, who manage my career, it's a straight shot. There's no fluff in our relationship.

"Since I've been with the Erv Woolsey Company, it's really been a very relaxed relationship. I know I'm in good hands. I don't really worry about anything. It's great to be part of a team where you all work together"

Early last year, Clay faced another challenge. He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Before sitting down for this interview, he had visited the head of research for multiple sclerosis at Vanderbilt Hospital.

"She had a really nice truck, so things evened out."

"We talked about what my prognosis would be for the future. Everything really looks fabulous for me. His prognosis is that over the next five to eight years I will probably not regress any. And in the next 10 years, he thinks there will probably be a cure for MS. I did say probably. I don't want to misquote him. My MS is not of the progressive nature at this point, and it doesn't seem like it's going to be. I feel very fortunate and very blessed. I thank God for that.

"There's no fluff in our relationship."

No matter what aspect of his life he's dealing with, Clay tries to keep a realistic attitude.

"I don't feel like any of the wheels are turning in different directions. I'm an enthusiastic person. There's a lot of time and affection that goes into each project that I do. I don't feel happy unless everyone around me is happy first. I think that whenever you have positive energy around you, the end result reflects that."

-Mandy Wilson

The BILLBOARD MONITOR recently reported that Ty Herndon was the only new artist from the "Class of 1995" to have two number one records. He's savoring the success of several hit singles, but during the last year or so he lost his 20-year-old first cousin in a car wreck, a close friend to cancer, worked 216 dates on the road and is finally grieving the death of his father who died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage when Ty was 18.

"I'm a mean, lean, crying machine these days," Ty says.

If a person isn't prone to tears, he or she may be after hearing "Don't Tell Mama" from Ty's LIVING IN A MOMENT album. It's a ballad about a young person who has too much to drink and gets behind the wheel of his car. As he's dying, he begs "Don't tell Mama I was drinking/ Lord knows her soul would never rest."

"I've gone into markets now doing a show, and they will cheer when I do that song. I know it's probably driven the promotion department crazy at the label."

He expects some resistance at radio. "I'm gonna have to get out there probably with some of these stations and sell that song because they're gonna say, 'That's not a Ty Herndon record, that's too Country. Are you trying to be George Jones?'"

One comparison people might've made to George Jones who has chronicled his wild days in an autobiography, was when Ty was arrested in 1995 in Dallas by an undercover police officer.

"About my arrest and everything that surrounded it with the exposure charge, which was dropped, there was just a lot of misconceptions. On top of the drugs - that was really hard on my wife and me. There were a lot of rumors about me sexually that actually were around for a long time even before the arrest. I want to put some of those to rest.

"It's part of that recovery thing for me about not sitting back and going 'Oh, whatever you want to think, it's OK'. I'm armed with some pretty heavy recovery tools, and I've got a spirituality that's going on with me now that is pretty incredible. I'm ready to go to the wall with what I believe these days, and I will. I guess I just want people to know me and love me for who I am.

"I'm a good guy, and I've got a good thing going on, and I love my wife. I want people to know that. I really want to put the drug and the whole arrest thing to rest in '97. I don't want it to go away, because I want to take what I learned from that situ-

ation and make that a part of my future, because if I forget about it I'm putting myself in a lot of danger. I'm hoping my career and my reputation can survive and live in this good place in '97."

Besides working on a new album, Ty's also planning new ways to reach out to others this year. He started the What Mattered Most Foundation for kids with AIDS. He's planning events for that with the help of his wife Renee, who works with the terminally ill. Ty's also involved in Special Olympics.

"I've got a spirituality that's going on with me now that is pretty incredible."

"I'm going around for the D.A.R.E. (Drug Awareness Resistance Education) program. I'm speaking to the schools, to the kids, and that's really rewarding. Not only does it feel like I'm helping the kids, but it's really helping me also. Those guys can break it down to raw elements of honesty, truth, and I really like that. I give a talk on dreams and drugs. I haven't ventured into the high schools yet. I'm still into the middle and elementary schools, but I'm planning on getting the high school next year."

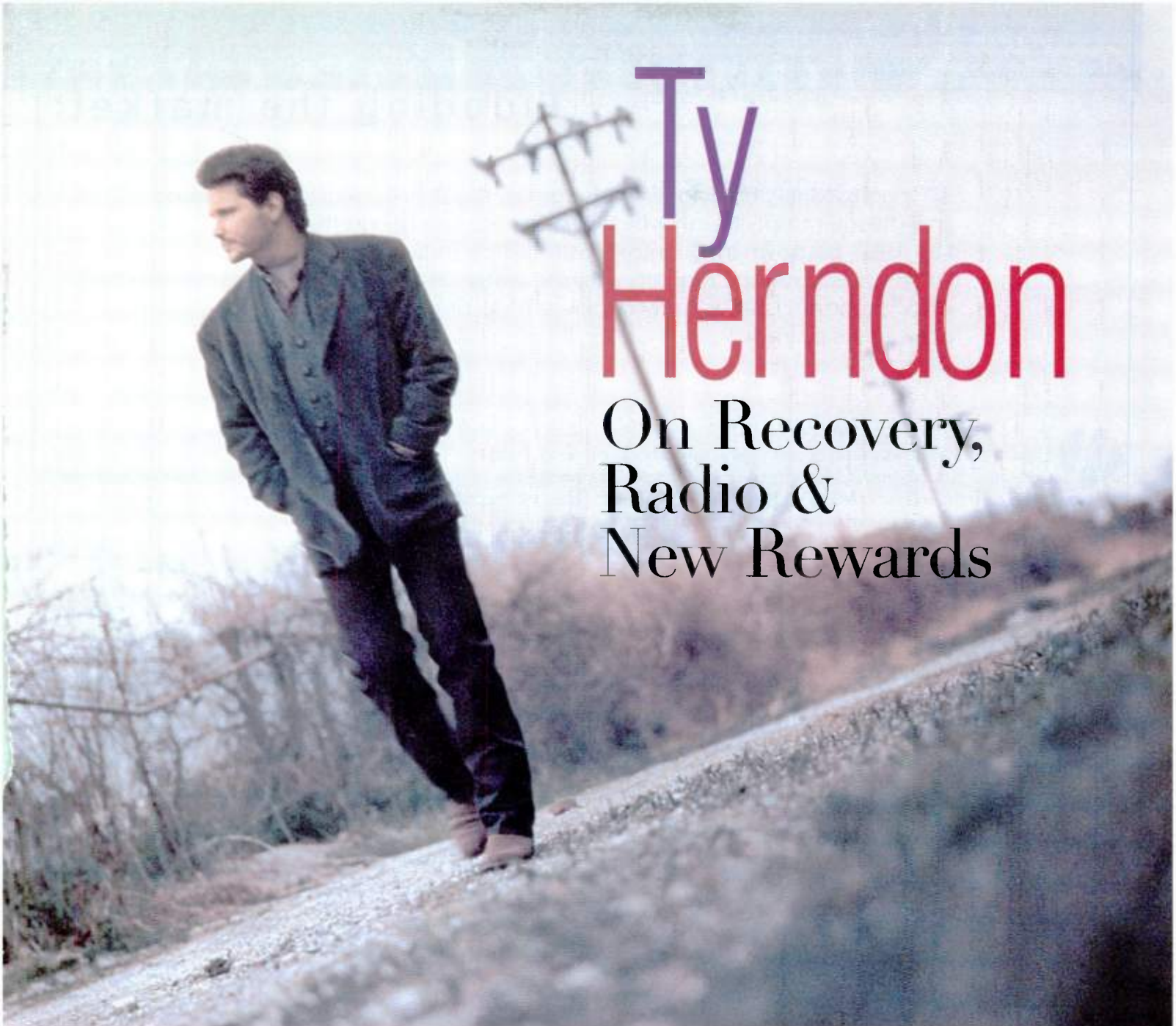
Ty says he got into problems with methamphetamines or "speed" by cramming 30 hours of things to do in a 24-hour-day. What does he do now to keep from falling into the same trap?

"Big old boundaries. If I have had a really late night, I will not get up and go do a 6:30 morning radio show. You can't do

"...I sure am grateful for where I am in my life right now."

everything. The great part about this year is I'm going into my third year, and I'm not having to do a lot of honky tonks and a lot of club dates any more. I'm not up as late, so it leaves me more time to do things during the day. Although we've worked a lot this year, I haven't really been pushed to the wall."

Ty recalls that growing up he sang in church and was the "good boy, the family hero" but that changed once he started playing clubs.



Ty Herndon

On Recovery, Radio & New Rewards

"I guess I just want people to know me and love me for who I am."

"I got a little wild during the honky tonk days. I worked eight years of honky tonks out in Texas, and something that starts out recreational will kick your butt. You can't just keep it at recreational. My advice is don't do it, don't experiment, don't start doing any of the stuff. Some people don't have addictive personalities. I don't allow anybody to do any kind of drugs around me. If I know it's in the room, I pretty much throw a big fit. That's just part of me taking care of myself. I come from some addictive behavior back-

ground that I found out with talking to my mom and through therapy and stuff.

"You can't do everything."

"My dad was an alcoholic, a good man, a great man, and he was a fun guy even when he was drinking and stuff. Addiction is hereditary, not always, but in my case it was. I wouldn't go back and do anything that I've gone through again, but I sure am grateful for where I am in my life right now. The whole process of getting here is a good place for me. I thought I would never get here this way but it's been a real learning experience for me. I'm real happy where I'm at."

-Teresa George

A Touring Forecast- Flooding the market:

- Is Country Music holding it's own against the ever-increasing number of entertainment options on which consumers can spend their money?
- Will 1997 go down in Country Music history as the year of blockbuster tours?
- Have we flooded the market, washing away demand for Country entertainment?
- How important is it for "new superstars" to break away from the multitude of new artists on radio?

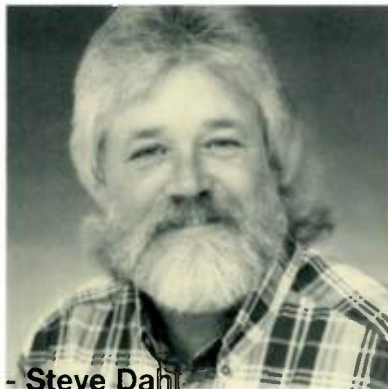
When it comes to the touring industry, POLLSTAR may have said it best in its 1996 year-end issue: "Country Music was affected by nearly all of the same problems facing the industry in general but still proved it's a genre that is far from fading." In fact, POLLSTAR reports, the total gross volume of major concert ticket sales in 1996 was \$1.05 billion as compared to \$950 million in 1995. And, seven Country artists made the magazine's list of 1996's Top 25 tours, up from five Country artists in 1995. But across the board, according to AMUSEMENT BUSINESS, artists took in less money in 1996 than in 1995, despite playing more dates. Singling out Country, the gross of the top 10 tours was up considerably over 1995, thanks in part to Garth Brooks. As AMUSEMENT BUSINESS reported in its year-end issue, "Promoters had to work harder for the money in 1996, but the year was saved to a point by several Jurassic acts, the king of Country and some newly developed box office muscle."

CLOSE UP recently caught up with several booking agents and managers to take a look back at 1996 and a look ahead at 1997.

"1996 was a very good year for bookings, but tickets sales really slowed down in the fall...I think there's just too much competition for the entertainment dollar," says Rod Essig of Creative Artists Agency, the company responsible for booking artists including Alan Jackson, Tim McGraw, Wynonna and BR5-49. "There were a lot of acts out there. And you're competing to sell tickets against 110,000 people going to the University of Tennessee football games or professional football games."

Consumers' money is spread thin, agrees Steve Dahl of Monterey Artists, representing John Michael Montgomery, The Mavericks and Ricky Skaggs, to name a few. "We're not only fighting against the football games or the movies or the school functions, but our entertainment dollar now is being spread through the internet, through so many different ways for people to spend their money. (Country concerts) have always been there, so they know what that is. They went out and experimented with new things.

"(Monterey Artists) had a good year last year because we thought about it in '95 and '94 - that it was going to be a tighter dollar out there - so we packaged a lot more creatively last year, and we're doing that this year."



- Steve Dahl

Dahl gives Junior Brown's dates with Alan Jackson or with ZZ Top in 1996 as an example. "I think the critical thing is for the artist to be unique enough that they have their own little niche out there, and that is part of creating the demand for people to spend their money to come see them."

It is generally agreed the best way to beat out the competition is to create a can't-miss event, the likes of which haven't been in the market recently.

"A Country concert should be the exception. It should be a special event, not a regular occurrence," points out Paul Lohr of Buddy Lee Attractions, representing Mark Chesnutt, Terri Clark and Lorrie Morgan, among others. "We have flooded the market with so many shows, we as an industry, that it's now the rule rather than the exception. And the average ticket buyer is just maxed out," Lohr laments.

"I think you're seeing more promoters doing a little more research (of the market in general) prior to diving in," Lohr continues. "Other times you would have a promoter do a show and not care if there was a lot of concert traffic in the market at the same time. But last year, we really saw them step up the analytical stage prior to booking a date."

Country artists have traditionally been road warriors, and it's hard for some to change that mentality, the agents say.

Rick Shipp of the William Morris Agency, representing Brooks & Dunn, Patty Loveless and David Lee Murphy, among others, says cutting back on the number of dates is something his company incorporated into its long-term plans. "We have been trying to get our headliners on two-year cycles instead of 12-month cycles for several years. It's just now coming to fruition. Everybody wants to work. We're just trying to pay attention to what's out there."

Essig agrees. "As a company, CAA is definitely slowing down a number of our headliners. Tim McGraw did a 140-150 dates last year, and he'll do 75 this year. Alan Jackson's only doing 75."

"There are so many artists out there that if one act says I'm going to take the year off, there will be 10 acts trying to take



- Paul Lohr

A Country concert should be the exception.
-Paul Lohr

Downpour of entertainment alternatives

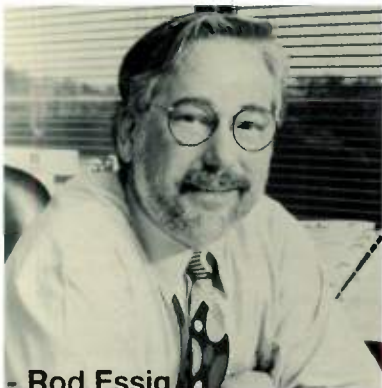
their slot," Dahl explains. "Some acts have built themselves into a situation where they have to be on the road. Certain groups won't tour unless they're touring behind a new album release. Everybody's got different reasons to tour."

"There are a lot of issues that we as an industry need to look at," Essig points out. "We sit here all the time talking about giving people much more value for their dollar. Garth Brooks has always done that. An \$18.50 ticket plus a service charge. It doesn't change...In essence people are going to spend more money on merchandise, they're going to be more apt to come to a show. When you get into selling X amount of tickets, it really doesn't matter that much over the long haul. Garth Brooks has so many other income streams that what he loses in that extra \$2 in that ticket is not going to kill him. It's all a different philosophy. Tim McGraw's crowd is a young, stand up and kick crowd. His crowd is not going to spend a lot of money. Reba McEntire's is much more of a \$35 ticket in the front row and sit down and watch the show. It's a very different crowd."

"The business is still there as long as the buyer perceives the artist to be a good value," Lohr says. "If he can make money on the show, there's plenty of business. It's then up to the Nashville community as a whole whether they can readjust their costs and their presentations without sacrificing quality in order to get the deal done." Thousands of dollars of "bells and whistles" or an extra bus affect the bottom line, Lohr explains. "The fat years of the early '90s gave us a comfort zone and a financial buffer zone, which enabled us to enjoy the extras...I would like to think that it comes down to artistic execution, the charisma of the artist and the quality of the material being presented as being what ultimately draws a fan to the stage."

The recently announced Fruit of the Loom Country Comfort Tour (Travis Tritt, Hank Williams Jr., Charlie Daniels Band and JoDee Messina) and Kraft (Vince Gill and Bryan White) tours could prove to be lucrative.

"I think the Vince and Bryan White tour will be really big," Shipp says. Though Gill has traditionally shied away from sponsorships, "this year a sponsor came to the table with a history of being involved in Country Music," Shipp explains. And one of the year's most anticipated blockbusters is expected to be the Brooks & Dunn and Reba tour on which the superstars will alternate nights opening. Both acts are known for their elaborate shows, but Shipp says they've joined their production to make this tour possible.



- Rod Essig

"I think we do need to create events," Essig says. "Brooks & Dunn and Reba McEntire - in the rock world that happens all the time where you have Elton John and Billy Joel out together. Again, that's a great value for your money. I'm a believer in that. Create pizzazz. Create excitement. As an agent, that's where we get to be creative in

the packaging and not always trying to draw the same audience for the same show."

But tried and true superstars like Brooks & Dunn, Reba, Gill or Jackson, can't be expected to carry the load of Country concerts forever, the bookers agree. One of the problems facing the industry is the lack of "new superstars".

"What I'm getting right now is the fans want to see new artists, new stars stepping up to the plate and really happening. I believe as an industry we need to build a couple more superstars," Essig says. "The only one that has really come out moving into that arena consistently is Tim McGraw. I think there are some people that are on the horizon of making some moves if they get not number one records, but career records. There's a big difference." Essig says artists like LeAnn Rimes and Bryan White need to be given time to grow and become household words.

Some potential superstars may have been lost in the shuffle because radio was bombarded with new artists in the past few years, Dahl says. However, Dahl points to reigning CMA Vocal Group of the Year The Mavericks as an example of how success can happen in a non-traditional way. "They went through without radio. They played 200 and some dates a couple of years ago, and they showed everybody what a great, great band it is...So in the midst of what is going on with commercial Country radio, there's still glimmers.

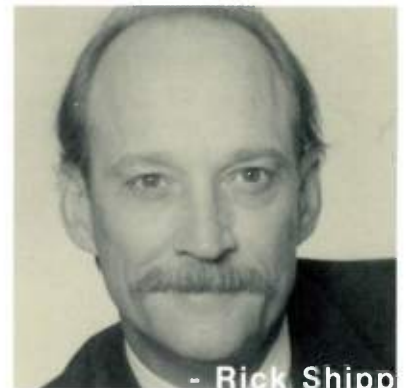
As an industry we need to build a couple more superstars.
-Rod Essig

"I think everybody's got to start thinking more creatively. I believe things will improve. I believe we will cut some better records in Nashville. I believe we will have things that are unique enough to break through this next year and the public will get excited about. I think too many people are paying too much attention to it for it not to happen."

Essig points out that the market also is expanding, with more and more artists internationally. "It's like anything else in America right now, we have to be more worldly. We can't just keep drawing on the same market."

With a little creativity, Country will continue to thrive, the agents agree.

"I'm very optimistic," Essig agrees. "It's not easy. It's not like just answering the phone. But I think we gave up a lot of our creativity, and now we're going back and saying this will work and this won't. We can't just throw it against the wall, because it will come back and hit you. That's really good for all of us, because as agents, we know what to do, we've seen the cycles. It's a challenge, and it's doing the right thing. This year you may not make as much money, but next year the crop will be back."



-Shannon Heim

- Rick Shipp

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cma events

February

4 Country Music Association Quarterly Board Meeting/Renaissance Hotel/Nashville

March

20 MINT: MUSIC INDUSTRY & NEW TECHNOLOGIES/ presented by CMA/Cumberland Science Museum/Nashville

April

2 America's Sold On Country Tour/Plaza Hotel/ New York, NY

3-4 Country Music Association Quarterly Board Meeting/New York, NY

8 America's Sold On Country Tour/Northfield Hilton/Detroit, MI

17 America's Sold On Country Tour/ Chicago, IL

May

14-15 Marketing with Country Music/presented in conjunction with ADVERTISING AGE/Renaissance Nashville Hotel/Nashville

June

16-21 26th International Country Music Fan Fair/co-sponsored by the Grand Ole Opry/Tennessee State Fairgrounds/Nashville

July

17-18 Country Music Association Quarterly Board Meeting/Washington, DC

August

5 CMA Awards Press Conference

September

24 31st Annual CMA Awards/Grand Ole Opry House/Nashville

29-Oct.1 SRO/CMA's International Entertainment Expo/ Nashville Convention Center/Nashville

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www.countrymusic.org.



COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

datebook

*Denotes international telephone number with country code in parentheses

February

7-March 23 13th International Country & Western Festival/Schutzenhaus Albisquetti, Zurich/Contact Albi Matter at (41) 1-461-99-66; fax (41) 1-462-70-30; e-mail amatter@swissonline.ch

26 39th Annual Grammy Awards/presented by NARAS / Madison Square Garden/New York, NY

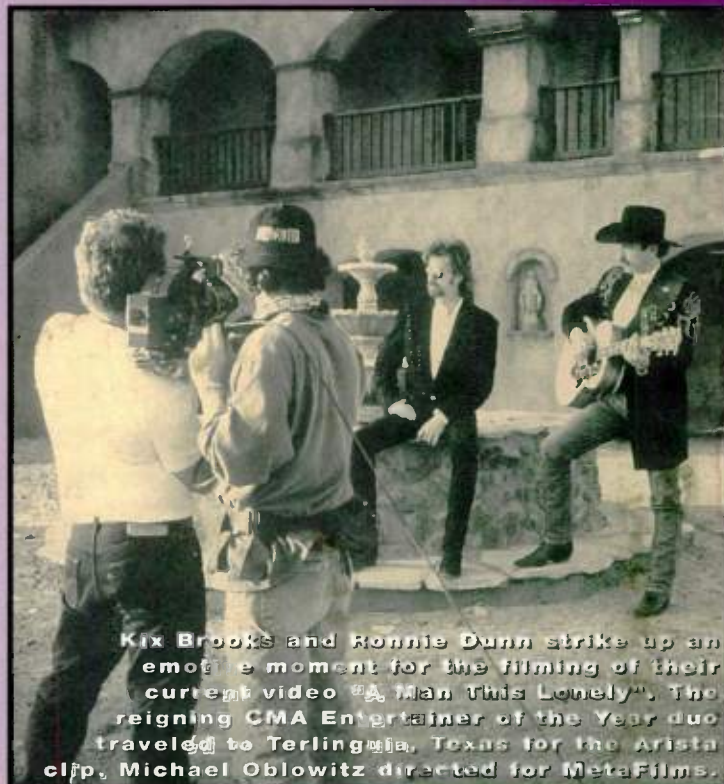
March

5-8 Country Radio Seminar/presented by Country Radio Broadcasters/Opryland Hotel/Nashville (615) 327-4487; www.crb.org

8-11 39th Annual NARM Convention/Orlando, FL/ (609) 596-2221

12-16 SXSW '97/Austin, TX/(512) 467-7979; fax (512) 451-0754

14-16 IBMA Southeast Regional Conference/presented by International Bluegrass Music Association/Holiday Inn Four Seasons/Greensboro, NC/(502) 684-9025



Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn strike up an emotive moment for the filming of their current video "A Man This Lonely". The reigning CMA Entertainer of the Year duo traveled to Terlingua, Texas for the Arista clip. Michael Oblowitz directed for MetaFilms.