

RARE HANK WILLIAMS PHOTOS • OVER 25 REVIEWS

# COUNTRYMUSIC

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2002

## GEORGE JONES

How country's self-destructive honky-tonk titan cleaned up his act – and outlasted an entire generation of his peers

**CONTRACTS, STARS & MONEY**  
When bad things happen to good music

**CHRIS LeDOUX**  
His struggle to survive – in his own words

**CHELY WRIGHT**  
The changes that made her a star

**UNDER THE COVERS**  
Songs you've heard before – by somebody else

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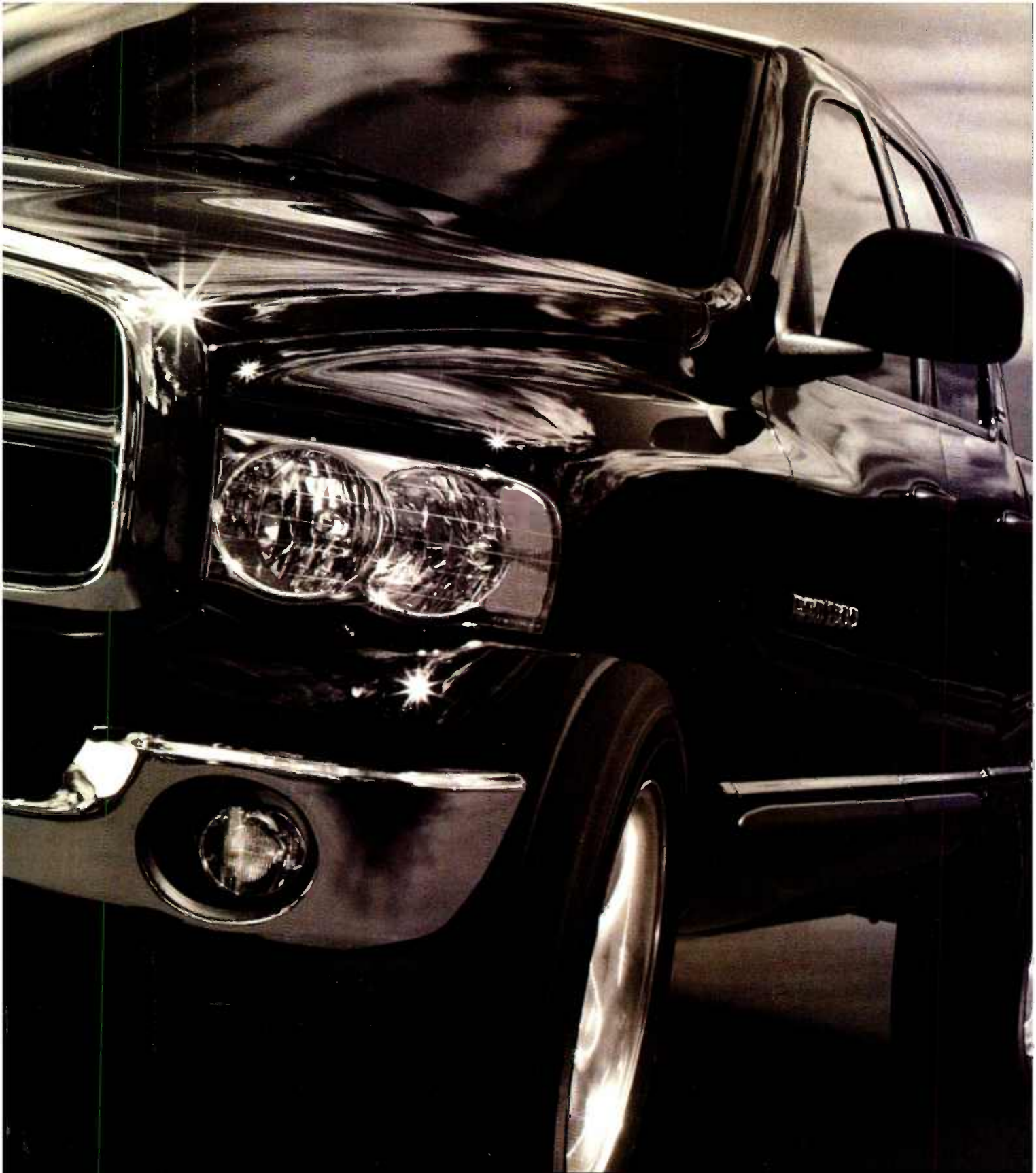


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## COVER

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Who expected George Jones to outlast an entire generation of peers? At 70, the legendary, hard-living singer has reformed his wild ways and settled into a genteel life – while remaining a towering presence on the country scene. He's still making great music and still speaking his mind.  
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By Chris LeDoux



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ALBERT SANCHEZ/ICMA NASHVILLE

KEVIN FERGUSON



22

PHIL CICERO


It figures. You spent two hours  
making that green-bean thing, and  
the first thing they grab took only minutes.



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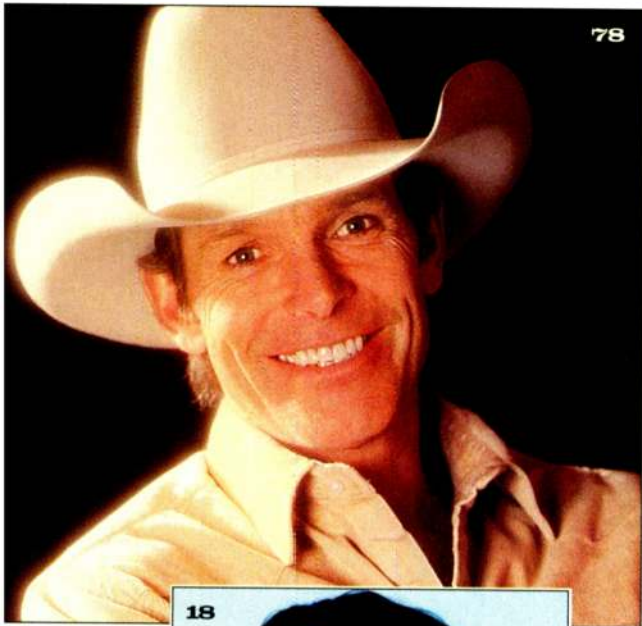
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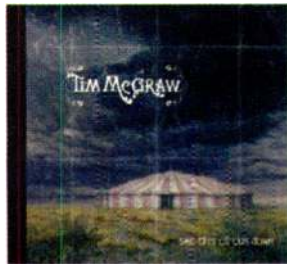
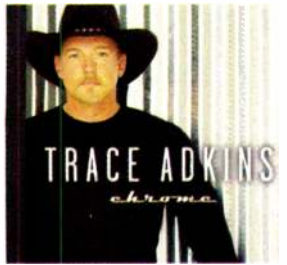
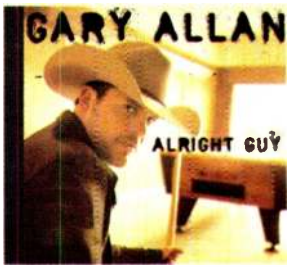
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**country**  
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Hey Bob, are you going to the Gary Allan concert in LA?

No Jim, I'm not into LA.



What's wrong with sunny beaches, movie stars and fancy parties?

That's all fine Jim, but the people are so plastic.



Sounds good to me.



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## BROOKS & DUNN

I was so happy to see Brooks & Dunn on your cover (*August/September*). I knew they were having trouble, but the article went into a depth that I didn't know.

### BILLY BOHN

LEBANON, ILLINOIS

As a charter subscriber to your magazine, I have enjoyed reading many fine artist interviews. Which begs the question, why would you do an "artist" interview with Brooks & Dunn?

I have never understood how these two have been successful. Ronnie Dunn sings exactly like his hair looks – as if someone is using a cattle prod on him. And Kix Brooks wouldn't know a harmony if it smacked him square between the eyes. If these two didn't have extremely talented harmony singers, they would sound like two caterwauling middle-aged men.

I thought when *Tight Rope* failed everyone had finally caught on. But they come back with *Steers & Stripes*, which you review as "fresher and more energized." Give me a break. This album sounds no different than anything previously released by these two. "Only In America" is no more than a typical formulaic Nashville release, and the only reason it is garnering attention is because Americans love any song that mentions our heritage.

### MARCIA DAINES

NORTH LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

## MARY NOT CONTRARY

Thank you for the article on Mary Chapin Carpenter ("*Destiny's Child*," *August/September*).

I've come to the conclusion that mainstream radio is just not intelligent enough for her numerous talents. On one hand, we have a talented diva screeching *oh-oh the way you love me* over and over again. (Who writes this drivel?) On the other hand, we have Ms. Carpenter wondering, *Where the ghosts of antiquity are/On nights like this ... and I am falling*



Mary Chapin Carpenter

COURTESY SONY MUSIC



# LETTERS

slowly backwards/Right into your famous last words. Pure poetry.

There has been much talk about the dumbing down of America. Lyrics written with a grade-school vocabulary are just another link in the mounting chain of evidence.

**BARBARA LAWRENCE**  
PHOENIX

## PAISLEY POWER

Today I bought Brad Paisley's *Part II* and couldn't be happier. James Hunter (*August/September*) comments that Brad Paisley "should stretch out a little more than he does on *Part II*." What should he stretch out to? Maybe you should listen to the song "Too Country" again, sir. Brad continues to make the music he loves.

**JOLENE SOPA**  
AMHERST, WISCONSIN

## STRAIT /S GREAT

I am writing in response to Charlene Walters' letter (*August/September*). You wonder why George Strait is so great? It's all in numbers. His undying love for country music has given us more than 25 albums of nothing but traditional country music! Who can even count the amount of No. 1 songs he's had!

George has put in his time. Every year he provides us with a powerful, outstanding country music festival. Then he goes home for the summer to work on his next album and spends time on his ranch with his family getting ready for his annual team-roping classic. Not only that, he does numerous ads promoting quality products. He does all this and you still wonder why everyone thinks he's so great? With such a busy life, we should be thanking him for his lasting devotion to us, the fans. Thanks, Mr. Strait.

**LORI SOWADA**  
WRENSHALL, MINNESOTA

## HALL BIAS?

What gives? Ten people going into the Hall of Fame – could someone tell me why all of them are men? Why no Jean Shepard, Dottie West, Jeannie Seely, Jan Howard, Connie Smith – to name a few? Was this a mistake?

**JAN MOSS**  
OLEAN, NEW YORK

## DOCTOR CYRUS

I would like to compliment Hazel Smith on the Billy Ray Cyrus tidbit (*August/September*). I am "one of those



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fans" she referred to who has stuck by Billy Ray. It is delightful for us longtime fans to see the new ones showing up because of his TV show, *Doc*. They are asking questions and buying his albums. *Doc* has been great for Billy Ray! I have subscribed to *Country Music* for years, and Hazel Smith has always had the insight to spot the "real deal" when she sees it. Thank you, Hazel, from the bottom of my "Achy Breaky Heart"!

**GAIL BLEVINS**  
BALTIMORE

## OH, BROTHER!

"The Grass Is Greener" (*August/September*) was a terrific article. Finally, someone who understands music tells us about new albums that are sensational. I had not seen the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, but recently saw a preview of it. The music was so great that I had to see the movie. Then I realized there was a soundtrack, and I wanted to buy it. Through this article I found out who was on the soundtrack (all favorites of mine), and I will buy the CD as soon as I get to the store. I am sick of Garth, Shania, Faith, Tim. I yearn for someone singing a song that is constructed with the finesse of a Merle Haggard, Bill Anderson, Harlan Howard, Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn. I recently heard a new song by Alison Krauss, very well put together and wonderful, and I thought that maybe the junk is behind us. It was that good. As for country radio – *bah humbug*. I rarely listen to music on the radio any more. Thirty to forty years ago, I listened to the car radio every time I was in the car. And I listened to country radio in the house morning, noon and night. Now I listen to talk radio in the car and watch TV in the house.

**SHIRLEY DESY**  
LAKEWOOD, CALIFORNIA

## CONTRIBUTORS

Meet this issue's esteemed guest stars

**Tom Roland**, who looks into the pros and cons of cover songs in the article "Sounds Familiar," has written about country music for more than 20 years. He covered the music beat for Nashville's daily paper, *The Tennessean*, during the 1990s, wrote the 1991 book *The Billboard Book Of #1 Country Hits* and wrote and produced the former network radio show *Solid Gold Country*. He resides in Los Angeles, where he freelances for *The Hollywood Reporter* and *The Orange County Register*.



**James Hunter** first met George Jones during the early '90s, when he profiled country's greatest voice for *The New York Times Magazine*. Hunter has written about music since 1980, when he began contributing to *The Village Voice*. His work has

appeared in *Vibe*, *Details*, *US*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Observer*, *Spin*, *LA Weekly* and other publications. He has written liner notes for Vince Gill, Trisha Yearwood and John Anderson, and has appeared on an episode of A&E's *Biography* on Nashville singers. He currently writes regularly for *Rolling Stone* and the *Voice*, and is working on a recording project in New York with Duncan Sheik. Hunter lives in West Virginia.

**Radney Foster** is no stranger to music journalism – he's been talking to reporters since 1987, when he and former partner Bill Lloyd formed Foster & Lloyd and signed with RCA Records. Moreover, his wife, Cyndi Hoelzle, is a music scribe. As a solo artist, Foster signed with Arista Records in 1991, and in 2000 he and Hoelzle launched PureSpunk.com, their own music website and record company. Foster draws on personal experience when giving his views on recording contracts in the article "Golden Gamble," a part of our "Lawyers, Stars And Money" feature.



**John Lomax III**, who writes about legendary producer Jack Clement in this issue's *Journal*, is a journalist, manager and international consultant with a reputation for guiding musical renegades through corporate corridors. He managed Townes Van Zandt in the '70s, Steve Earle in the '80s and The Cactus Brothers and Australia's Kasey Chambers in the '90s. He currently manages Tammy Faye Starlite. His books include *Nashville: Music City U.S.A.* (1986) and an authorized biography of the Chambers family, *Red Desert Sky*. He's also a columnist for *Country Music International* in England and *Country Update* in Australia.

So you want to erase the shame that surrounds the banjo? Can you erase the film footage that comes with the soundtrack? Can you stop Hollywood from pairing bluegrass with movies that depict Southerners as backward, weak, poor, dumb or ugly? From Jethro, Ellie Mae and Miss Bonnie Parker to a Down syndrome boy and mountain men in *Deliverance* to a trio of derelict ex-cons in *O Brother* – does anyone want to identify with these characters? How about a show that depicts real-world Southerners who play the banjo and sing bluegrass?

**JACK TEDESCO**

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

## TEEN VIEWS

I am writing in regard to the article “Youthquake” (*October/November*). I don’t think the country music industry should be trying to change its image in order to attract young fans. I don’t have a problem that the country music of today doesn’t sound just like early country music; all styles of music evolve. However, if country music drops its traditional themes of realistic love, authentic heartache, hard work and the simple pleasures of life in favor of “bubblegummy” songs, it won’t be country music anymore. Besides, country music doesn’t need to change its content to have young fans. I started listening to country when I was 14 and am still listening to it.

**ANNE BEERY, 19**  
BREMEN, INDIANA

I listen to country and a little bit of pop, so of course I like this new pop-country music. But I also love old country music. I respect everyone from Dolly Parton to Vitamin C. However, I’m afraid for country music. I think that pop and country are going to become so much alike that country is going to blend right into pop and just disappear! My advice: Country needs to take a step backward.

Let me explain. First, I need to talk about the definition of country music – nobody knows it! There are so many different definitions that I didn’t know which to believe until about a year ago when I heard my

music teacher’s definition of country music. He said, “Country music is a song that tells a story about real life.” Well, I was curious about this definition, so I went to my old CDs. Sure enough, they all had songs on them that told stories, and all my new CDs didn’t. So I believe his definition. I also believe that, somewhere between Dolly and Faith, country lost its way.

**JESSICA BORST, 13**  
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

Johnny Cash’s music has really inspired me throughout my life. When I’m in a bad mood or just having a bad day, I’ll turn on Johnny’s music. His music makes me happy, and I forget all my troubles. Each song has its own story behind it, and if you listen closely, you’ll hear the meaning of it.

I like listening to the older country singers because they sing about loving, losing, being lonely and everyday things happening in their life or a friend’s life.

**JENNY DUNLAP, 17**  
OAK RUN, CALIFORNIA



## NOT YET PERFECT

I am writing in response to the review on Perfect Stranger (*October/November*). I have been to see Perfect Stranger many times, and I have both of their albums. Not many of us have overnight success. These guys are not blowing out the charts. They are slowly trying to work their way into the hearts and minds of music fans. They are great musicians, and if people would give them the chance I feel they deserve, they might just have that honest-to-goodness *Greatest Hits*.

**JOHNA BURCHFIELD**  
YANTIS, TEXAS

## TEXAS REVOLUTIONARY

After reading the article on Charlie Robison (*August/September*), I thought that Texas music would finally get the respect that it deserves from your magazine as well as the industry. That is, until I read the review given to Pat Green and Cory Morrow’s *Songs We Wish We’d Written*. The review suggests that the two lack “vocal chops,” “character” and possess “limited talents.” It also refers to the Texas music scene as a “fraternity” and states that “their musical ambitions have never extended beyond giving the Greeks a good time.”

I view this review as a slap in the face to what we in Texas like to refer to as the “Texas Music Revolution.” I commend these guys for doing what they love and delivering awesome performances to their fans at sold-out shows. I no longer wonder why Pat Green and several other Texas songwriters have chosen a slogan for their merchandise that states NASHVILLE SUCKS.

**APRIL BUCKNER**  
NEW WAVERLY, TEXAS

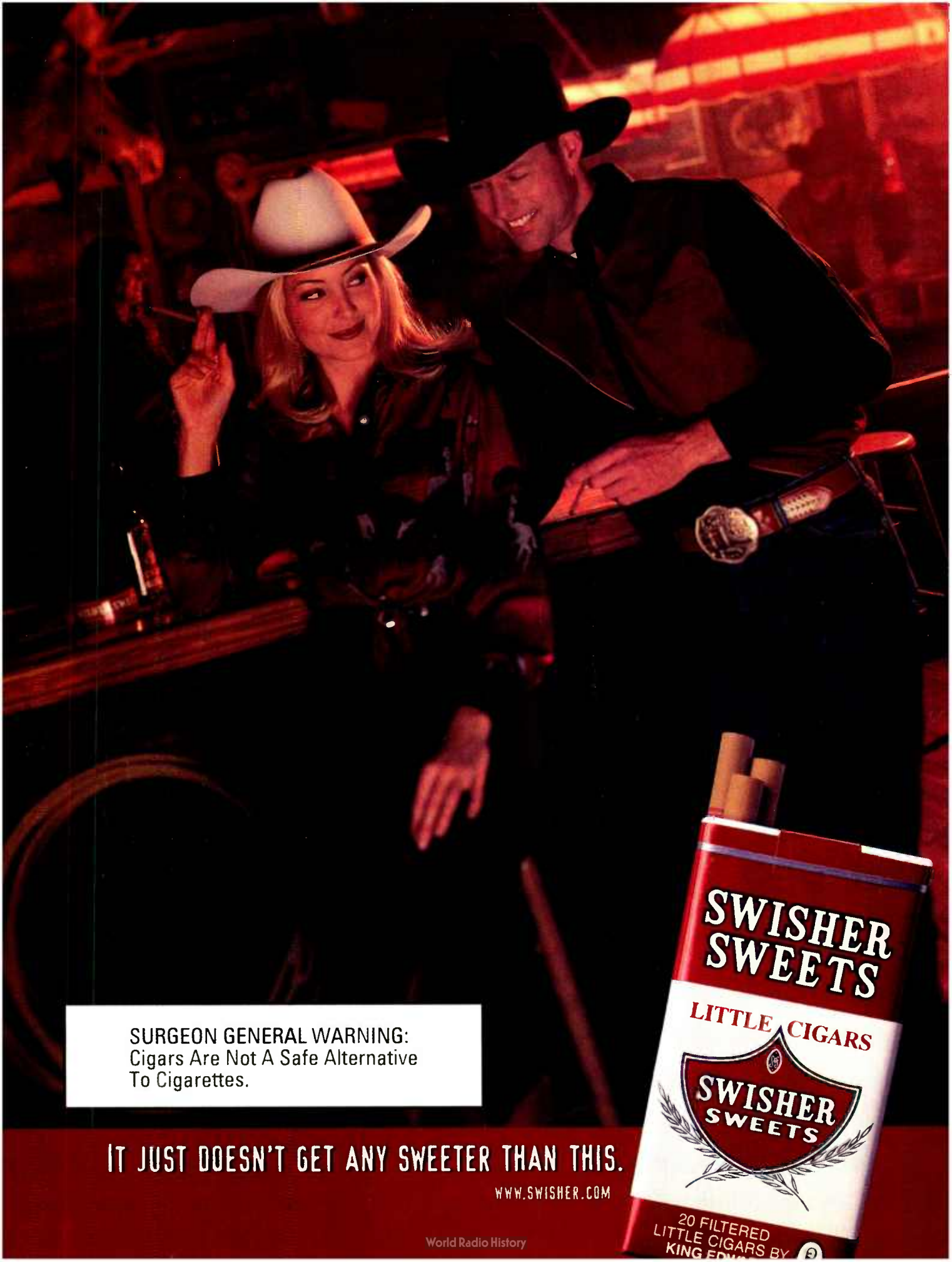
## STATLERS SATISFY

I have subscribed to *Country Music* for several years and have always read your comprehensive album reviews with great interest. I thought Geoffrey Himes missed the mark in his review of The Statler Brothers’ latest album, *Showtime* (*August/September*). Himes thought that the Statlers were “going through the motions” and “relying on sentiment and nostalgia, allowing the act’s once-witty irreverence to slowly leak out of the material.”

Even though I have been a Statlers fan for nearly 30 years, I will admit that some of their recent albums, such as *Words And Music* and *Home*, were deserving of a two-star rating. I thought *Showtime* was a solid step forward from some of their recent albums. The first cut, “She Never Altogether Leaves,” features precisely the irreverence that Himes considers lacking from this album.

With all due respect, *Showtime* is a respectable effort from The Statler Brothers that deserves to be heard by all country music fans.

**JIM BARKS**  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY



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# COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

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TAMMIE ARIOTO

## GRAND SLAM

**A TIM MCGRAW** performed at **ANDRE AGASSI's** "Grand Slam for Children" benefit concert in Las Vegas. Backstage, McGraw hung with rocker **ELTON JOHN**, who was also part of the star-studded lineup.



TAMMIE ARIOTO

## CHELY'S BIG MOVE

**CHELY WRIGHT** schools rapper **LIL' ROMEO** in her movie debut playing a teacher in *Max Keeble's Big Move*.



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## WHAT I REALLY MEANT TO SAY, JAY ...

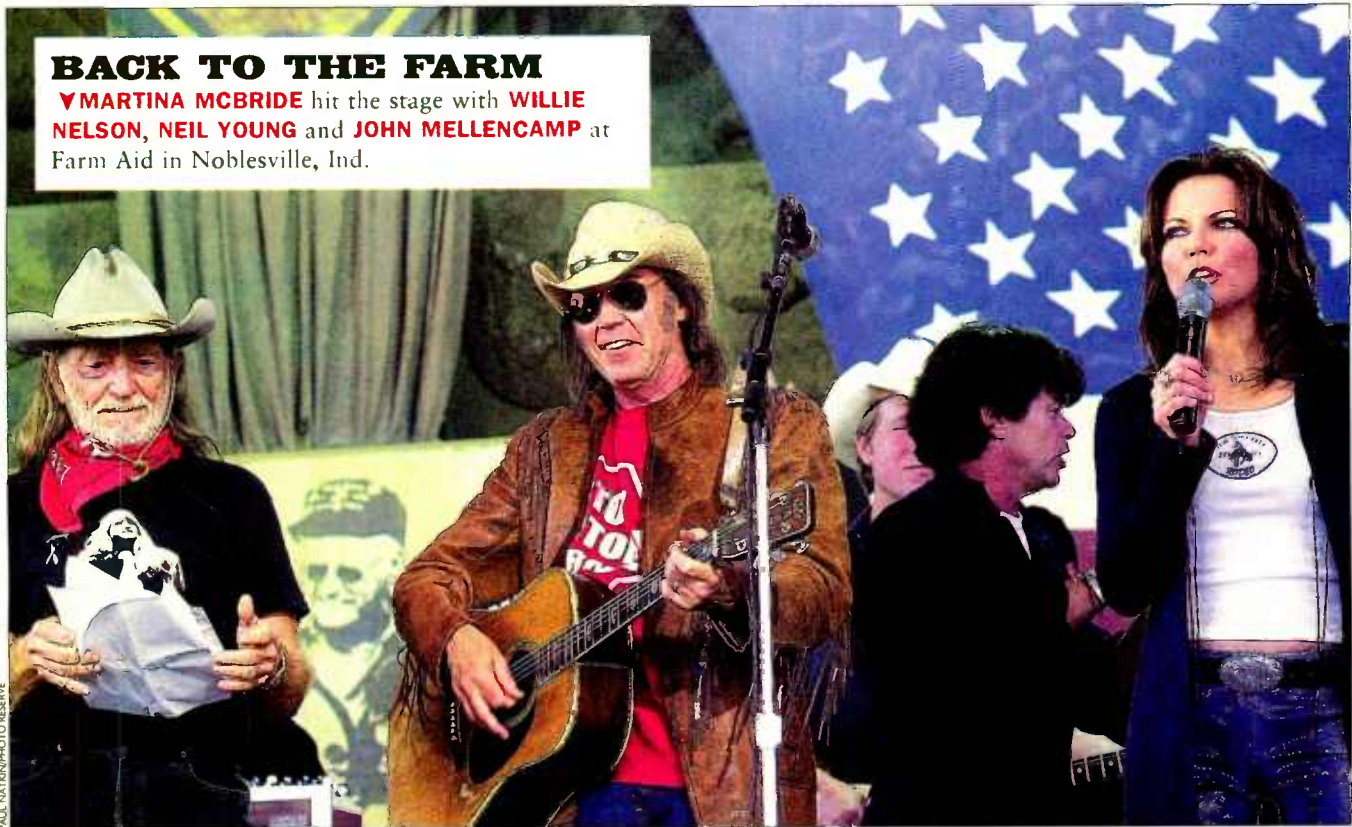
**CYNDI THOMSON** sang her No. 1 hit "What I Really Meant To Say" on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*.

KEVIN WINTER/IMAGEDIRECT (2)



## BACK TO THE FARM

**MARTINA MCBRIDE** hit the stage with **WILLIE NELSON**, **NEIL YOUNG** and **JOHN MELLENCAMP** at Farm Aid in Noblesville, Ind.



PAUL NATTON/PHOTO RESERVE

# COUNTRY ON THE TOWN



RON KESSAR (3)

## OH CANADA!

**A CAROLYN DAWN JOHNSON** (top), **THE WILKINSONS** and **TERRI CLARK** (below) headed north to Canada to accept their trophies at the 25th Canadian Country Music Awards. Carolyn swept the evening with five wins.



BERLINER STUDIOS/BEI (www.berlinerstudios.com) (2)

## STARS UNITE

**A REBA MCENTIRE** rubbed shoulders with Hollywood's **MIKE MYERS** and **MEG RYAN** at *America: A Tribute To Heroes*, a live multi-network telecast that raised funds following September 11's terrorist attacks. The **DIXIE CHICKS** also performed.



## OPRY OFFSPRING

**A DARRYL WORLEY, ELIZABETH COOK, BLAKE SHELTON** and **VINCE GILL** joined numerous other Grand Ole Opry stars at a taping of *Opry Family Reunion*, an eight-volume video series that's also being pitched as a cable-TV special. Opry vets **CHARLEY PRIDE** and **BILL ANDERSON** (right) regaled the youngsters with stories of the show's colorful past. (For ordering information, call (800) 410-8802.)



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# THE INSIDER

BY HAZEL SMITH



## PORTER GOES OFF

When the big red Grand Ole Opry curtain rises, **Porter Wagoner** usually flashes a mile-wide smile as he and his Wagonmasters band break into a get-up-and-go song like “Howdy Neighbor, Howdy” or “Bear Tracks,” setting the stage for a fun-filled appearance.

But hell hath no fury like a scorned hillbilly. On the first live *Opry* matinee broadcast after the announcement of the Country Music Hall of Fame inductees, Wagoner took the stage with a scowl. Live on the *Opry* matinee radiocast, he lambasted the Hall of



The Wagonmaster wasn't happy with this year's Hall of Fame choices.

Fame choices. So far Wagoner has *not* been asked to join the hallowed group of inductees. He had remained silent when his protégé, **Dolly Parton**, was elected to the Hall of Fame two years ago. But on this afternoon broadcast, Porter even took a poke at Dolly.

Wagoner was royally teed off. He even swore on the air several times. The audience, mostly out-of-town tourists, was shocked.

The singer was especially hot under the collar when he brought up the induction of **Sam Phillips**, owner of Sun Records in Memphis, who discovered **Elvis Presley**, **Jerry Lee Lewis**, **Johnny Cash** and **Charlie Rich**. “What has **Sam Phillips** done for country music?!” roared the angry Wagoner.

“Who does Porter Wagoner he think he is,” some fans must have thought, “talking like that on the radio from the *Opry* stage?”

Porter certainly deserves to be in the Hall of Fame. So do **Carl Smith**, **Ferlin Husky**, **Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper**, **Mel Tillis** and others.

## SONGS THAT MATTER

When **Diamond Rio**'s touching “One More Day” became a well-deserved country music hit, the group received tons of mail from individuals with stories, all different, about how the song made a difference in their lives. One such letter read, “I am 20 years old. I am having a baby in a few days. The song ‘One More Day’ is my song for her. I am unable to keep my daughter. The song makes me cry every time I hear it. Thank you for giving me a song that I can listen to and think of her.”

**Lee Ann Womack**'s “I Hope You Dance” was such a song. So was **Brad Paisley**'s “He Didn't Have To Be,” **John Michael Montgomery**'s “The Little Girl” and, of course, “He Stopped Loving Her Today” by the great **George Jones**. Unforgettable songs from the heart make a difference. Aren't we proud to be country?

## BILLY BOB

After seeing the award-winning movie *Sling Blade*, I became a fan of **Billy Bob Thornton**'s writing, acting and directing. Little did I know his first love was music. A cool dude from Arkansas, it was clear to me that Billy Bob was blessed – or cursed – to be able to see both the forest and the trees. And I sensed he had some sort of love of country music, because he had the good sense and vision to use **Dwight Yoakam** in the role of the bad, bad guy in his movie.

“Southern Gothic” is how **Thornton**'s CD on *Lost Highway* is described by reviewers with an educated grasp of the English language. I know about **Faulkner** and those **Williams** boys, **Hank** and **Tennessee** – more **Hank** than **Tennessee**, if the truth be told.

What I'm getting around to is this: It appears to me that there was no way to go but the way they went to get the music they got. Billy Bob's music isn't what you'd normally call “country.” Said Billy Bob the singer, “What I do best is tell stories and create characters.”

## VINCE THE PRINCE

**Vince Gill** celebrated his 10th anniversary on *CMT's Grand Ole Opry Live* debut. Vince is not only one of the best people and best singers on the planet, he also is one of its best hosts – the boy knows how to keep a

show moving and entertaining. The Gill gals came out for the celebration – wife **Amy Grant** and daughters **Jenny**, 19, and **Corrina**, 5 months at the time. The televised *Opry* hour featured **Vince's** multitalented pals **Steve Wariner** and **Brad Paisley**, legends **Loretta Lynn** and **Little Jimmy Dickens**, and his special guest, the remarkable singer **Sonya Isaacs**. Vince described it as a sweet night for him, his family and his *Opry* clan. Said Vince, “Two of my favorite things are the *Grand Ole Opry* and my mama – and they are both the same age.”



Gill offered a gracious greeting for Loretta Lynn.

## BRAD & BUCK

**Brad Paisley** told me he'd spent a few days with **Buck Owens** in his Bakersfield Recording Studio where they “put down some things” – that's hillbilly talk for recording some songs. According to Brad, Buck is recording an album that he calls *Buck Owens' One Man Band* because he plays all the instruments. The **Dixie Chicks** are on the same song as Brad.

## HENHOUSE BLUES

The **Dixie Chicks** and their label, **Monument Records**, are in a legal snit that burns me up.





As long as there's a ruckus, there will be no new music. Man, I need a Dixie Chicks fix in the worst way. I feel a hurting coming on. Chicks music is healing for an old hen like me.

### STRAIT ALL OVER

After 37 glorious years, the famous Astrodome in Houston – home of the Houston Stock Show, where country music reigns – will become history. Next March 2002, the great **George Strait** performs the final show to ever be held in the venue. When the new Astrodome rises in 2003, the star of the event will again be the Strait-man. No about it, Texans love Texans.

### CEREAL STARS

Now every morning you can share breakfast with one of your favorite stars. Kellogg's has our country music folks on their cereal boxes, including the bright smiles of **Reba McEntire**, **Jo Dee Messina**, **Sara Evans**, **Lee Ann Womack**, **Pam Tillis**, **SHedAISY**, **Kathy Mattea** and several of our newcomers. You can bet your firstborn no cereal but Kellogg's will grace my breakfast table. I am a loyal country music supporter.



### OLD KENTUCKY HOME

All the years I knew **Bill Monroe**, the creator of bluegrass music, he grieved over his childhood home going to ruins. The late Monroe would be a happy man to know his homeplace – located near Beaver Dam on Route 62 in Rosine, Ky. – has been restored right down to the flowers and shrubs. Rightly so, it now appears on the National

and most everyone who knows her road manager for 10 years, D.R. Roach, calls him by his last name – whether they're smiling or screaming! – my first sentence is about as accurate as you can get.

When **Naomi** and **Wynonna Judd** embarked on their farewell tour a decade ago, D.R. Roach was hired as Wy's security director and road manager. From there, he went on to keep her secure during her debut solo tour. Ever since, Roach has been with Wynonna every step of the way, from the birth of her two children, **Elijah** and **Grace**, to her marriage and divorce from **Arch Kelley**.

Says Wynonna, "I am so happy to plan the rest of my life with Roach. I know we can make it through anything because we have been co-workers and friends for the past 10 years. Our relationship works so well because our first instinct is to have faith in each other. In fact, he's already family. We laugh constantly and learn something from each other every day."

Roach added, "I've been there all the way. We've literally walked through fire

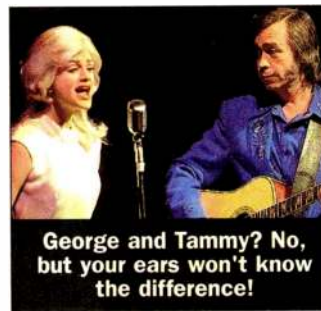
together. Two years ago I fell in love with my best friend, and now asking her to marry me makes it complete." Roach has one son from a previous marriage.

Register. Dr. Campbell Mercer, executive director of the Bill Monroe Foundation, was the overseer of the dedication ceremony, which was attended by native Kentuckians **Tom T. Hall** and **Ricky Skaggs**, longtime friend **Ralph Stanley**, Kentucky Governor **Paul Patton** and other local and state dignitaries. The grounds will ultimately embrace the building and operation of the Bill Monroe Museum.

### TAMMY'S STORY

**Tammy Wynette's** music spoke volumes to women around the world. She was a "Stand By Your Man" kind of woman when it was the thing to be.

Like many country fans, I loved Tammy, and I attended the opening of a musical about her life, *Stand By Your Man*:



*The Tammy Wynette Story*, with a mixture of excitement and concern. How would the beloved singer's life be portrayed? Well, I'm here to tell you that the show, performed live at the Ryman Auditorium, was wonderful to watch.

Like the singer, even the weaknesses were strong.

First off, **Jim Lauderdale's** impersonation of **George Jones** was equally as good as **Mandy Barnett** when she filled the role of **Patsy Cline** in a similar musical a few years ago. His walk, his talk and even his curly Q's when he sang reminded me of George.

**Tricia Paoluccio** was excellent in her many roles, including Tammy as a young girl, but she truly shined from buns to bosom when

emulating **Dolly Parton**, particularly in a scene recreating Parton's visit to the hospitalized Wynette. While brushing her hair, Dolly said, "Tammy, I think that's why God gave us talent – He screwed up our hair so bad."

A great surprise for me came when **Nicolette Hart**, who plays Tammy, sang "Between 29 & Danger," a song I co-wrote with Bobby Braddock that Wynette recorded. I screamed loudly, "I wrote that song."

Several actors played dual roles, including steel guitar player **Kevin Owens**, who was flawless in the role of Wynette's record producer, **Billy Sherrill**. In my opinion, too much emphasis was put on actor **Burt Reynolds** and the **Hillary Clinton** incident where she said "I'm not sitting here like some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette."

However, the show's writing was on the money and the songs were incredibly Tammy. If *Stand By Your Man* is revived or taken on the road, it's well worth seeing.

### TRACY TRANSFORMED

At lunch with my son and grandson, I hardly noticed a couple with a baby seated at the next table. As we were leaving, my son Billy asked, "Mom, isn't that **Tracy Lawrence**?" I could not believe I'd eaten an entire meal and hadn't recognized a big-time country music star. But that's because he looked so splendidly healthy. His face is fuller, he's gained some needed weight and cut that long, frizzy hair. His eyes were clear, he was hatless and his hair was close-cropped blonde.

His new wife is drop-dead gorgeous, and his baby daughter is beautiful. I can't tell you how happy I was to see him looking so well. We embraced and spoke for a moment and I moved on.

# COUNTRYMUSIC

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

There's a country song about pretty much everything. Any emotion, any sensation – you name it, and somewhere there's a country song that describes it, ponders it, springs from it, digs into it, holds it up, airs it out or in some other way addresses it.

In a bygone era, there used to be country songs about even the worst things that could befall us – back

when a ship sinking or a train wrecking was awfulness at its most awful, with innocent, helpless lives lost in a horrific calamity over which they had absolutely no control.

But, as I write this, I haven't heard any song yet that even attempts to address what happened to us on September 11, when the skies were filled with unimaginable terror, thousands of Americans died and our televisions revealed horrors that will haunt us all for generations. Maybe there's a limit to what even country music can do. Or maybe we're just not ready to hear it yet.

But in the meantime, I've been struck by just how country music moved so quickly, in another way, to apply a healing compress to our nation's emotional wounds.

Existing songs suddenly took on new meanings, new significance and sometimes even offered some degree of organization and articulation to the noxious swirl of sadness, grief, fear, anger and frustration that engulfed us. Country songs – some of them

decades old – nobly rose to the occasion as if they'd been born waiting for this dreadful moment.

Country radio applied a next-day salve of mourning, inspiration and patriotism, mixing older songs with more contemporary fare that suddenly seemed relevant to the catastrophic aftershock. "Please remember me," sang Tim McGraw, giving voice to those whose lives were lost. "Lord, I hope this day is good," sang Don Williams, echoing the pleas of a nation hopeful for an end to the madness. "Go rest high on that mountain," offered Vince Gill about a reward beyond the suffering. "Angels In Waiting," Tammy Cochran's moving tribute to her late brothers, took a much broader emotional stance. So did Jo Dee Messina's "Bring On The Rain." A new Mark Wills song, in which a child releases a balloon heavenward with a message to his dead mother, hit listeners with extra sentimental wallop. Aaron Tippin rush-released a song he wrote two years ago, "Where The Stars And Stripes And The Eagle Fly," and earmarked all proceeds from the sale of the single to disaster relief. And – of course – Lee Greenwood asked once again that "God bless the U.S.A."

No music is as connected to – or identified with – America as country music. No music is as truthful, as real, or as relevant to the way we think and work and live and believe. No music matches country's power to touch us in times of celebration as well as times of mourning.

Perhaps, by the time you read this, a country song will have arrived that perfectly encapsulates the way we feel about all this, a song that distills a complex, terrifying and – even so – somehow unifying time down to "three chords and the truth," a term songwriter Harlan Howard once said was the essence of country music.

Maybe that song – those chords, that truth – will come along. And when it does, maybe it will help move us along the long road of healing ahead.



Neil  
Pond

Yours in country music,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Pond". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Neil Pond  
Editor in Chief

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# Georgia On Her Mind

Cyndi Thomson sings about home and heart on *My World*

**T**hese days, stardom often seems more manufactured than earned. With record companies and public relations firms conspiring to crown the next big thing, fans can be overwhelmed by hype rather than heart.

But once in a while things still work as they should — with a song that steals people's hearts and an artist who's not afraid to bare her soul. Case in point: Cyndi Thomson, a fresh-faced 25-year-old from Georgia whose *My World* is the fastest-selling debut album by a female country artist since LeAnn Rimes' record-setting *Blue* in 1996.

In its first week, more than 20,000 copies of *My World* flew out of stores thanks to the popularity of its first single, "What I Really Meant To Say," a song of missed opportunity that topped the charts and ranked as country's best-selling single for a two-month period this past summer.

"I feel like I'm walking in this dream," says Thomson in a distinctive Southern lilt gleaned from growing up in tiny Tifton, Ga. "For so long, you're writing these songs and sharing your heart, and then you put the record out and 20,000 people you *don't know* have it in their house, listening to it. That's pretty cool."

Cool, indeed, but then Thomson looks at her fairy-tale saga as her spiritually ordained destiny. Since age 12, when she saw Trisha Yearwood's video for "She's In Love With The Boy" and told God she wanted to be a country performer, everyone from her parents to her choir teacher has fueled her dreams of Nashville success.

"I think it was a divine experience," she says. "[God] told me I would do it. He just told me in my heart."

Thomson arrived in Nashville four years ago to attend Belmont College and pursue her dream. She got her lucky break on a modeling job at a party for Deana Carter, where another model/songwriter put her in touch with veteran tunesmith Tommy Lee James. Though she had never before written a song, she told James it would be worth his time to write with her.

"My mama," she explains, "always told me to walk like you know where you're going."

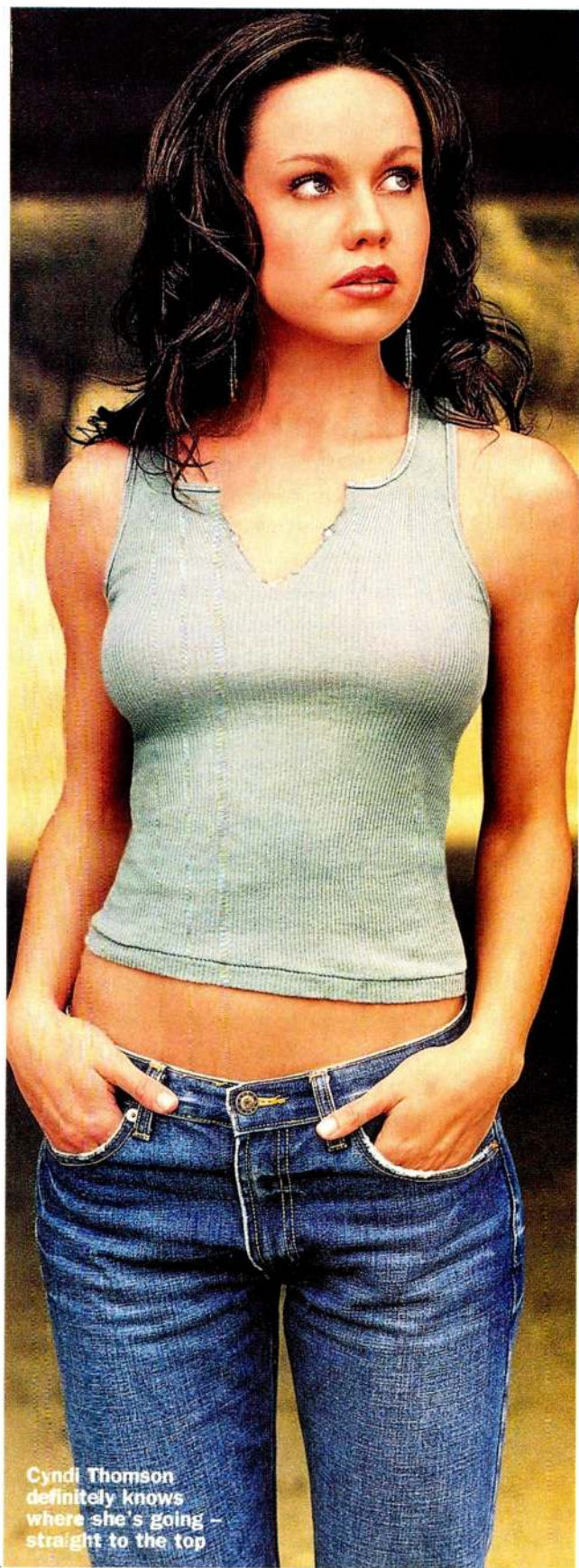
Thomson found the direction for her music when she and James wrote "I Always Liked That Best," a tune from *My World* that beautifully evokes the intimacy and sensuality of love against a backdrop of the Southern experience.

"I wanted to make people *feel*," she says. "I wanted that emotional thing, where you're completely drawn into the song, and the singer is almost right there in your face."

At 5 feet 8 inches, Thomson's statuesque beauty has now caught the attention of the Ford modeling agency. She'd also like to go to law school and eventually start a family. But for now music has the strongest pull.

"I know this is my life," she explains, "When God's hand is in something, you never know what's gonna happen."

— Alanna Nash



Cyndi Thomson definitely knows where she's going — straight to the top

JAC GUY/RETNA

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# Close Call

Thanks to "Austin," Blake Shelton got his chance

**B**lake Shelton knows all about unusual twists of fate. If not for a couple of unexpected turns that proved particularly timely, he might not be looking promisingly toward the future as one of the biggest breakthrough country artists of 2001.

Twist No. 1: Shelton thought he had finished recording his debut album with producer Bobby Braddock when an executive from Giant Records called, telling him, "You've got to hear this song." The 6-foot-5-inch native of Ada, Okla., dutifully listened and recognized that the song was indeed special. But he wasn't sure it was right for him.

Still, Braddock encouraged him to work with the tune, so Shelton kept playing with the arrangement, tweaking it while playing it on his guitar. Suddenly, with just the right musical nudging, it felt *very* right, and Shelton went back into the studio to quickly record it. Giant rushed the song onto the CD at the last minute, and then sent it out as the album's first single. The rest is musical history, quite literally. With its five-week run at the top of the charts, Shelton's "Austin" tied with Billy Ray Cyrus' 1992 smash, "Achy Breaky Heart," as the longest-running No. 1 song for a new male singer.

Twist No. 2: A week after "Austin" began receiving radio play, Giant Records closed. Shelton's self-titled debut CD wasn't out yet. "I thought my career was over," the singer says in his heavy Okie drawl.

But fate decided differently. Because radio programmers were raving about the just-released "Austin," Warner Bros. Records picked up Shelton's contract and released his debut CD without changing a thing.

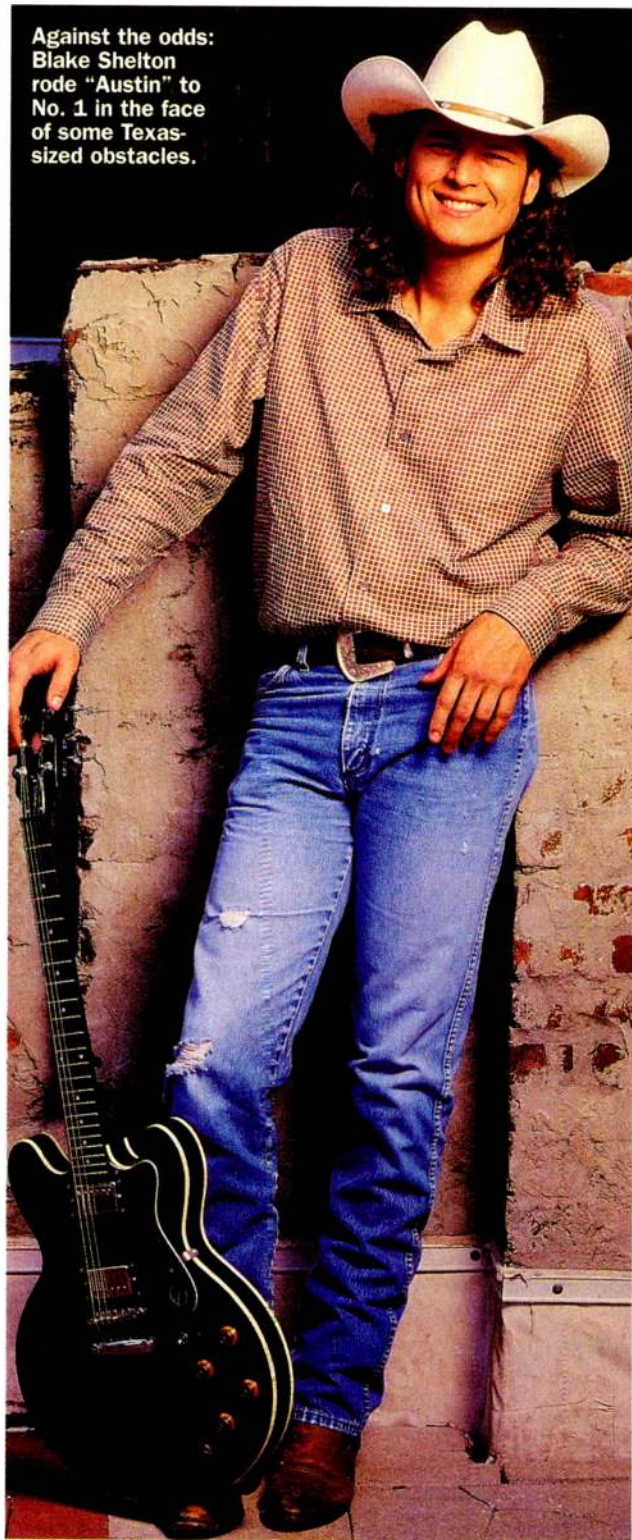
When the album finally came out July 31, "Austin" was a chart-topper and *Blake Shelton* sold nearly 35,000 copies to become the third-best-selling country album of the week – topping such established stars as Tim McGraw, Lonestar, Toby Keith and Faith Hill.

All this hoopla for a song that nearly didn't make an album that almost didn't get released. "It's all extra sweet for me," says Shelton, "because the odds were stacked against me."

The son of a used-car salesman and hairdresser, Shelton began his career in his early teens, playing community events and honky-tonks around Ada. Another Oklahoma native, respected songwriter Mae Boren Axton, saw one of his performances and encouraged him to move to Nashville.

Shelton took her advice, moving to Nashville at the tender age of 17. Axton – writer of the classic Elvis Presley hit "Heartbreak Hotel" and mother of the late actor/singer Hoyt Axton – took the singer under her well-respected wing. She even gave him his first job, painting her house.

Against the odds: Blake Shelton rode "Austin" to No. 1 in the face of some Texas-sized obstacles.



TIM CAPPRELL

Fate also introduced Shelton to his all-time favorite singer, Earl Thomas Conley. The two co-wrote "All Over Me," Shelton's second single. "If my career were over tomorrow, just knowing I had met and written a song with Earl Thomas Conley – it's personally a huge accomplishment," Shelton beams. "I'm the luckiest man alive."

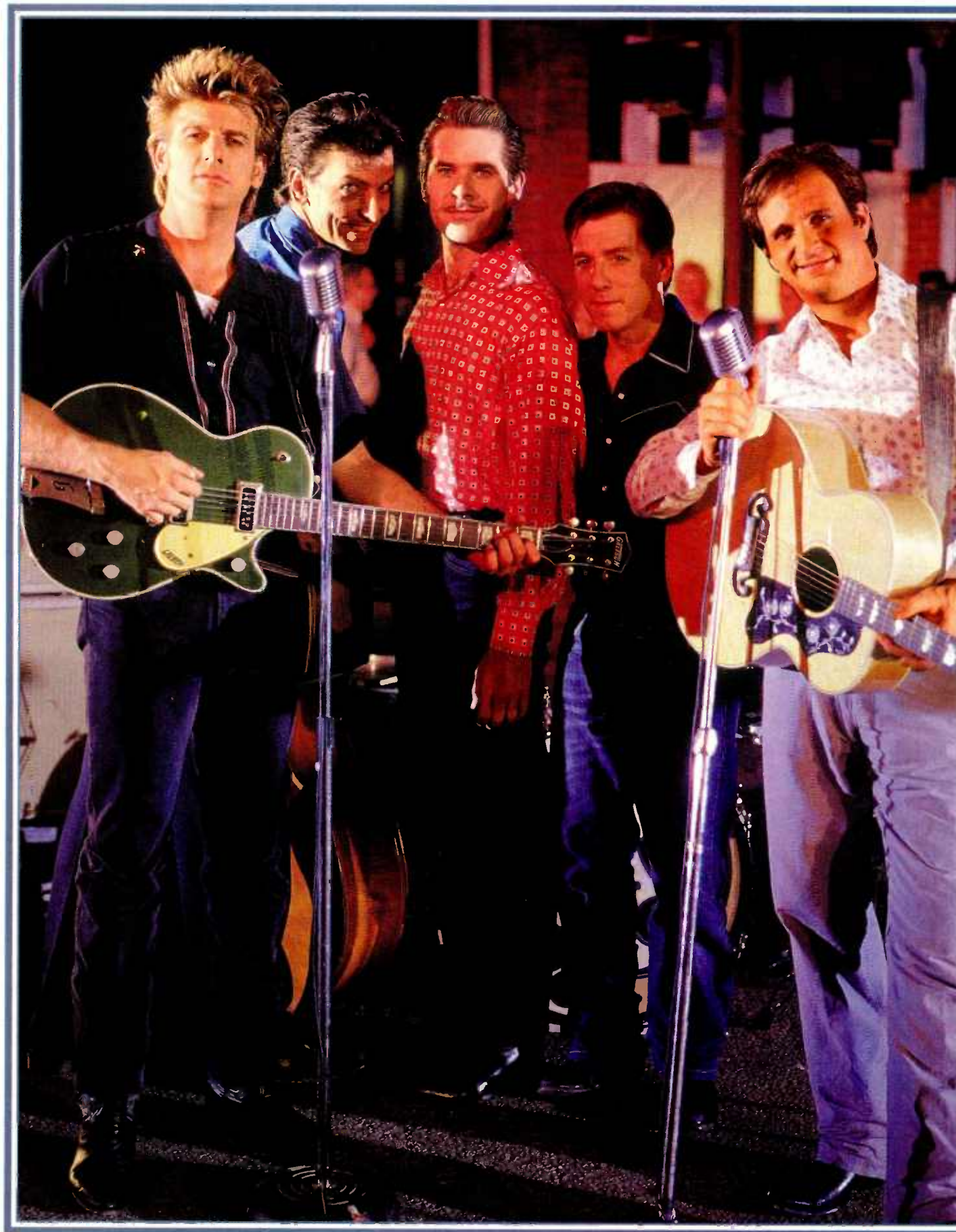
— Charlene Blevins



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# DIALING A NEW NUMBER

## Nashville's BR549 drops the hyphen – and adds a hip new look

**S**ix years into its career, BR549 is tuning up the engine and fine-tuning the chassis. The goal: To move beyond cult status by updating its style with more contemporary flavor.

So on came the overhaul and off came the overalls.

"We didn't want to marry that 'retro' tag," says Chuck Mead, who shares lead vocalist duties with fellow guitarist Gary Bennett. "We're not a novelty act. Just because I wear 1960s suits doesn't make us a costume band. The music has always been more important to us than anything else."

The Nashville-based band's fifth album, *This Is BR549*, consciously downplays the traditional country flavor that originally gave the band its reputation. The move underscores the dilemma facing traditional performers, who find themselves ostracized by modern country radio and therefore unable to reach a mass audience.

"I don't think radio could play us because we weren't pop-country," Bennett says. "We didn't fit into any specific category. That ultimately hurt us."

The group, which originally garnered attention by performing honky-tonk songs for tips in a Nashville nightclub, initially resisted modernizing its sound after signing with Arista Records in 1995. But at some point observers began placing more emphasis on the band's vintage clothing than on its Hank Williams-weaned sound.

"People should be more interested in what you play rather than what you wear," Bennett says. "If you asked Merle Haggard what his influences were, he'd tell you the same ones we would. But Merle never dressed in a funny hat and string tie. So the clothes attached a bit of a stigma to us."

As a result, BR549 began to be perceived as a cult-level novelty act instead of a band capable of significant impact. When Arista Nashville folded into corporate parent RCA, the then-hyphenated BR5-49 was let go.

"We didn't have a good track record like Alan Jackson or Brad Paisley, so Arista was essentially just trimming the fat," Mead notes. "It was time for us to move on."

After announcing last February that they had signed with Sony offshoot Lucky Dog, the band members set out to reclaim the excitement they experienced in their early days.

"Consider it a BR549 renaissance," Mead suggests.

Feeling liberated after the *This Is BR549* sessions, the band decided to renovate their wardrobe as well, hoping that a more mainstream image might better fit with the new middle-of-the-road sound.

"We figured that if we could erase the visual aspect, then people would listen to the music," Bennett says. "We didn't pierce our bellybuttons or anything like that, but we were conscious of the need for some modernization."

— Christopher Mitchell



**With its former retro wardrobe, BR549 came to be branded a "costume act." Chuck Mead (second from left) insists, "We're not a novelty act. The music has always been more important than anything else."**

BR549 has updated its look to a more contemporary style. "We were conscious of the need for modernization," says Gary Bennett (right).

PHIL CICERO

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# LION IN WINTER

**At 70,  
George  
Jones is  
sober,  
content  
and  
finally  
on top  
of his  
game**

**M**ario's is an Italian restaurant in Nashville of Olympian grandeur and scale. Extravagantly appointed in dark reds and glimmering golds, with wine-stocked walls curved baroquely, the place looks much as it did when it reigned as a favorite of '60s and '70s country stars.

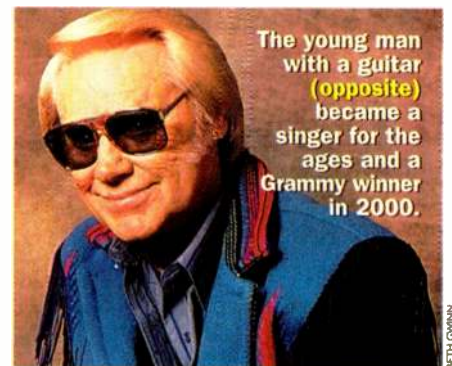
by James Hunter

These days, Mario's is an icon of old Nashville — much like the 70-year-old, platinum-haired country singer sitting at the head of a corner table. As George Jones settles in for an evening meal at Mario's, the man regarded as country's greatest living singer prefers to talk about the present, not the past. He turns the discussion to his new Internet venture, *George Jones' Bandit Radio*, on which one may choose from a thousand different country songs, each selected by the veteran country singer.



MICHAEL OCHR ARCHIVES

# KEEPIN' UP WITH THE JONES



The young man with a guitar (opposite) became a singer for the ages and a Grammy winner in 2000.

BETH GREEN

**September 12, 1931** Jones is born into near poverty in the remote oil and lumber community of Saratoga in East Texas.

**1942** At 11, Jones ventures to an arcade in Beaumont, Texas, with his guitar and sings for passersby. Two hours later, he goes home with \$24 in tips. A career is launched.

**1943** While Jones backs a local act on KRIC radio in Beaumont, Hank Williams stops by to promote a show. Jones backs Hank on guitar for one song, but is so awe-struck he can't hit a lick.

**June 1, 1950** Jones marries the first of four wives: Dorothy Bonvillion, whom he meets at a local music club. He takes a job as a \$1.25-an-hour painter's apprentice.

**July 23, 1951** Dorothy Bonvillion, six months pregnant, files for divorce, claiming Jones is "addicted to alcoholic beverages, and has threatened physical violence and harm."

**September, 1954** Jones marries his second wife, Shirley Ann Corley, whom he meets in a Houston drive-in restaurant.

**January 1954** Jones makes his first recordings for the Starday label in a makeshift Beaumont studio.

**1959** Jones has his first No. 1 country single with a spirited, alcohol-tinged novelty song called "White Lightning," penned by the late J.P. "Bg Bopper" Richardson.

**1962** Jones is named Favorite Male Country Artist in the annual *Billboard* poll.

**November 1963** On the day John F. Kennedy is assassinated, Jones' hard-drinking father is committed to the alcoholics' ward of a Texas state mental hospital.

**April 1968** As rumors swirl that Jones has become involved with duet partner Melba Montgomery, Shirley divorces him on grounds of "harsh and cruel treatment."

**1969** After a tempestuous courtship, Jones marries country singer Tammy Wynette. With hit duets like "Two Story House," "Near You" and "(We're Not) The Jet Set," the star-studded couple is hailed as "The President And First Lady Of Country Music."

**January 1975** Wynette sues Jones for divorce on grounds of "cruel and inhuman treatment."

**1975** Jones is beset with legal and financial problems stemming from his ever-more-frequent concert "no shows." But he continues recording, and *Newsweek* hails 1976's *Alone Again* as "a jaunty, unassuming country masterpiece."

**December 1975** *Rolling Stone* names Jones Country Artist of the Year in its annual critics' poll.

**December 1976** Jones is sued by two Nashville women who claim he assaulted them and attempted to force-feed them vodka.

**September 1977** Jones is arrested in Florence, Ala., after attempting to shoot his close friend Earl "Peanut" Montgomery. A couple months later, the singer's on-again-off-again girlfriend, Linda Welborn, obtains an arrest warrant against him, claiming assault.

**December 1977** Jones files for bankruptcy in Nashville.

**December 1979** Jones is committed by friends to Hill Crest, a private psychiatric hospital in Birmingham, Ala. During his stay, his record label, Epic, releases *My Very Special Guests*, an album of duets with Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor, Elvis Costello, ex-wife Tammy Wynette, Willie Nelson and Emmylou Harris.

**Early 1980** Jones launches a series of concert dates with Wynette, with whom he had sporadically continued to record.

**1980-1981** The hit "He Stopped Loving Her Today" becomes Jones's first million-selling single and wins the first of two consecutive Single of the Year awards from the CMA. Jones also wins the Male Vocalist of the Year award both years.

**March 1982** Jones returns to Hill Crest psychiatric hospital after he wrecks his 1982 Lincoln in a high-speed chase by Mississippi troopers.

**May 1982** After a string of concert "no shows," Jones is arrested yet again, for drunk driving, near Franklin, Tenn. A Nashville TV crew captures his arrest.

**March 1983** Jones marries his fourth wife, Nancy Sepulveda, and begins the long road to personal and professional rehabilitation.

**October 1986** "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes" receives the CMA Video of the Year award.

**1991** Jones leaves Epic Records after 20 years and joins MCA Records.

**October 1992** Jones, on his best behavior, is rewarded for nearly four decades of great music and bac behavior with induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

**March 6, 1999** After several years of sobriety, Jones nearly dies after he crashes his SUV into a bridge near Nashville. He later pleads guilty to driving under the influence.

**February 2000** Jones wins a Grammy for *Cold Hard Truth*.



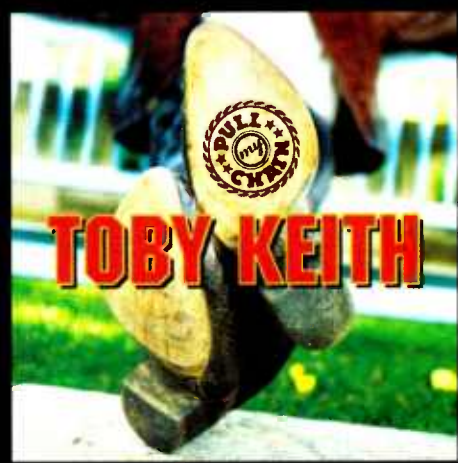
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World Radio History

# GEORGE JONES

*continued from page 28*

once-customary cigar is absent as well.

The next day, Jones asks, "Wasn't that some dinner we had last night?" He grabs his remote control, flicking off his beloved big-screen TV. He relaxes in a leather recliner awash in noon sunlight in a sitting area off his bedroom, near the back of his palatial brick house, surrounded by 112 acres of manicured property in Franklin, 20 miles south of Nashville. He wears jeans and a pastel-striped golf shirt; his thick platinum hair and gold Rolex glisten. He looks out one of the room's many windows, waves toward the lawn, and says it's a lot of work to keep it looking good. But when time permits, he loves to hop on a mower and cut the grass himself.

Nancy Sepulveda, Jones' Louisiana-born wife of 16 years, walks in and offers his visitor a Coke. Her husband's heroic manager for years, she is used to tending to his career and living on the telephone, greeting Jones in his robe some mornings to hand him a call from an interviewer or radio programmer. Her steely business sense is sheathed inside in a manner that is Southern sweetness itself.

As she takes care of him, Jones talks about the grand old days of country music – the days when he was king. "You'd go out there in a rhinestone suit, standing out like a sore thumb. People loved that; it was half the show, seeing those beautiful suits. And then, if you were a fair entertainer at all, you were really going to go over good."

He pauses, his mind sorting through the past. "Lord, I lost a lot of stuff," he continues. "Drinking and everything. People coming to your house and picking up whatever they wanted. Taking it home with them. I used to have one heck of a record collection, too. But that's all disappeared."

Some wistfulness seems natural. In April 1998 he suffered the unexpected loss of his famous ex-wife, Tammy Wynette. Then Jones himself nearly died in a March 1999 automobile accident. And after winning a Grammy with his remarkable comeback album, *Choices*, he spent the last couple of years navigating through corporate consolidations that have threatened to halt all the momentum he'd managed to build up.

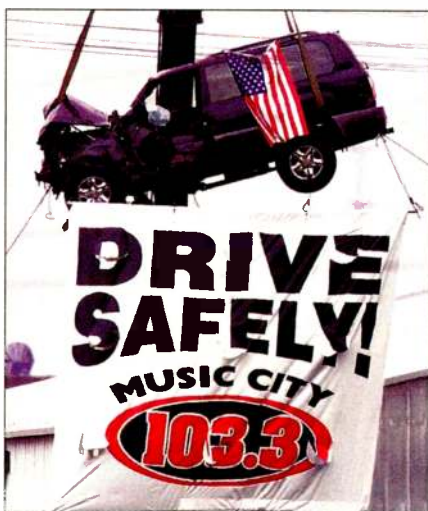
Guiding Jones through recent business endeavors has been veteran Nashville music executive Evelyn Shriver, who's

spent the last three years working to keep his recording career alive. In 1998, Asylum Records made Shriver the first female president of a Nashville-based record company. Shriver had been Jones' publicist for years before joining Asylum, yet when she approached him about recording, Jones voiced some hesitation; for most of the '90s, up against country's youthful boom, he had felt like a singer admired from a deeply frustrating distance. He had become a country legend that *country* radio wouldn't touch.

"I was ready to retire on the recording



**Accompanied by wife Nancy, Jones appeared in court after his March 1999 car accident, which police discovered was alcohol-related. A Nashville radio station used Jones' wrecked SUV (below) as the centerpiece for its public service safe-driving ads.**



part of it," Jones remembers, "just do my concert dates and get rid of a few headaches. But Evelyn came to me and said she knew how to market my product. 'We want you,' she said, 'and I'll guarantee we'll move some records.' Well, you know, it had been a long time since anyone ever spoke to me that way."

One hell of a spring followed. One March morning, while driving and talking on his cellphone, Jones crashed his SUV

into a Nashville bridge. No one else was involved in the accident, but Jones sustained life-threatening chest and lung injuries.

While Jones lay unconscious in the hospital – where he would end up staying for two and a half weeks – the media chased after a story that alcohol contributed to the cause of the wreck, even though Jones had supposedly sworn off drinking for the past decade. After police confirmed that an open vodka bottle had been discovered in the wreckage, under Jones' car seat, the singer admitted he had, indeed, been drinking the morning of his accident. He reimbursed the city for the damage to the bridge and entered a court-ordered rehab program.

"All the publicity and everything was just an aggravation," he says. "It didn't bother me as much as it did my wife, because I know how they are, when your name's in the public eye. What bothered me the most was trying to get back, to get some energy and my health back. I was miserable. I was hungry as I could be – and nothing sounded good."

After his appetite reappeared, he discovered he had what he calls "lockjaw" – a result, he says, of not exercising his jaw when his vocal cords were traumatized by the accident. "It was miserable: Here I was, finally hungry again and could eat, but I couldn't get it in my mouth."

But, true to character, Jones once again bounced back from his own self-destructive clutches. *Cold Hard Truth*, his first release for Asylum Records, debuted on the country album charts in 1999 at No. 5 on the sturdy back of its initial hit single, "Choices." This commercial coup restored Jones to a place alongside Shania Twain and the Dixie Chicks. In Nashville, the stalwart traditionalist from Beaumont, Texas, was the talk of the town.

He had survived, again.

But after the accident, Jones worried whether he would regain the full strength of his fabled voice. He had recorded *Cold Hard Truth* prior to his accident, and in initial concert appearances following his hospitalization, it was apparent that his injuries had affected his vocal range.

He renewed his commitment to sobriety, and this time he has stuck to it. "They won't have to worry about me anymore, when it comes to drinking," he noted, "because I have hung it up." He also stopped smoking cigarettes, which



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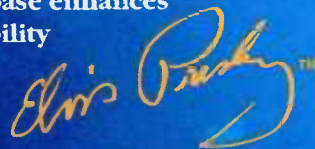
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# GEORGE JONES

he says he doesn't miss, and he no longer fires up those after-dinner cigars.

Jones' renewed commitment to good health paid off. In late 2000, he entered the studio feeling content and determined, and from all reports, he sounded as supple and expressive as ever as he began tracking songs for his new album, *The Rock*.

His work amazed even those who had worked on *Cold Hard Truth*.

"Jones came in for a couple of days and just sang," says Keith Stegall, a 46-year-old Nashville producer who collaborated with him on both albums. "Because of the alcohol in his earlier career, he missed a lot of it. But now he's discovered a whole new joy in being in the studio and singing again, because he's in the moment, aware and very much into it. He's still got that primal thing in his voice that compels people to listen."

People have been listening for a long time. Jones initially hit the country charts in 1955 with the keening hard-country romp, "Why Baby Why." He then asserted himself as a remarkably capable performer with careening honky-tonk tunes like "White Lightning" and "The Race Is On" and emotional ballads like "She Thinks I Still Care" and "Walk Through This World With Me."

Sixteen years into his career, he teamed up with countrypolitan savant Billy Sherrill and started cutting some of the most remarkable records of his career, including such classic songs as "A Picture Of Me (Without You)," "Once You've Had The Best," "The Grand Tour" and "Bartender's Blues."

Then in 1980, amid desperate binges of boozing and cocaine snorting, he recorded and released "He Stopped Loving Her Today," a definitive Billy Sherrill production that a legion of country fans cites as one of the genre's quintessential songs. More hits filled the early '80s, including such close-to-the-bone tunes as "I'm Not Ready Yet," "If Drinkin' Don't Kill Me (Her Memory Will)," "Still Doin' Time" and "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes."

But by the early '90s, Nashville had fixated on the younger artists who had begun selling millions of CDs in the wake of Garth Brooks' overhaul of country music.

In 1990, he enjoyed a hit with "A Few Ole Country Boys," recorded as a duet with Randy Travis. Jones had now scored Top 10 hits in five decades. But after more than 70 Top 10 hits

over a 35-year period, the hits eventually stopped coming.

The following year, Jones signed with MCA Records in hopes that changing labels might revitalize his recording career.

"'New country' was really strong when I went with MCA," Jones says. "Being an older artist, I could get nobody's attention. I was lost in the shuffle. It made me not give a damn, so I'd say, 'Well, I'll collect the money for each album, and we'll just go in there and find out what songs they got and we'll do 'em. The hell with it, the radio ain't going to play me anyhow.'"

As demonstrated by *The George Jones Collection*, the anthology of Jones' singles from his MCA period, those years started out well. *Along Came Jones* reinvented Jones' most essential ballads and honky-tonk workouts. But his '92 single "I Don't Need Your Rocking Chair"



**Country's superstar couple of the '70s, Jones and Tammy Wynette, reunited for duets in the '90s. Her death in 1998 dealt Jones a severe personal blow.**

failed to make a significant showing on the radio charts, despite help from Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson, Vince Gill and a handful of other young country stars who joined him on the self-tribute recording. After that, Jones became discouraged, despite acclaimed projects like 1992's gold-selling *Walls Can Fall* and 1994's *The Bradley Barn Sessions*, which teamed him with rock and country heavies like Keith Richards, Mark Knopfler and Emmylou Harris.

Eventually Jones contacted Tony Brown, president of MCA. "I said, 'When y'all get through with me, just let me know. You're not going to hurt my feelings. We're spinning our wheels,' I

said. 'We're definitely not selling any albums.' He told me, 'We're just into the new country and I guess we just don't know how to market an older artist.'"

Two weeks later, Brown called Jones back. "He said, 'Well, George, I hate to say it, but we're going to have to do what we talked about, we're going to just let you go.' I said, 'That's fine. No hard feelings, we think the world of y'all.' But that was the first time I'd ever been released from a label."

However, thanks to Asylum Records and Shriver, and despite his harrowing brush with death, Jones soldiers on with an almost unbelievable vocal vitality and grace. *Cold Hard Truth* and *The Rock* are first-rate albums, and despite the controversy and embattlement of the past several years, the George Jones saga seems to have taken a turn few might have anticipated – toward sweetness and control.

"He's having a great time," Shriver reports, "and that's a great thing to see. It would be sad if his whole life had changed but then the talent had worn out. But he still has the pipes."

**F**or Jones, it's no longer 1978. Though he's still Nashville royalty, he's no longer the King Of Country Music, as he was then. Neither is he a tangle of contradictions and impulses, as he also used to be.

"I don't worry about all that mess uptown in Nashville too much," Jones says. "I'd hate to know I was starting out in today's music. I'm just not used to being bossed around like these new artists are. They're told what to wear, what to do and when to do it. We didn't do things like that in the old days."

Although willfully out of step with the Nashville establishment, Jones still feels he has something to prove.

"The only reason I want to be successful with this one-more-time album and single is simply because of one thing. Not the money and all that, not so much. I would just like to make the people in Nashville realize that, with country music, it doesn't take a kid to do something that a 70-year-old man can still do if given the chance. Even though I'm not 20 years old with a cute little butt and a cowboy hat, I'll still sell to many young people."

And with that, George Jones gets ready for his next appointment – but not with another interviewer, not with a producer, not with a manager. His hair guy is waiting. \*

1 sore nose  
+ 239 sneezes

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1 cranky king  
of the jungle



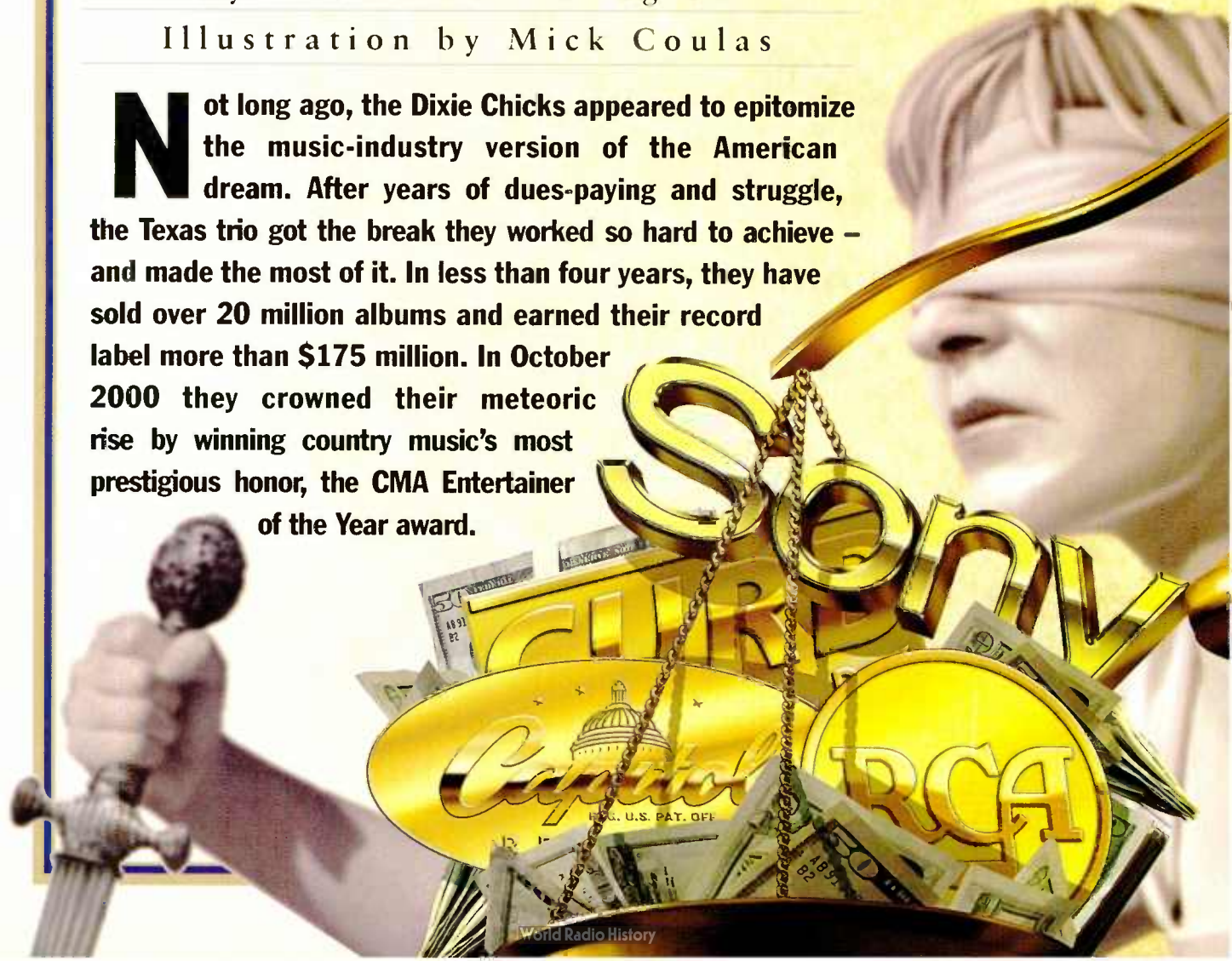
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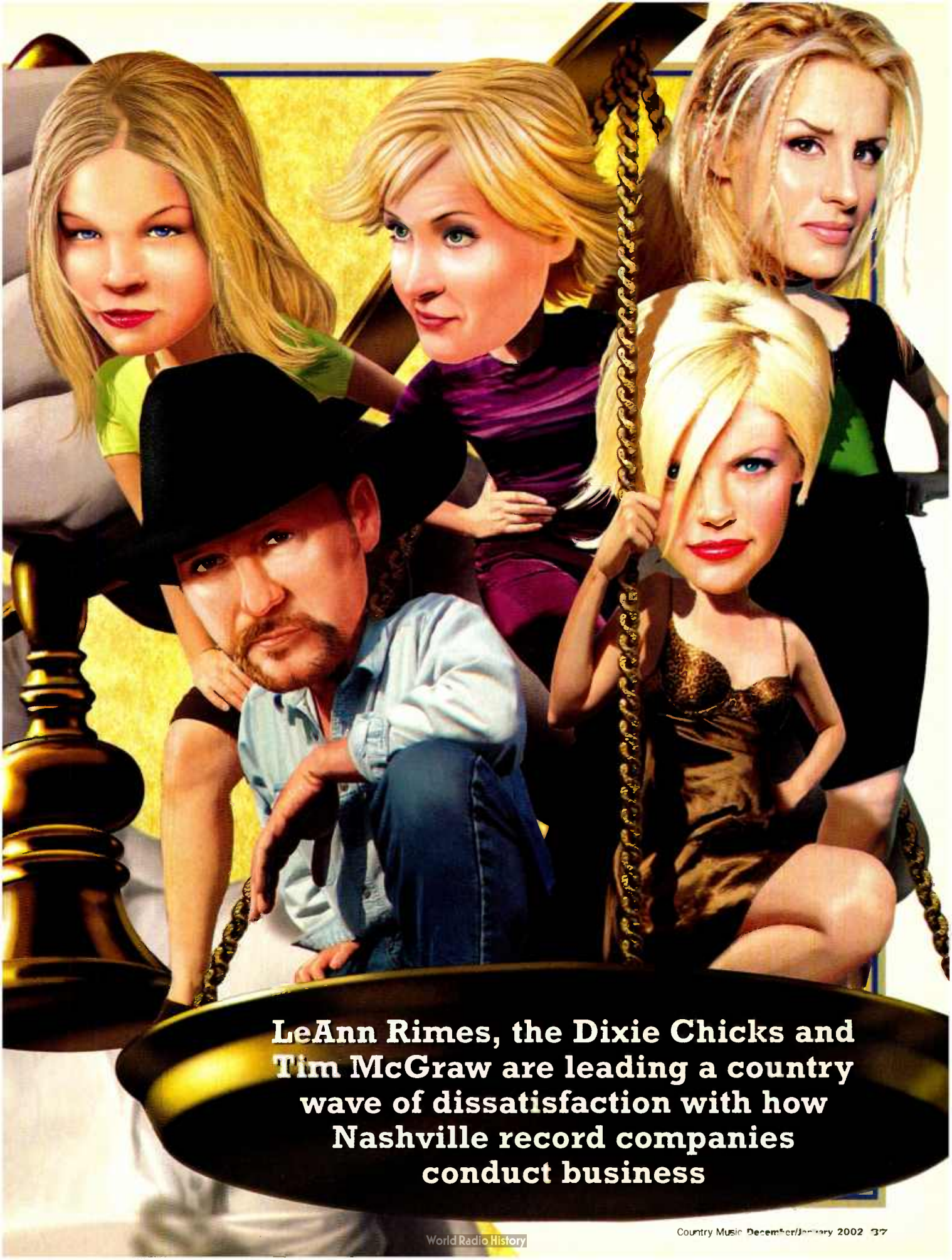
# LAWYERS STARS MONEY &

by Miriam Pace Longino

Illustration by Mick Coulas

**N**ot long ago, the Dixie Chicks appeared to epitomize the music-industry version of the American dream. After years of dues-paying and struggle, the Texas trio got the break they worked so hard to achieve – and made the most of it. In less than four years, they have sold over 20 million albums and earned their record label more than \$175 million. In October 2000 they crowned their meteoric rise by winning country music's most prestigious honor, the CMA Entertainer of the Year award.





**LeAnn Rimes, the Dixie Chicks and  
Tim McGraw are leading a country  
wave of dissatisfaction with how  
Nashville record companies  
conduct business**

# LAWYERS, STARS AND MONEY

In 2001, group members Natalie Maines, Martie Seidel Maguire and Emily Robison took a sabbatical to reap what they'd earned. They appeared to have much to be thankful for, including new marriages, new relationships, new homes, even a new baby.

Then they looked at their record company's financial books and asked, "Where's our money?" After initiating a series of audits, the trio alleged that their record label had cheated them out of more than \$4 million.

**O**n July 13, the Chicks filed a legal motion to terminate their relationship with Sony Music Entertainment, the multinational conglomerate that owns their Monument label. Four days later, Sony countered with a 10-page lawsuit against the group claiming breach of contract. The Chicks responded with a 45-page lawsuit of their own, accusing the label of "fraudulent accounting gimmicks" and "systematic thievery."

For such a messy dispute to go public means that a charmed, mutually prosperous business relationship has degenerated into an aggressively antagonistic feud.

"We refuse to sit back and silently endorse this behavior simply because this is a 'standard' practice at Sony," the trio said in a written statement. "This is about people keeping their word."



AP PHOTO/RICH PENDERKNECHT



AP PHOTO/RICH PENDERKNECHT

**Stardom has its trials: ex-Eagle Don Henley, with country's LeAnn Rimes (above) and rocker Courtney Love (left), testified about record-company contracts to a Senate committee investigating allegations of legal loopholes that put artists at a disadvantage. Tim McGraw (right) saw red when his label issued a greatest-hits collection against his wishes.**



JANET GOUGH/CELEBRITY

Indeed, some industry insiders see this case as the latest salvo in a growing movement of artists who are challenging standard recording contracts. The lawsuit puts the Chicks in the front line of musicians who are engaging in battle with the international entertainment firms that currently control the American recording industry.

Today more than ever, the record contract is a high-stakes agreement that can determine if artists become multimillionaires – or worker bees who pad the corporate accounts without seeing much money themselves.

Not only does a contract specify who maintains creative control of the music, it also spells out financial obligations: the percentage of money artists make from the sale of their music, and who pays the costs of touring, recording, videos, radio promotion, parties, sometimes even clothes and hairdressers.

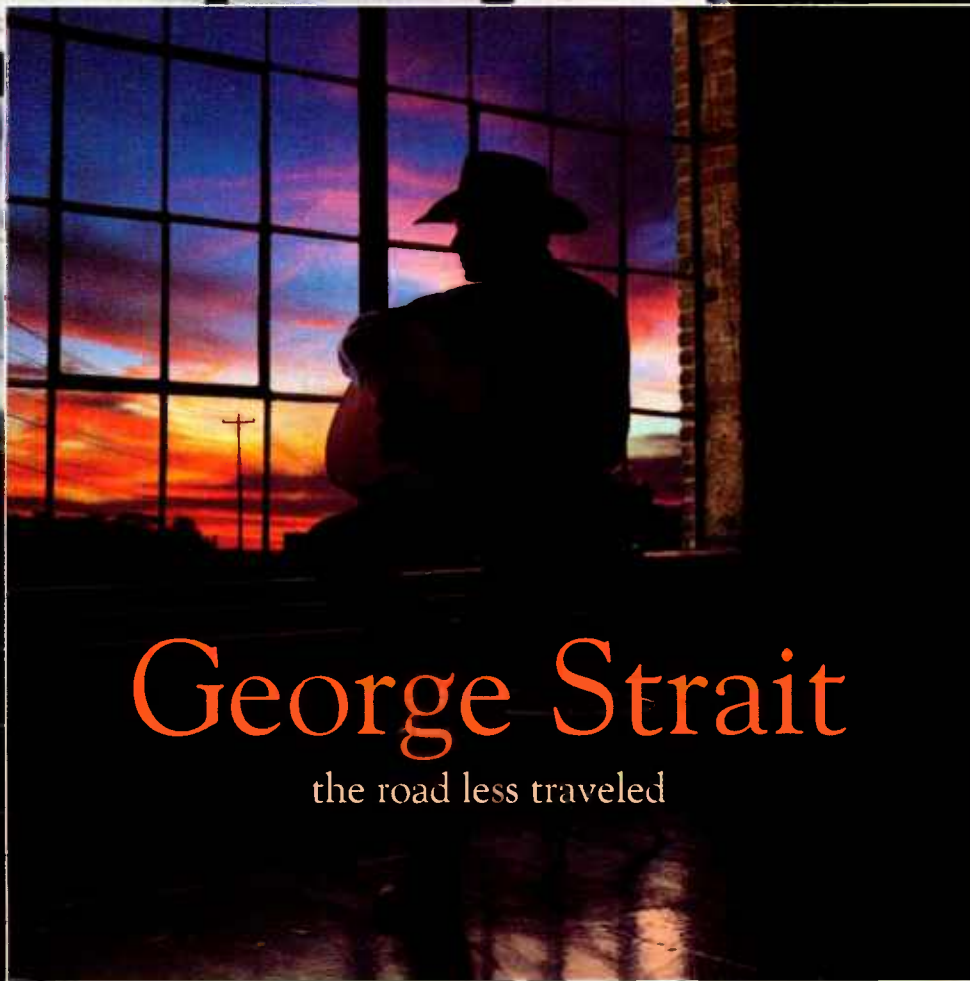
Indeed, the fine print of a contract will indicate whether a record company will give an artist a full-bore promotional push or take a more reserved, financially cautious approach to releasing a new record. The contract also details how many albums an artist is required to make for a label, and who calls the shots

**“This is about people keeping their word.”**

The outcome of the dispute likely will affect more than three talented Texans and a billion-dollar multinational corporation – it will likely send shock waves throughout the music industry and shake up all future U.S. recording contracts.

Neither side is talking publicly about the standoff. But the crux of the problem between Sony and the Dixie Chicks lies in a voluminous document filed in the business affairs office of the label: their record contract.

# George Strait



## George Strait

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World Radio History

# LAWYERS, STARS AND MONEY

about scheduling those releases.

Remember when LeAnn Rimes issued a disclaimer saying she was not responsible for her last album, *I Need You*? Even though Rimes didn't want the album out, Curb Records had the right to release the material – with or without her permission. Tim McGraw also openly expressed his anger with Curb Records when the company released a greatest-hits collection against the singer's wishes.

Rimes joined the Dixie Chicks, former Eagles member Don Henley and rocker Courtney Love in testifying at a California Senate hearing on a 1987 amendment that exempts the record industry from state labor laws. Rimes told the legislators that she signed her contract at age 12, when she knew little about legalities or fine print. She's now spent several years as a multi-platinum artist, and she claims that Curb Records has refused to allow her to renegotiate the terms of her contract. "I just turned 19 last month," Rimes testified. "If I record one album every two years, which is the industry average, I



**The Dixie Chicks – Martie Seidel Maguire, Natalie Maines and Emily Robison – filed to terminate their relationship with Sony Music, citing non-payment of royalties.**

will be 35 when my contract is up."

So while many hungry, starry-eyed artists eagerly sign whatever contract is put before them, just as many successful, road-hardened artists end up unhappy with the complex accounting practices of record labels and the small percentage of earnings they get from the sales of their music.

Joe Galante, the powerful head of Nashville's RCA Label Group, remembers his contract negotiations with Keith Whitley. It was 1984, and 29-year-old Whitley was literally lifted by RCA from backwoods bluegrass festivals to a dreamed-of shot at national stardom. Whitley sat in Galante's Nashville office, surrounded

to resolve these greatly diminished claims, purported to terminate the Recording Contract. The purported termination is based upon entirely trumped-up and baseless claims, and Defendants' threat to avoid performance of their remaining obligations to Sony is a sham and of no force or effect. Indeed, the Dixie Chicks recently announced to the world on the widely-broadcast

23. Defendants have reaped enormous financial benefits from Sony under the Recording Contract and the 1999 Amendment, earning millions of dollars in record and mechanical royalties from record sales alone. These monies were paid to Defendants on a regular, semi-annual basis, accompanied by detailed royalty statements sent directly to Defendants' accountants. In addition, Sony has expended hundreds of thousands of dollars in

27. In the event Defendants refuse to deliver the remaining albums required under the Recording Contract, Sony will suffer damage in an amount that cannot be calculated, but would be no less than \$100,000,000.

**SONY SUIT: The Chicks filed their initial legal motion after a series of audits and asked to be freed from a seven-album deal they signed in 1997. Sony responded to the trio's allegations of deceit and fraud with a 10-page lawsuit, citing breach of contract by the group.**

**COUNTER SUIT: The Dixie Chicks' 45-page countersuit accused Sony of engaging in "systematic thievery" to rob them of royalty earnings. The group alleged it caught Sony hiding money with bogus accounting tactics on at least 30 separate occasions over the last four years.**

35. By reason of Sony's intentional and material misconduct, the Dixie Chicks have terminated their Recording Agreement with Sony and, by these counterclaims, seek among other things full payment of all amounts due to them. The Dixie Chicks elected to terminate the

(B) Sony's continual, intentional and wrongful failure to account for and pay royalties it owes and Sony's other wrongful acts hereinafter alleged in the Counterclaims constitute, individually and in the aggregate, material breaches of its obligations, which entitled the Dixie Chicks to terminate the Recording Agreement and pursue their artistic careers in the entertainment industry.

examine Sony's books and records. Sony has failed to account properly and/or pay to the Dixie Chicks the proper amounts due (including making improper deductions from payments due) in no less than thirty (30) separate instances.



by gold and platinum records by Waylon Jennings and Alabama, looking like a starstruck kid who'd suddenly scored an unexpected backstage pass.

"He said, 'I'm ready to sign my contract,'" Galante recalls. "I told him 'Keith, you need a lawyer.' He said, 'Nah, I'll just sign it.'" Whitley eventually did sign with RCA, but not until the company convinced him to consult a legal expert.

On the other hand, Alan Jackson remembers how difficult it can be for a struggling artist to turn down a first-time offer. One of the hardest decisions of his career came when he was offered a less-than-ideal record deal by Mercury Records in 1986, just six months after he moved to Nashville.

"I was like, 'Wow!'" Jackson says. "But then I got this attorney who said, 'It's a record deal. If you want to take it, you can. It's not a very good one. They're not going to get behind your record very much. If you luck out and have a hit, you *might* end up with a career. More than likely, nothing will

happen and they'll drop you, or they'll have you locked up for five more albums.' It was my first big chance, but I didn't do it."

**T**oday, with Shania Twain, Faith Hill, the Dixie Chicks and Garth Brooks scoring sales in the 10-million range, record contracts are more complex than ever.

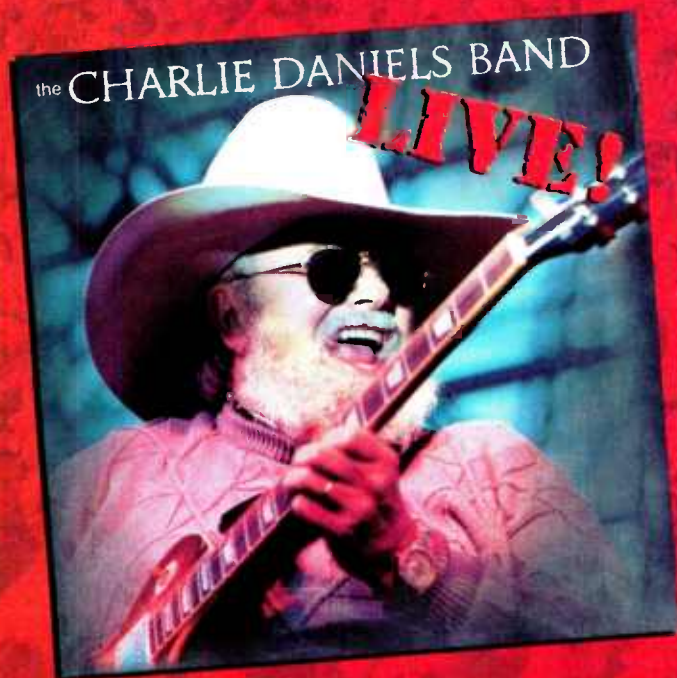
"It's like French," says Atlanta-based entertainment attorney Joel Katz, whose clients include Alan Jackson and Willie Nelson. "If you don't speak French, you can't understand the language. It's legal lingo, and you've got to know the vocabulary to understand the agreement. That's why they hire me."

The rise of mergers of leading entertainment corporations also complicates matters for country musicians. No longer does an artist's fate rest in the hands of a down-home musician like the late record producer Chet Atkins. Because of recent corporate consolidations, Nashville recording contracts are now controlled by eight companies:

- **AOL Time Warner** – Warner Bros., Reprise, Asylum and Atlantic labels
- **BMG Entertainment** – RCA, BNA and Arista labels
- **Capitol Records**
- **Curb Records**
- **Disney Enterprises** – Lyric Street Records
- **DreamWorks SKG** – DreamWorks Records
- **Sony Music Entertainment** – Epic, Columbia, Monument and Lucky Dog labels
- **Universal Music Group** – MCA, Mercury and Lost Highway labels

These record companies are in business for one reason: to make money. Under pressure from stockholders and board directors to meet quarterly financial goals, the heads of Nashville record companies must work diligently to guard the enormous investments they make in their artists and to get the greatest return on those investments possible.

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# LAWYERS, STARS AND MONEY

Ultimately, the label and the artist look to the recording contract as a guideline for how company money will be spent and how earnings will be divided.

Here is a sampling of the primary items found in most contracts:

- **RECORDING COSTS.** Few new artists have the money to pay for studio rentals, musicians, engineers and producers necessary to make modern, radio-ready recordings – most of which cost \$100,000 or more to create. “Nobody else is going to give you that kind of money to do it – not your mother or your father or Aunt Sadie,” says artist manager David Skepner, who has worked with Loretta Lynn and the Dixie Chicks. Any advance money must be repaid in full from sales income before an artist can begin to draw his percentage of sales earnings.

- **ROYALTY RATE.** This is the percentage an artist makes on each record sold. An attorney negotiates this value in “points,” the equivalent of pennies per every dollar earned. New artists can expect to receive anywhere from 10 to 16 points. Superstars, once they begin selling millions of albums, often renegotiate their contracts to a 22-point level.

- **LENGTH OF CONTRACT.** Most recording contracts feature clauses pinpointing how long an artist must stay with a record label, or how many CDs must be recorded for the company. If an act fails to sell product at an acceptable level, the label usually reserves the option to dump the artist (wiping clean the slate without making him pay what is owed from past advances and expenses). If an artist hits big, however, the contract usually ensures that he stays bound to the label for at least five more albums.

- **FREEBIES.** Scores of CDs – sometimes tens of thousands – are earmarked to be given free to radio stations and media to promote interest in the record. Artist royalties aren’t paid on these CDs because no sale is

involved. A trickier requirement involves deals cut with record stores and retail chains, such as Kmart and Wal-Mart. Record labels will offer the retailer free CDs based on how many the store purchases – e.g., if Wal-Mart buys 85, they might get 15 free. In most cases, artists don’t get royalties on those free CDs – even though they’re put into the retail bins and ultimately purchased by fans.

- **RECOUPABLES.** Artists routinely get billed for more than the cost of recording an album. These costs go toward funds for videos, radio promotion tours, image makeovers, parties and for independent promoters who push singles to radio stations. Usually artists must repay these investments – or “recoupable” expenses – out of their royalties before they receive any additional money from the label.

In the last decade, the upfront investments made by record companies have skyrocketed. Three decades ago, when Loretta Lynn was in her prime, the total investment in creating and marketing each album rarely exceeded \$30,000, according to her former manager David Skepner. Nowadays, recording the album alone costs more than three times that, and just one music video can add anywhere from \$50,000 to \$250,000 to the expenses.

“Today an artist has to recoup about a million dollars before they start making any money at all,” Skepner says.

Today, the music industry is riddled with horror stories of artists old and young who feel ripped off or mistreated by record executives. A new group, the Recording Artists Coalition – a nonprofit organization formed by Don Henley – has been formed to give musicians leverage in their negotiations with record companies. The coalition charges record labels with being systematically “corrupt” in their accounting practices.

“I have never been involved in an audit that, when the findings are in, an artist owes money to the record company,” Skepner says. “Does that say anything?”

Record labels see it differently, of course. Company executives tell artists that they strive to honor contracts faithfully and welcome audits to check their accounting. Moreover, it’s common for contracts to



COURTESY: QUALTONE RECORDS

**Radney Foster has survived major-label entanglements both as a solo artist and as a member of the acclaimed duo Foster & Lloyd (right). Now with a small independent label, he says his profit margin is actually larger.**

# Golden Gamble

Veteran artist  
Radney Foster  
reflects on record  
companies and  
contracts

In 1987, Radney Foster and fellow songwriter Bill Lloyd formed the country-rockin' duo Foster & Lloyd and signed with RCA Records. They scored an initial Top 10 song, "Crazy Over You," and three more Top 10 hits followed. After the duo split in 1991, Foster signed with Arista Records. His 1992 solo debut featured the hits "Just Call Me Lonesome" and "Nobody Wins." He left Arista in 1999 after three albums. His most recent album, *Are You Ready For The Big Show?*, was released independently on Foster's own label, PureSpunk.com, in partnership with DualTone.

*Country Music* asked Foster – now, at only 42, already a veteran of the business and its ups and downs – to share his views of record companies and recording contracts. Here's what he had to say.

**B**ig record companies are like Las Vegas. When you first walk through those golden doors, it's easy to get dazzled by the money, the neon and the glitz.

But from the moment you sign your first recording contract, it's a gamble. You start off with the odds against you having any great, far-reaching success.

They hand you money. They provide you expensive clothes to wear. They put you in fancy hotel suites. And you start thinking, "I'm going to be the one. I'm going to walk away with all the riches and all the glory."

Does the dream ever come true? Yes, a fortunate few do break big. They hit the jackpot. They take home the gold and the rewards.

But only a small percentage succeed. Scores of artists belly up to the music-business roulette wheel, and few walk away winners. That's how the business operates.

But here's the good news: You can build a career despite the odds. Even with all the risk and disappointment, I have a career today because RCA marketed the heck out of Foster & Lloyd, and Arista Records marketed the heck out of Radney Foster. They gave me the

chance to find a hard-core fan base, and I'm thankful for that.

But did the record companies balance their books fairly? No.

Arista Records sold 450,000 copies of my first solo album, *Del Rio, Texas, 1959*. But I never got a royalty check. That tells me the business isn't working right. It's certainly not working on behalf of the artists.

Granted, *Del Rio* was an expensive venture for the company. I got a \$35,000 advance. They put out several singles – some were suc-

cessful, some weren't – and they paid for several videos.

Now let's run the numbers. At 450,000 in sales at \$10 a record, the gross receipts come to \$4.5 million. If they spent \$1 million making and promoting my album, that still comes to \$3.5 million in profits. If we play by their rules and factor in other unaccountable expenses, the record company still took in at least \$3 million. Considering my \$35,000 advance, which is all I got for that record, I received about 1.5 percent of the profit.

That's why I'm now putting out records in a different manner. I got offered other major-label record deals, and I turned them down. I wanted to own my music. So I hooked up with a new independent company, DualTone Records.

Here's how it works: I paid \$30,000 to make my recent album, *Are You Ready For The Big Show?* That's a lot for an independent album, but it's pennies compared to what major companies spend to record a project. I lease the record to DualTone. They pay the costs of manufacturing, distribution, promotion and marketing. Then we share the net profits. A confidentiality agreement doesn't allow me to reveal the specifics, but I will say an artist should make 30 to 50 percent of the profits from such an agreement.

Under this deal, the break-even point is 10,000 in sales. We're going to sell at least 40,000, and there's a chance we might sell 100,000. If we do, we will all have hit a big home run.

Frankly, this is the first fair business partnership I've had. And for the first time in my career, I will receive money from the sales of an album I've made.

It may not be the superstar jackpot, but at least I'm still in the game – and putting money in my pocket.

— Radney Foster



ALAN HANCOCK

# LAWYERS, STARS AND MONEY

include clauses that increase the royalty percentage the artist receives as sales rise. Past that, superstars often renegotiate their contracts long before they expire – effectively changing the rules mid-stream – to amend the terms so that they receive a greater royalty rate. “This is the only business in the world where contracts are renegotiated irrelevant to the terms of the contract,” says entertainment attorney Katz.

In Nashville, artists as diverse as Brenda Lee, Waylon Jennings and John Michael Montgomery have audited record companies to get a thorough accounting of how much money was taken in and where it went.

In the case of the Dixie Chicks, the group successfully renegotiated its Sony contract in February 1999

to receive a higher royalty percentage. In exchange, the trio agreed to add an extra CD to the end of its contract.

In November 1999, the Chicks made their first audit request, and the lawsuit charges that Sony hid crucial documents and continually delayed the action. In September 2000 the Chicks ordered a complete audit of their earnings, resulting in what the group says was an uncovered \$4.1 million in mistakes and unpaid royalties.

Says Alan Jackson, who has sold more than 35 million albums, “You don’t know what the contracts are, but if you look at the numbers, you can see that the record companies are usually making a whole lot more money than the artists. In country music, most artists make their money touring ‘cause you don’t make that much off records.”

Nonetheless, record labels believe that contracts are fair, and that artists are better informed and better advised now than in the past.

“We don’t sit there like a guy with a

baseball bat and it’s *Godfather* time,” says Joe Galante, who has negotiated hundreds of contracts in his 30 years with RCA. “People have choices. Everybody is better qualified. The artist comes in now with business managers, and attorneys linked to firms in New York and L.A. The money is a lot higher, so you have to have the best around you.”

**S**till, despite the attorneys and the negotiations and the accounting measures, problems obviously exist – and tensions between artists and record labels are at an all-time high.

For that reason, the Dixie Chicks dispute will be followed closely by both artists and by record executives. In the end, the outcome of the lawsuit could have an immense impact on how future recording contracts are written.

“There are expectations on both sides as to what people are worth,” Galante says. “Artists have one opinion. Labels have another. Somewhere in between there’s reality.”\*

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“This tribute may be one of the few Dale Earnhardt collectibles currently within reach of the average collector,” said George Hubbard of the International Collectors Society, distributor of the issue and national clearinghouse for rare Limited Edition collectibles. “His competitive spirit combined with his extraordinary talents served to catapult Earnhardt to the pinnacle of national and international racing celebrity. Now, with his passing, his status will be deservedly elevated to that of legend,” added Hubbard.

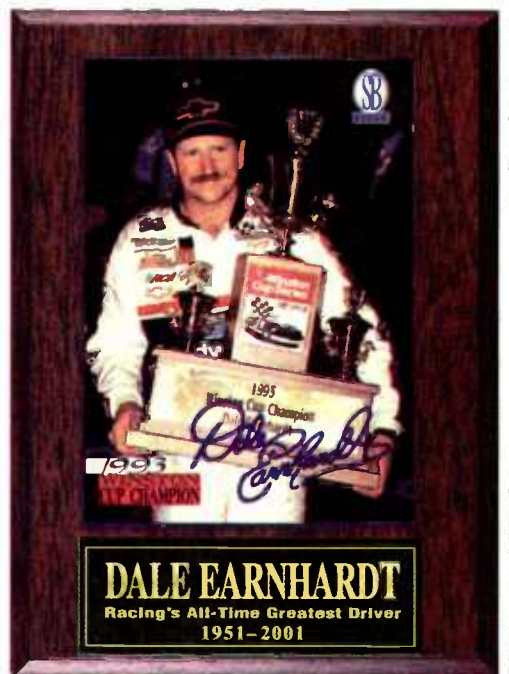
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“I expect that the laws of supply and demand will have a dramatic effect on all Earnhardt collectibles. Therefore, in order for everyone to have an equal chance to obtain this special memento, ICS has a first-come, first-served policy in place. That’s why it’s so important to act quickly!” Hubbard remarked.

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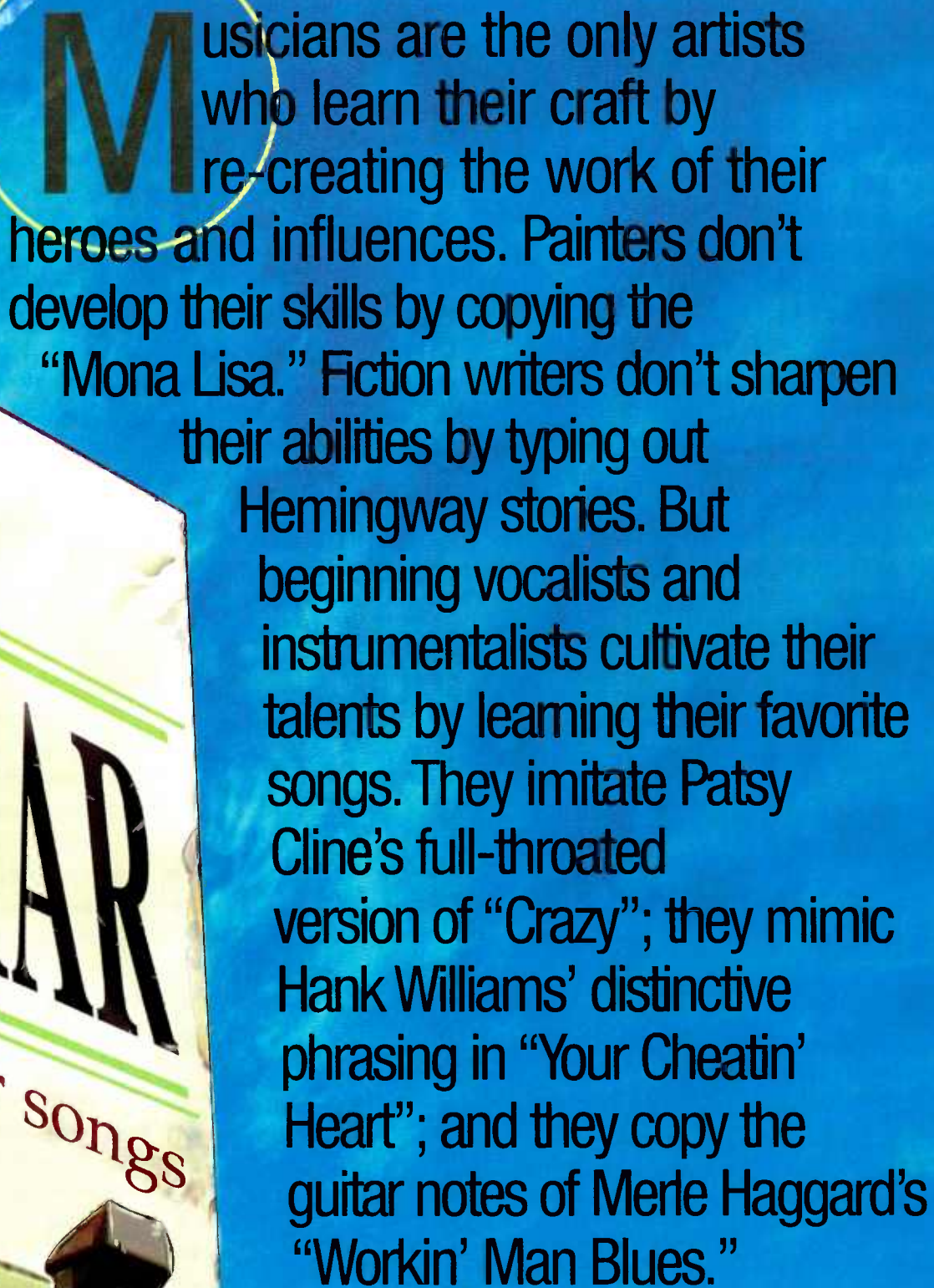
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BRAD WALKER



**M**usicians are the only artists who learn their craft by re-creating the work of their heroes and influences. Painters don't develop their skills by copying the "Mona Lisa." Fiction writers don't sharpen their abilities by typing out Hemingway stories. But beginning vocalists and instrumentalists cultivate their talents by learning their favorite songs. They imitate Patsy Cline's full-throated version of "Crazy"; they mimic Hank Williams' distinctive phrasing in "Your Cheatin' Heart"; and they copy the guitar notes of Merle Haggard's "Workin' Man Blues."

by Tom Roland

# COVER SONGS

And while singers eventually must move beyond their influences, it's natural that they feel an impulse, from time to time, to record a favorite classic song or to update a special older tune for contemporary audiences.

These days, country's current hit-makers are mining gold by putting new polish on old gems. Brooks & Dunn reintroduced B.W. Stevenson's "My Maria," Sara Evans put a country feel on Edwin McCain's "I Could Not Ask For More," Jo Dee Messina resurrected Dottie West's "Lesson In Leavin'," and Lee Ann Womack recast Rodney Crowell's "Ashes By Now," to cite but a few.

Taking it a step further, Alan Jackson, Reba McEntire, LeAnn Rimes and Dwight Yoakam have all created entire *albums* of re-treaded material.

"Great songs are great songs," says record producer Norro Wilson, who piloted Sammy Kershaw's remake of The Amazing Rhythm Aces' "Third Rate Romance." "Even if you re-cut it, you can update it."

Cutting an older song

can also tap into a listener's memory. Radio programmers insist that country fans – fans of all genres, actually – respond well to hearing a familiar song.

The appeal of familiarity is one of the reasons Rascal Flatts' shows include several cover songs, drawing on everyone

who tracked Womack's version of Rodney Crowell's "Ashes By Now" and Mark Chesnutt's rendition of Aerosmith's "I Don't Want To Miss A Thing."

The danger comes in choosing the *right* cover song. For one thing, some songs are virtually untouchable. Country

**A cover song doesn't have to beat the other one . . . But if it's not as great in some form or fashion, we're not gonna let anybody hear it. ”**

— Mark Wright

from the Edgar Winter Group to Michael Jackson to Shenandoah.

"We could do our whole album all night long, but there could be some lulls in there, 'cause not every song's gonna make the radio," Rascal guitarist Joe Don Rooney says. "If we throw some songs in there that people are familiar with and can sing back to you, it's good, you know. It's like being in a bar band, kinda, but takin' it on the road."

Still, while a cover song might hold a concert crowd's attention, remakes can be a risk to record. "An artist does a remake at the risk of gettin' their butt kicked," says producer Mark Wright,

standards like George Jones' "He Stopped Loving Her Today" or Loretta Lynn's "Coal Miner's Daughter" are so closely identified with one artist that no cover could overcome a listener's memory of the original. Similarly, it would be pointless to remake such enormous hits as Tim McGraw's "I Like It, I Love It" or Shania Twain's "Man! I Feel Like A Woman" because the originals remain so pervasive on the radio and in people's minds.

In other words, there has to be a way for the artist to add a personal imprint to the tune.

"A cover song doesn't have to beat the other one," Wright insists. "But if it's not as great in *some* form or fashion, we're not gonna let anybody hear it."

Cover songs have been with country music throughout its history. Jimmie Rodgers and The Carter Family both recorded old folk tunes during their heyday in the 1920s and '30s. "Lovesick Blues," the song that immortalized Hank Williams when he debuted on the *Grand Ole Opry* in 1949, had been recorded two decades earlier by vaudeville performer Emmett Miller. Elvis Presley's two-sided debut single in 1954 featured rockabilly renewals of Bill Monroe's bluegrass classic "Blue Moon Of Kentucky" and Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup's blues tune "That's All Right." And "Sweet Dreams," identified today with Patsy Cline, charted four times for three other artists between 1956 and 1961. In the late '60s and early '70s, when the album was still a developing musical format, a hit such as "Stand By Your Man" or "Rose Garden" automatically spawned numerous remakes as Nashville artists packed their albums with covers of recent favorites.

"We used to call that 'throw-'em-a-bone,'" recalls Norro Wilson, who worked alongside veteran producer Billy Sherrill during that era. "I still like to

Garth Brooks didn't shy away from covering Billy Joel's "Shameless."



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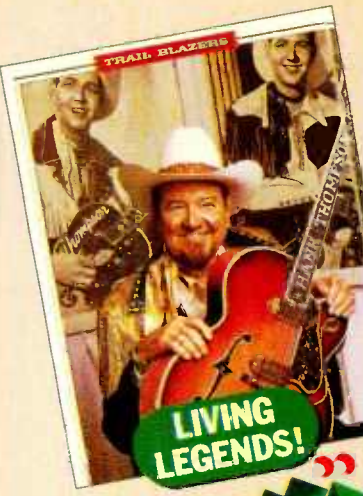
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# POPPIN' THE COUNTRY

**C**overing older songs is a two-way street. Just as many pop songs have been retooled into country hits, so have pop artists scored by re-fashioning country songs to conform to their musical styles.

Bette Midler is a good example. In 1989 she earned Record of the Year honors at the Grammy Awards for "The Wind Beneath My Wings" – six years after Gary Morris introduced it as a country hit. The following year, she had another hit with "From A Distance," which had first been recorded as a country song by Nanci Griffith. And Midler's 1995 album, *Bette Of Roses*, contained new versions of two previous country hits, Collin Raye's "In This Life" and Don Williams' "I Believe In You."

But Midler is just following a time-honored tradition, one that stretches back more than half a century. In 1951, pop singers Patti Page and Tony Bennett both scored No. 1 hits with country songs – Page with the classic "Tennessee Waltz" and Bennett with a lush, twang-free rendition of Hank Williams' "Cold, Cold Heart."

Then, in the early 1960s, Ray Charles set the standard for country-to-pop transitions with two classic volumes of *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music*. His unforgettable versions

of Don Gibson's "I Can't Stop Loving You" and Eddy Arnold's "You Don't Know Me" proved that a well-written country song could be turned into something distinctive in other formats when treated with respect and vision by an artist from another genre.

The practice has been repeated over and over through the years. Tom Jones revamped Porter Wagoner's "Green, Green Grass Of Home" for pop audiences in 1967, Gladys Knight remade Ray Price's "You're The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me" in 1974, and Dorothy Moore covered the Eddy Arnold hit "Misty Blue" in 1976.

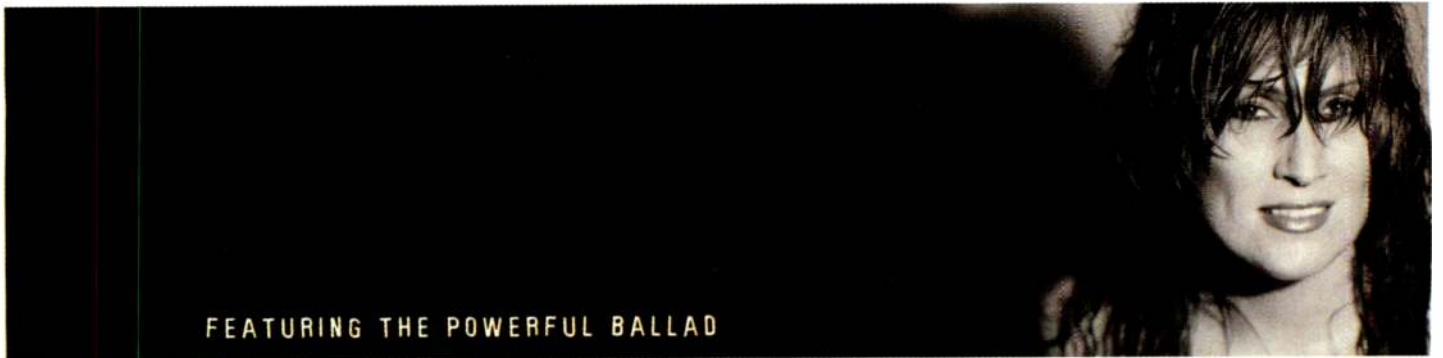
Today, pop artists continue to dig into country song catalogs to find appropriate material. All-4-One spun hits with "I Swear" and "I Can Love You Like That" during the '90s after John Michael Montgomery had made them into country hits. Similarly, Oklahoma R&B quartet Joose rang up a hit by reworking Garth Brooks' "If Tomorrow Never Comes." And Brit popster Gary Barlow found a pop hit with Joe Diffie's "So Help Me Girl."

The lesson may be this: A good song is a good song, and a distinctive artist can always find a way to make an old song sound new all over again.

— Tom Roland



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# COVER SONGS

throw an old song on an album, 'cause I think the potential of it gettin' some attention from a jock may happen."

In the late '70s, Wilson became something of a remake factory. He had particular success producing new versions of old songs with Margo Smith, who had three consecutive hits covering Connie Francis ("Don't Break The Heart That Loves You"), The Ames Brothers ("It Only Hurts For A Little While") and Kitty Kallen ("Little Things Mean A Lot").

But not everything worked. When Wilson had Razy Bailey cut Eddie Floyd's R&B staple "Knock On Wood" in 1984, it fared poorly.

Unlike Wilson, though, some country insiders frown on the use of cover songs. When Willie Nelson proposed an album in 1977 that would collect traditional pop classics such as "Georgia On My Mind" and "All Of Me," his record label balked. But Nelson stood his ground, and his album, *Stardust*, became a landmark country release.

Similarly, when

Ricky Van Shelton stocked his 1980s albums with previous hits for other artists – including "Statue Of A Fool," "Life Turned Her That Way" and "From A Jack To A King" – some critics dismissed him as unoriginal. Fans, however, embraced him.

But while country stars may love older songs, fans rarely get to hear them on the

of Jackson's fans to go back and discover the originals. More than that, the album touched a chord with fans, with Jackson's faithful take on Don Williams' "It Must Be Love" hitting the top of the charts.

"Sometimes you do a remake 'cause you know you're gonna be connecting," says Pam Tillis, who plans to cover songs

“ Some songs are sort of sacred . . . It'd be hard to seriously cover 'Satisfaction.' ”

— Paul Worley

radio. While yesteryear's rock music can be heard in a variety of radio formats – including several versions of pop oldies and classic-rock stations – country oldie stations are rare. So when a current country act reintroduces a classic, the audience gets a history lesson.

Alan Jackson's *Under The Influence* album serves as a strong example. The album featured remakes of songs by Gene Watson, Merle Haggard and George Jones, among others, no doubt leading some

by her father, Mel Tillis, on her next album. "It's a nostalgia thing: 'Oh, yeah, I remember that song.' And then sometimes, like when Alan did it, it was because a lot of people didn't know it. It kind of hits both bases: all the people who know it and would love to hear it again, and then all the new people." Familiarity, however, does breed contempt if the new version fails to live up to the original recording. That's where the risk comes in.

When LeAnn Rimes re-recorded "Purple Rain," a song distinctly associated with Prince, she was roundly thumped for adding nothing to a title that had already realized its creative potential and was well established within the public's psyche.

"Some songs are sort of sacred," suggests Paul Worley, who produced Sara Evans' remake of "I Could Not Ask For More." "It'd be hard to seriously cover 'Satisfaction.' You're never gonna beat the Rolling Stones. [Sometimes] the original record is a timeless and beautiful moment that has an endless life in American culture. Those you wanna leave alone."

Artists can sidestep that issue by bringing a new element to the song. Jo Dee Messina resisted re-cutting Dottie West's "Lesson In Leavin'" for a couple of years, because she feared the song was too dated. Co-producer Tim McGraw, however, pushed her to try it with a swamplier arrangement.

"The original is very '70s sounding," Messina notes. "But we went for that very hard-drivin' groove, less electric, less synthesized sound."

Dwight Yoakam is a master at reinventing previous hits. His *Under The Covers* album featured a succession of fresh takes on older songs, and his recent rendition of Queen's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" is now one of his most identifiable songs.



In "I Don't Want To Miss A Thing," honky-tonker Mark Chesnutt walked down the same vocal path as Aerosmith's Steven Tyler.

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World Radio History

# ONE MORE TIME

## Country covers range from soaring brilliance to wretched excess

What makes a good cover song? It's all in the interpretation. Looking back, it's easy to find many fine remakes where an artist took a good song and transformed it into something special. Then there are times when a singer should have left well enough alone. Here's a snapshot of the good, the bad – and the never should have been.

— Bob Allen



**“Mule Skinner Blues (Blue Yodel No. 8),” Dolly Parton (1970)**

As her recent recordings attest, Parton has always had an affinity for the roots of country music. More than three decades ago, she served up this vivacious cover of a Jimmie Rodgers song that clearly was modeled on Bill Monroe's famous bluegrass version. The song became Parton's first Top 10 solo hit.



**“Cherokee Maiden,” Merle Haggard (1975)**

Merle Haggard has always been the late Western swing king Bob Wills' biggest fan – and one of the most able interpreters of his music. Hag's chart-topping revival of this Wills favorite awakened a host of younger singers to Wills' enduring musical legacy.



**“Are You Ready For The Country,” Waylon Jennings (1976)**

Jennings' snarling Top 10 cover of this Neil Young anthem stands as one of the landmark tunes from Jennings' eminently memorable musical heyday in the mid-1970s.



**“Near You,” George Jones & Tammy Wynette (1976)**

Country music's most famous couple turned syrup into sentimental sap with their gooey chart-topping revival of this Francis Craig pop hit from 1947.



**“Blue Skies,” Willie Nelson (1978)**

The Red-Headed Stranger achieved one of history's most brilliant country-pop alchemies with this chart-topping revival of an Irving Berlin pop standard, originally penned in 1927.



**“The Rose,” Conway Twitty (1982)**

Conway Twitty's record label advised him not to release this over-the-top cover of Bette Midler's 1980 pop hit. But, like most great country singers, Twitty was always willing to take a risk. Suffice it to say, this was not one of the brightest moments from his vast catalog of No. 1 hits.



**“Uncle Pen,” Ricky Skaggs (1984)**

Like a heady gust of fresh air, former bluegrass prodigy Skaggs turned Nashville's country-pop status quo on its head with this brilliant revival of Bill Monroe's autobiographical bluegrass standard.



**“Tennessee Flat Top Box,” Rosanne Cash (1987)**

Cash won the hearts of country fans everywhere with this jaunty, chart-topping update of a rockabilly favorite from dad Johnny's catalog.



**“Stand By Your Man,” Lyle Lovett (1989)**

Clearly, Lovett had tongue in cheek when he took on the great Tammy Wynette's signature song. But which cheek? One of the most improbable covers ever recorded, it leaves the lingering question: “Why, Lyle?”



**“Shameless,” Garth Brooks (1991)**

The title of this Billy Joel favorite provides an unfortunate description of Brooks' flat-footed remake of this soulful pop confessional. With “Shameless,” Brooks revealed what a lot of listeners had already figured out: His musical roots ran deeper into '70s and '80s pop than any era of country music.



**“Angry All The Time,” Tim McGraw (2001)**

Tim McGraw's wife, Faith Hill, first found this remarkably written ballad on a Bruce Robison album. McGraw's admirable version bravely takes this worthy song to the masses – adding much-needed emotional resonance to country radio.



# COVER SONGS

But Yoakam insists that, in his case, remakes are more about musical experimentation than commercial exploitation. "For me," he says, "it's what I like – period. I've never been able to conduct my musical career by calculating, much to the chagrin of managers and the label at times, who would have preferred a little more calculation on my part. But I'm doing what inspires me to continue to do music."

Still, what will and what won't work among cover versions is nearly impossible to predict. When producer Don Cook suggested that Brooks & Dunn re-record "My Maria," Ronnie Dunn at first opposed the idea. "Ronnie thought it was too overexposed," Cook recalls.

Dunn changed his mind when his daughter got excited about the recording, and it eventually garnered a CMA nomination for Single of the Year. On the other hand, it was Dunn's idea to record a new version

of John Waite's rock hit "Missing You" in 1999. When released as a single, though, "Missing You" turned out to be the worst-received release in Brooks & Dunn's history.

In concert, artists have more leeway in doing covers. Fans get a chance to sing along when Garth Brooks whips out Billy Joel's "You May Be Right," Martina McBride sings "I Can See Clearly Now" or Trisha Yearwood serves up John Mellencamp's "Small Town." The artist is not staking his or her long-term reputation on the song, and sometimes the right choice adds a needed dynamic to the show.

"We started doing 'Small Town,'" Yearwood says, "because my tendency to do ballads leaves me, on my live show, looking for up-tempo stuff to get the crowd goin'."

But on record, covers remain a risky venture – but one that artists will continue to take.

"If they're hits, they're hits," says producer Mark Wright. "And there's just a whole new audience out there that's never heard it. Let's let 'em hear it."\*



Trisha Yearwood loves getting into the groove of "Small Town" by rocker John Mellencamp.

MICK COLLINS AND CANDACE LOURIDES

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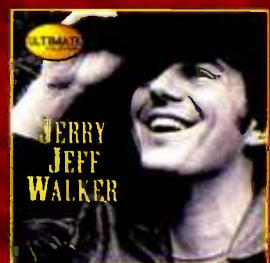
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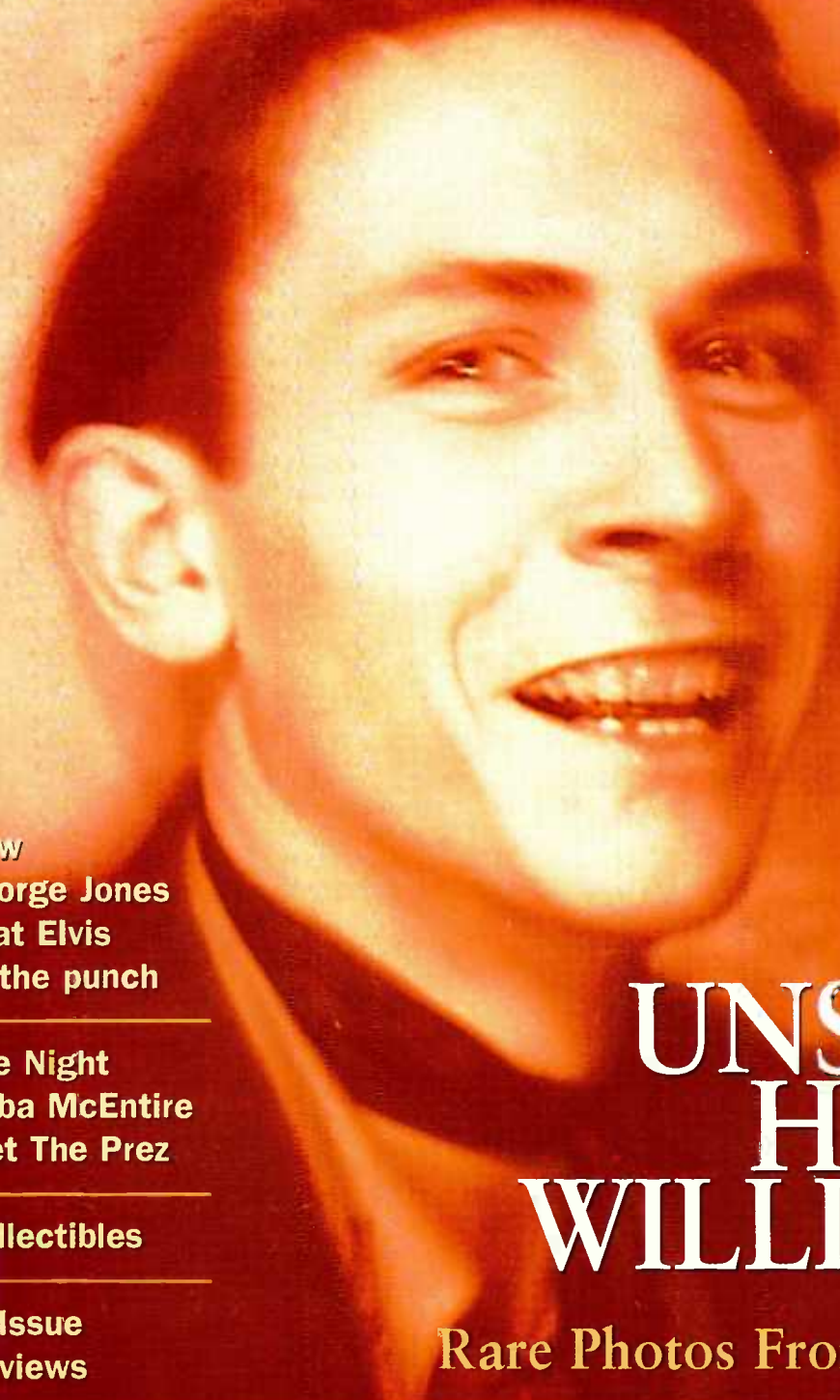
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## THE UNSEEN HANK WILLIAMS

Rare Photos From His Past

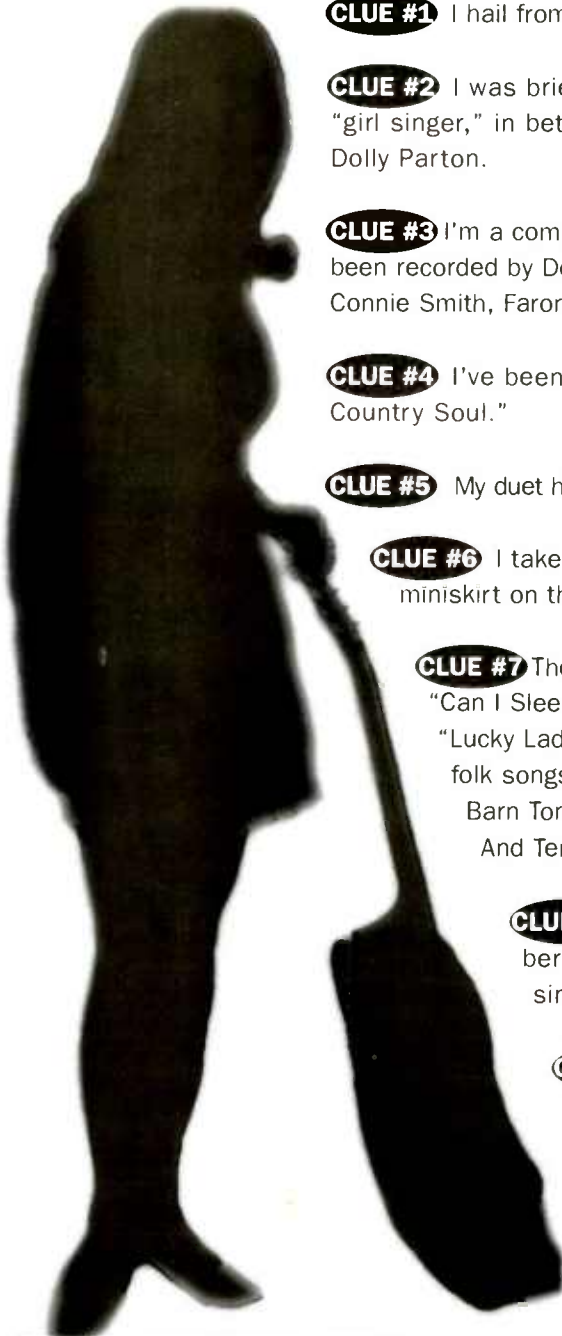
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- J3 Cover Story: Hank Williams**  
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- J7 This Date In Country Music**  
Anniversaries, birthdays and other musical milestones.
- J8 The Story Behind The Song**  
Dickey Lee wrote "She Thinks I Still Care" with Elvis Presley in mind. As it turned out, Presley eventually recorded it – but not until after George Jones made it a country standard. Lee tells the tale behind a classic heartbreak ballad that's topped the charts three times.
- J10 Jack Clement**  
"Cowboy" Jack Clement is one of American music's most colorful characters – as well as an important musical catalyst. From the early days when he collaborated with Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash to his landmark work with Charley Pride, Waylon Jennings and U2, he remains a one-of-a-kind music-maker.
- J13 Disc-overies**  
Notable country reissues by Bob Wills, Merle Haggard and Leona Williams, Kitty Wells, John Hartford, Jerry Jeff Walker, Bill Clifton and a collection of historic Texas string band recordings.
- J14 Country's Hall Of Fame**  
Reba McEntire shocked some country fans when she walked out at the 1993 CMA Awards in a revealing, low-cut dress. We take a look at the origins of the designer dress – now on display at the Country Music Hall of Fame – the aftershocks and McEntire's reflections on that night.
- J16 Collections**  
An essential marketplace for buyers, sellers and traders, as well as a forum for readers to share their views.

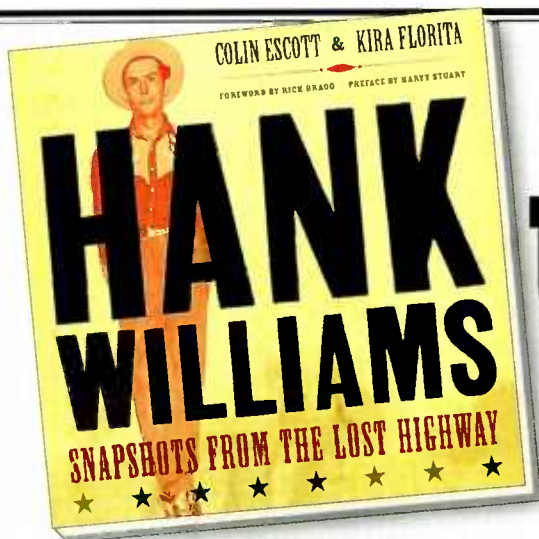
# WHO AM I?

How much do you know about your country music favorites? Here's your chance to find out. Test your trivia knowledge about one of the greats.



- CLUE #1** I hail from Pennsylvania.
- CLUE #2** I was briefly Porter Wagoner's "girl singer," in between Norma Jean and Dolly Parton.
- CLUE #3** I'm a composer whose songs have been recorded by Dottie West, Ray Price, Connie Smith, Faron Young and others.
- CLUE #4** I've been billed as "Miss Country Soul."
- CLUE #5** My duet hits were with Jack Greene.
- CLUE #6** I take credit for introducing the miniskirt on the Grand Ole Opry stage.
- CLUE #7** The melodies of my hits "Can I Sleep In Your Arms" and "Lucky Ladies" came from the old folk songs "Can I Sleep In Your Barn Tonight, Mister" and "Fair And Tender Ladies."
- CLUE #8** I've been a member of the Grand Ole Opry since 1967.
- CLUE #9** Songwriter Hank Cochran brought me to Nashville, and I married him.
- CLUE #10** I won a Grammy for "Don't Touch Me."

\* Answer on page J16



# The Unseen Hank

**New book delivers rare photos of the legendary singer**

**H**ank Williams fans thought they'd surely seen every photograph in existence of the legendary country star. After all, the same familiar pictures have been recycled again and again.

But now *Hank Williams: Snapshots From The Lost Highway* provides an avalanche of fresh imagery. It is arguably the most visually stunning book in the history of country music.

There's fine writing, to be sure, including a preface by Marty Stuart, a superb foreword by Rick Bragg and documentary-style text by Colin Escott and Kira Florita. But it isn't the words that make this volume extraordinary – it's the 150 previously unpublished images of country music's most influential singer/songwriter. When Florita and Escott assembled the *Complete Works* box set that won a Grammy Award in

1998, they discovered a treasure trove of pictures and documents that had never seen the light of day. The bulk of them came from Hank's sister Irene and her private collection, which had been purchased by Stuart. They wouldn't all fit in the set's booklet, so the decision was made to publish a separate work to contain them. The hardcover book features photographs of Williams performing as a teenage entertainer, posing with fans and family, joking with band members, entertaining on various stages and in his coffin at age 29. Included are his handwritten song lyrics, contracts and letters. News clippings, advertisements, legal papers and more tell the tale of country music's tragic king in a way that it's never been told. By exclusive arrangement with Perseus Books, here is a sampling from this amazing volume.


— Robert K. Oermann



On July 15, 1951, the city of Montgomery, Ala., staged a "homecoming" for its favorite native son. Backstage, Hank was photographed with wife Audrey and his children Hank Jr. and Lycrecia.



MILTON S. MIKE  
GENERAL MANAGER



King Edward Hotel

147th STREET EAST OF BROADWAY  
NEW YORK  
CABLE ADDRESS: "KING EDW. H." N.Y.

I Think My God for you

I

When this cruel world has been unkind  
and left me sad and blue  
At that time I kneel down in prayer  
and I think my god for you.

You always give me with open arms  
to understand each thing I do  
and lend your hand when I am down  
and I think my god for you

H

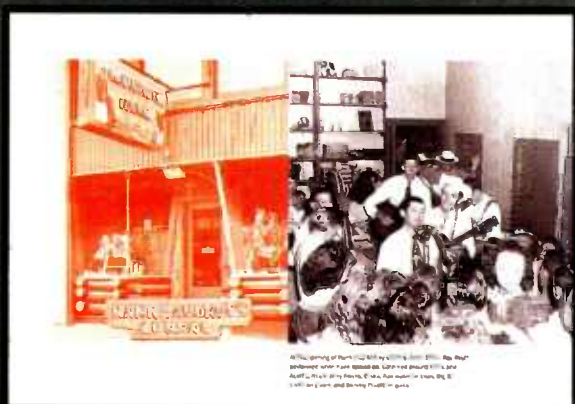
I'm understanding in your eyes  
and love so kind and true  
Make me the richest man on earth  
and I think my god for you

I pray to god to give me strength  
so I can wait for you  
for you my dream my love my life  
and I think my too god for you.

Hank Williams

Oct 11, 1951, in hotel, N.Y. York

ADJACENT TO RADIO CITY TIMES SQUARE - FIFTH AVE



In 1951, Hank & Audrey's Corral (above left) opened as a Western wear store in Nashville. With Williams looking on, Roy Acuff entertained at the premiere gala (above right). The building still stands at 724 Commerce Street.

Scattered throughout the book are numerous scribbled song lyrics in Hank's crude penmanship. "I Think My God For You" (left) was scrawled in New York at the King Edward Hotel on Oct. 11, 1951 – less than 15 months before Williams' death. The song was never recorded.

The magnitude of Williams' stardom is illustrated in this photo of an outdoor performance. Notice that the crowd extends all the way into the woods.



Country music parks were big business in the Northeast in the early 1950s. These outdoor venues featured a partially covered stage, like the one shown here (left). Behind Williams are fiddler Jerry Rivers and bassist Cedric Rainwater.

Most of the photos in *Snapshots From The Lost Highway* came from Williams' sister, Irene, pictured with him in 1926 when they were young children (above left), and again in the 1930s (above right).

Several of the images in the book picture Hank with fans. Although none are identified or dated, this snapshot of a clearly awe-struck boy shaking the legend's hand says it all.



# THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

## DECEMBER

- December 1**  
**1954** Fred Rose dies
- December 2**  
**1954** Daniele Alexander born
- December 3**  
**1916** Rabon Delmore of The Delmore Brothers born  
**1927** Ferlin Husky born
- December 4**  
**1944** Eddy Arnold inaugurates modern recording in Nashville  
**1955** Diamond Rio's Brian Prout born  
**1981** Lila McCann born
- December 5**  
**1901** Singing cowboy Ray Whitley born  
**1967** Gary Allan born  
**1987** Ricky Van Shelton scores his first No. 1 hit, "Somebody Lied"
- December 6**  
**1955** Foster & Lloyd's Bill Lloyd born
- December 7**  
**1931** Bobby Osborne of The Osborne Brothers born
- December 8**  
**1914** Floyd Tillman born  
**1982** Marty Robbins dies



Marty Robbins

- December 9**  
**1938** David Houston born
- December 10**  
**1951** Johnny Rodriguez born  
**1996** Faron Young dies from suicide
- December 11**  
**1944** Brenda Lee born  
**1949** Fiddlin' John Carson dies
- December 12**  
**1972** Hank Williams III born
- December 13**  
**1934** LuluBelle and Scotty wed  
**1949** Alabama's Randy Owen born

- 1954** John Anderson born
- December 14**  
**1899** Deford Bailey born  
**1934** Charlie Rich born



Jimmy Dean

- 1961** "Big Bad John" becomes a gold record for Jimmy Dean
- December 15**  
**1891** A.P. Carter born  
**1928** Ernie Ashworth born
- 1933** Jerry Wallace born
- December 16**  
**1937** Jim Glaser born  
**1997** Nicolette Larson dies
- December 17**  
**1910** Spade Cooley born  
**1966** Tracy Byrd born
- December 18**  
**1964** Cledus T. Judd born
- December 19**  
**1908** Bill Carlisle born  
**1920** Jimmy Dickens born  
**1947** Janie Fricke born  
**1980** *9 To 5* opens nationwide as Dolly Parton's first movie  
**1985** Johnny Paycheck shoots a man in Ohio and winds up in prison
- December 20**  
**1952** Marty Robbins debuts on the charts with "I'll Go On Alone"  
**1999** Hank Snow dies
- December 21**  
**1928** Freddie Hart born  
**1956** Lee Roy Parnell born
- December 22**  
**1921** Hawkshaw Hawkins born  
**1937** Red Steagall born  
**1995** Clint Black's album *One Emotion* goes platinum
- December 23**  
**1967** Jack Greene joins the Grand Ole Opry  
**1969** Willie Nelson's

- Nashville home burns to the ground; he moves to Texas
- December 24**  
**1913** LuluBelle (Wiseman) born  
**1960** NBC radio airs its last *Opry* broadcast
- December 25**  
**1908** Alton Delmore of The Delmore Brothers born  
**1948** Barbara Mandrell born  
**1954** Steve Wariner born
- December 26**  
**1911** Brother Oswald (Pete Kirby) born
- December 27**  
**1978** Bob Luman dies
- December 28**  
**1932** Dorsey Burnette born  
**1958** Joe Diffie born  
**1960** Marty Roe of Diamond Rio born  
**1963** Merle Haggard debuts on the charts with "Sing A Sad Song"
- December 29**  
**1940** Ed Bruce born  
**1983** Jessica Andrews born
- December 30**  
**1931** Skeeter Davis born
- December 31**  
**1920** Rex Allen born  
**1947** Roy Rogers marries Dale Evans  
**1997** Floyd Cramer dies

## JANUARY

- January 1**  
**1953** Hank Williams found dead  
**1994** Faith Hill's debut single "Wild One" becomes a No. 1 hit



Faith Hill

- January 2**  
**1936** Roger Miller born
- January 3**  
**1917** Leon McAuliffe, steel guitarist, born
- January 4**  
**1955** Kathy Forester of The Forester Sisters born  
**1957** Patty Loveless born

- 1966** Deana Carter born
- 1970** Fiddler Clayton McMichen dies
- January 5**  
**1923** Sam Phillips of Sun Records born
- January 6**  
**1924** Earl Scruggs born
- January 7**  
**1930** Jack Greene born  
**1933** WWVA's *Wheeling Jamboree* begins  
**1950** Hank Snow joins the Grand Ole Opry  
**1959** David Lee Murphy born



David Lee Murphy

- 1998** Owen Bradley dies
- January 8**  
**1935** Elvis Presley born  
**1979** Sara Carter dies  
**1983** Reba McEntire scores first No. 1 hit, "Can't Even Get The Blues"
- January 9**  
**1951** Crystal Gayle born
- January 10**  
**1948** Loretta weds Oliver "Mooney" Lynn
- January 11**  
**1911** Western swinger Tommy Duncan born  
**1933** Goldie Hill born  
**1946** Naomi Judd born
- January 12**  
**1905** Tex Ritter born  
**1926** Ray Price born  
**1939** Oak Ridge Boy William Lee Golden born  
**1952** Ricky Van Shelton born
- January 13**  
**1962** Trace Adkins born  
**1968** Johnny Cash records live album at Folsom Prison
- January 14**  
**1929** Billy Walker born
- January 15**  
**1950** David Lynn Jones born
- January 16**  
**1943** Ronnie Milsap born  
**1998** Cliffie Stone dies
- January 17**  
**1955** Steve Earle born  
**1972** Amanda Wilkinson of The Wilkinsons born

- 1992** Garth Brooks' first prime-time special airs on NBC
- January 18**  
**1941** Bobby Goldsboro born  
**1956** Mark Collie born
- January 19**  
**1939** Phil Everly born  
**1946** Dolly Parton born  
**1998** Carl Perkins dies
- January 20**  
**1924** Slim Whitman born  
**1965** John Michael Montgomery born
- January 21**  
**1942** Mac Davis born  
**1987** Dwight Yoakam's debut LP goes gold
- January 22**  
**1952** Alabama's Teddy Gentry born  
**1955** *The Ozark Jubilee* debuts on ABC-TV
- January 23**  
**1940** Johnny Russell born  
**1956** Harley Allen born
- January 24**  
**1936** Doug Kershaw born  
**1939** Ray Stevens born  
**1950** Becky Hobbs born  
**1963** Lonestar's Keech Rainwater born
- January 25**  
**1989** The Judds' *Heartland* album goes platinum
- January 26**  
**1942** Dave Rowland of Dave & Sugar born
- January 27**  
**1968** Tracy Lawrence born
- January 28**  
**1965** Greg Cook of Ricochet born
- January 29**  
**1957** Irlene Mandrell born
- January 30**  
**1937** Jeanne Pruett born



Jeanne Pruett

- 1938** Norma Jean (Beasler) born
- January 31**  
**1995** Jerry Clower's *Mouth Of The Mississippi* goes gold

If sweet revenge exists, Dickey Lee achieved it when he wrote "She Thinks I Still Care." He came up with the doleful ballad by remembering the first time a woman broke his heart, and it wound up hitting the No. 1 spot three times for three different performers.

"When I do it on shows," Lee says, "I tell them, 'I wasn't thinking about writing a hit. I was writing about the first girl I ever fell in love with. She messed me up, but things worked out OK, because George Jones recorded it and had a No. 1 record, then Anne Murray recorded it and had a No. 1 record, then Elvis Presley recorded it and had a No. 1 record. Finally I had enough money to put a contract out on the girl, and I had her killed.'"

Lee's joking, of course – the member of the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame is known for his piercing wit as well as his sharp pen.

Besides writing several other country classics – including Tracy Byrd's "The Keeper Of The Stars," George Strait's "Let's Fall To Pieces Together" and Reba McEntire's "You're The First Time I've Thought About Leaving" – Lee has enjoyed pop and country hits as a performer.

His recording of "Patches" became a Top 10 pop hit in 1962, and his songs "I Saw Linda Yesterday" and "Laurie (Strange Things Happen)" reached the pop Top 20 in 1963 and 1965, respectively. He later moved to Nashville and enjoyed four Top 10s as a country performer: 1971's "Never Ending Song Of Love," 1975's "Rocky" and 1976's "Angels, Roses, And Rain" and "9,999,999 Tears."

A Memphis native born Royden Dickey Lipscomb in 1936, Lee was still in college at Memphis State University when he had a blind date with Beverly Mayer, the woman who inspired "She Thinks I Still Care."

"I was about four years older than she was," he recalls. "I had never

# "SHE THINKS

(Written by

met her, but the reason I had a blind date with her was that she had a hot, good-looking older sister, so I thought, 'If she looks anything like her sister, she'll be great.' "



Dickey Lee in 1962

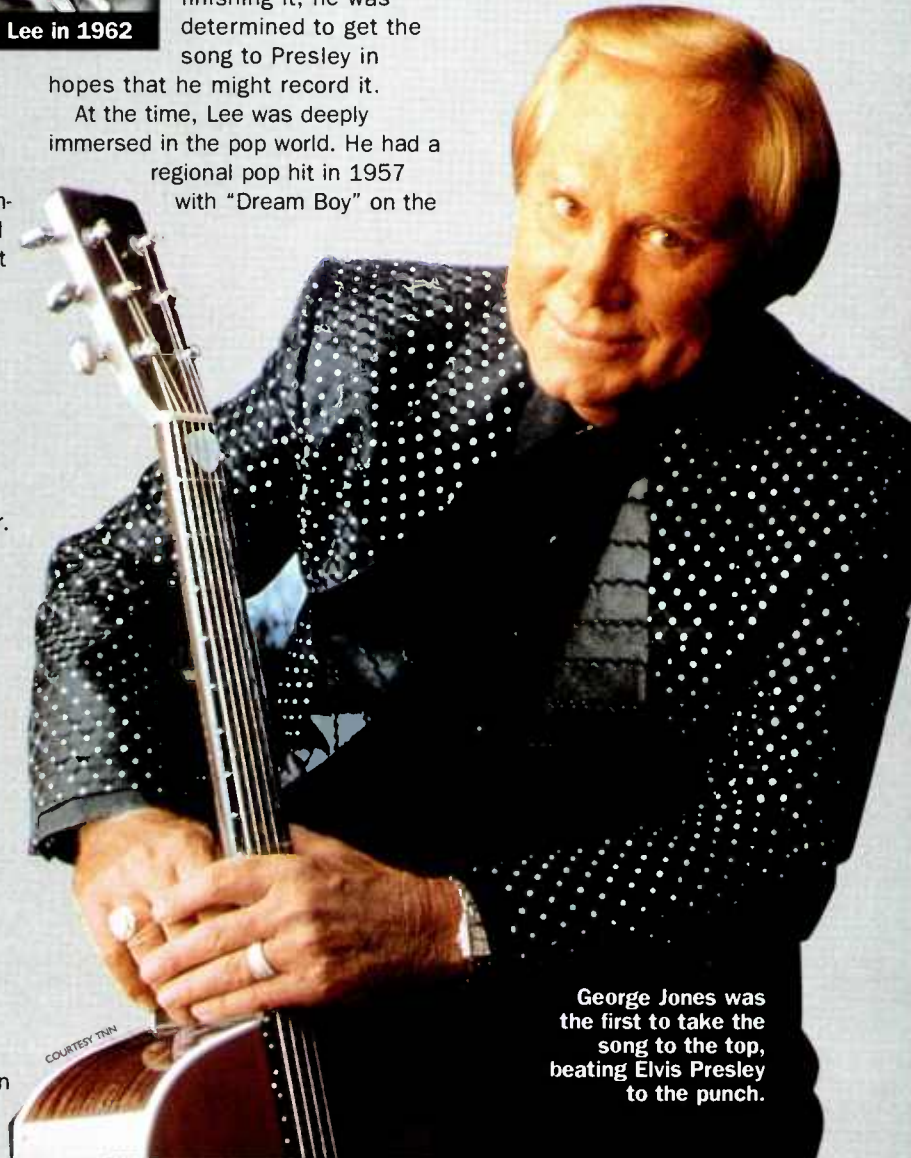
When they stopped dating, Lee started working on "She Thinks I Still Care." As he wrote it, Lee says, he had the voice of Elvis Presley in mind. After finishing it, he was determined to get the song to Presley in

hopes that he might record it.

At the time, Lee was deeply immersed in the pop world. He had a regional pop hit in 1957 with "Dream Boy" on the

Tampa label, and he had recorded for Memphis' legendary Sun label. Through his association with Sun he had met Presley. So when he finished "She Thinks I Still Care," he called Lamar Fike, a member of Presley's inner circle, to pitch the song to the king of rock 'n' roll. Lee never heard back, so he put the song aside and continued on his quest to become a pop star.

By 1962 he was working with former Sun studio engineer Jack Clement and music publisher Bill



George Jones was the first to take the song to the top, beating Elvis Presley to the punch.



# I STILL CARE<sup>”</sup>

(Dickey Lee)

Hall, who had set up a recording operation in Beaumont, Texas. Unknown to Lee, Clement had taken advantage of his location in George Jones' hometown to pitch "She Thinks I Still Care" to Jones. Lee wasn't aware that Jones had recorded the song until it was released in April 1962. It shot to the top spot on the charts and stayed there for six weeks, making it Jones' second biggest hit behind "Tender Years."

Later, as Lee was enjoying some success as a pop singer, Connie Francis became the second singer to enjoy some success with the song Lee had written for Presley. Francis had changed all the *she's* to *he's*, and her version, "He Thinks I Still Care," made a small dent on the pop charts.

When Lee's pop career faded, Nashville welcomed him with open arms. His old partners Clement and Hall had moved to Nashville and in 1969 encouraged him to move to Music City. By 1971 he had embarked on a new career as a country singer.

While in Nashville, Lee chanced into a meeting with Presley, who he hadn't seen in years. Presley asked about "She Thinks I Still



Anne Murray

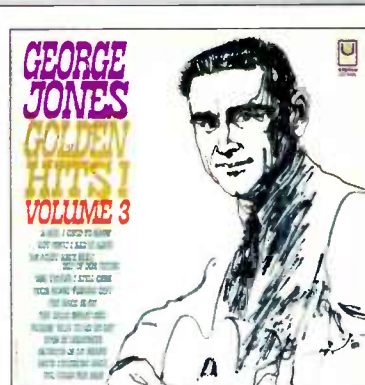
Care," which had recently been a chart-topper for Anne Murray, and he told Lee that he wanted to record it someday.

Lee responded, "I pitched that song to you when I first wrote it!"

Presley told Lee that he had never heard the original demo version of the tune. "I told him, 'I gave it to Lamar,'" Lee recalls telling Presley. The King responded with an angry expletive and a shake of his head. Elvis finally recorded "She Thinks I Still Care." It was released in late 1976 as a two-sided single with "Moody Blue." Once again, it went to No. 1 on the country charts.

Lee had his last chart hit as a singer in 1982, but he still performs on the rock 'n' roll revival circuit and writes country songs.

Meanwhile, "She Thinks I Still Care" is still being recorded. The last count Lee had from his publisher was in the late 1980s, and at that point there were more than 400 versions of the song. And Lee has remained friends with the woman who inspired his song. He reports that Beverly Mayer is now Beverly Mankee, the mother of four grown - and good-looking - daughters.



## "She Thinks I Still Care"

By Dickey Lee

Just because I asked a friend about her  
Just because I spoke her name somewhere  
Just because I rang her number by mistake today  
She thinks I still care

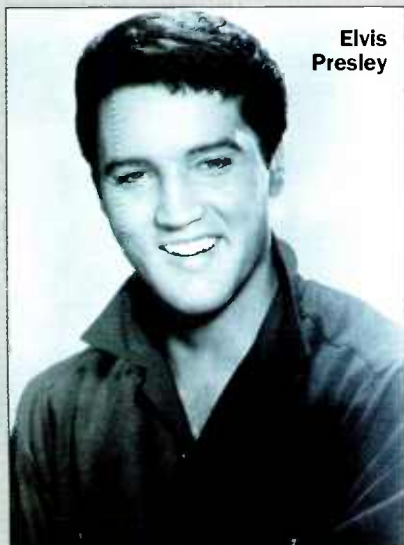
Just because I haunt the same old places  
Where the memory of her lingers everywhere

Just because I'm not the happy guy I used to be  
She thinks I still care

And if she's happy thinking I still need her  
Then let that silly notion bring her cheer  
How could she ever be so foolish  
Oh, where would she get such an idea

Just because I asked a friend about her  
Just because I spoke her name somewhere  
Just because I saw her, then went all to pieces  
She thinks I still care

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Elvis Presley



Since the late 1950s, "Cowboy" Jack Clement has served as producer and mentor to legendary figures like Johnny Cash, Charley Pride, Roy Orbison and Waylon Jennings.

# Star Maker

Veteran producer "Cowboy" Jack Clement is still leaving his mark

By John Lomax III

Jack Clement's concept of retirement apparently resembles that of Garth Brooks. Though Clement vowed to leave the music business a couple of decades ago, he has since recorded rock superstars U2, constructed one of Nashville's most advanced audio-video studios, started several music publishing companies, collaborated with longtime friends Johnny Cash and Charley Pride and written songs with U.S. Senator and former Georgia governor Zell Miller.

Now, at age 70 – nearly half a century after Sam Phillips hired him as a Sun Records staff producer – the man Nashville came to call "Cowboy" is gearing up to become even more active. His reason: To save country music from the banality threatening to choke it to death.

"I'm comin' out of retirement," pronounces the colorful native of Whitehaven, Tenn. "I'm mad as hell and I'm not gonna take it anymore!"

Consequently, Clement is busy working on several upcoming projects with Charley Pride and the winsome Irish singer Cathy Maguire, producing hit songwriter Shawn Camp and re-releasing his only album, 1978's *All I Want To Do In Life*, which he's rescued from AOL Time-Warner's vaults.

Though his bluster may be tongue-in-cheek, Clement's far too accomplished to ignore. A quick survey of his most significant accomplishments touches upon several milestones in American music.

For a start, he recognized the talents of an unknown Jerry Lee Lewis when the Louisiana native boldly walked into Memphis' Sun Studios in 1956. "He told Sun's receptionist he could play

piano like Chet Atkins plays guitar," Clement recalls about the day he met Lewis. "Well, that got my curiosity up, so I said, 'Send him back.'"

True to his word, Lewis proved to be a phenomenal pianist with personal flair and a broad grasp of musical styles. "I told him, 'Country's not happening, we need some rock 'n' roll,'" Clement remembers. Clement produced "Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On," launching Lewis into pop-cultural stardom.



The colorful Clement is coming out of retirement at age 70.

Clement played a role in the development of other Sun superstars. For Johnny Cash, he wrote "Guess Things Happen That Way" and "Ballad Of A Teenage Queen," both of which became country chart-toppers and Top 20 pop smashes in 1958. He later produced many of Cash's hit country albums, and, more than 43 years later, their relationship continues.

Clement beams as he talks of playing on sessions for Cash's next CD. "One time the band was me and

Randy Scruggs. Couple of days later it was me and Norman Blake," says Clement. He also contributed to a recording of John Hartford's "Gentle On My Mind" that's also slated for Cash's upcoming album.

Charley Pride was another of Clement's Hall of Fame discoveries. He convinced Chet Atkins to sign Pride to RCA Records. Clement went on to produce Pride's first 20 albums and wrote the singer's initial hits, "Just Between You And Me" and "I Know One."

"I had to make a speech about Charley at the new Hall of Fame at the induction ceremony," Clement says. "My opening line was, 'Charley Pride turned out to be more than a pigment of my imagination.' I had 'em after that."

Then there's Don Williams, a Clement discovery from his days as the head of JMI (Jack Music Incorporated) Records. Williams posted his first five hits at JMI before jumping to Dot Records. Cowboy's filming of Williams singing "Come Early Morning" in 1972 would be considered a music video today, nine years ahead of MTV's birth.

Williams' JMI albums – *Don Williams, Volume One* and *Volume Two* – also started the production career of Allen Reynolds. Clement had helped convince Reynolds to move from Memphis to Nashville, and Reynolds would later produce hits by Crystal Gayle, Kathy Mattea, Bobby Bare and Emmylou Harris, as well as all of Garth Brooks' smashes.

Clement also produced Waylon Jennings' landmark *Dreaming My Dreams* album, which features "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way," one of Jennings' best-known songs. "If you listen to Waylon sing and play

# JACK CLEMENT

the guitar, when he's right, then that is completeness," Clement says. "Waylon is elegant - he's got a million-dollar thumb. It's a mystery to me why people wouldn't let him play on his own records." Clement worked with legends from outside of country and rockabilly, too. He produced jazz legend Louis Armstrong during his visit to Nashville in 1970. "It don't



**Clement's masterful touch spread in all musical directions, including Louis Armstrong in 1970.**

sound funny at all to me to hear a steel guitar on 'Almost Persuaded' with Louie singing it," Clement says.

When U2 traveled to Memphis to record at Sun Studios, Clement returned to his old home at their request to help record the hit "Angel Of Harlem" and two other songs for the Irish rock band's album, *Rattle And Hum*. "Bono and Adam visited me [in

Nashville] for about four or five days after they'd finished the record and the movie," Clement recalls. "They wanted to go to Tootsie's. This guy who sang there asked me to get up and sing. I didn't want to, but Bono and them coaxed me, so I sang a song or two. Then the guy said, 'Who's that with you?' I said, 'Oh, this is my new writer, from Ireland.' There was only one guy there who knew who they were. They loved that. They wanted Bono to sing one, so he got up - sounded terrible, but he didn't care; he's a funny guy."

That's only a partial list of Clement's accomplishments: He's also produced enduring recordings for The Glaser Brothers, John Prine, Doc and Merle Watson, Carl Perkins, Townes Van Zandt, Roy Orbison and polka king Frank Yankovich.

That said, though, Clement is just as important as a teacher and a catalyst. A virtual who's who of industry figures have worked for, hung out with or been influenced by him over the years. During his so-called "retirement" years, Clement combated Nashville's movement toward corporate sterility by establishing a musical salon, variously called "Cowboy's College of Musical Knowledge" or the "Cowboy Arms Hotel and Recording Spa." The attic of his fully equipped 24-track studio



became a nexus for singers, writers and pickers from all areas of the industry. There they could trade ideas and, most important, play together in an informal setting without time pressures, budget limitations or label supervision. Cowboy's attic became a safe haven where musicians could be musicians.

These days, Clement is glad to explain why the music industry used to be more fun. "There wasn't anything you had to do before you made the music," he asserts. "You'd just walk right in and make the music. You didn't have to mess around getting the drum sound, getting the earphones balanced. We didn't have baffles, didn't have earphones, except when we overdubbed. We just did it acoustically. Sometimes the walls would sing back to you a little bit. It wasn't like singing into a bunch of cotton."

But, Clement offers, he always liked being out of step with the times.

"What I have found is that most of the hit records I've had weren't like the other stuff that was selling at that particular moment," he says. "I don't have trouble going out on the limb. I have trouble getting other people to go out on the limb."

Retired or not, though, Clement still figures there are new universes to conquer.

"The thing I'd like to do best is to go visit some other planets in this galaxy or go visit some other galaxy," he says straightforwardly. "Be a spaceman, that's what my ultimate goal is - to get in a ship and blast off.

"I don't know if I'll ever pull that off."

But if history is any indication, don't bet against him. ☸



**Clement (left) contributes to a 1990 studio recording session of Johnny Cash and the Carter Family.**

# NEW AGAIN NOTEWORTHY DISCOVERIES



## BOB WILLS & HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS

**Boot Heel Drag: The MGM Years** (Mercury - 2 CDs)  
The King of Western Swing was recruited by then-new MGM Records in 1947. Wills had been a hit-making star at Columbia Records for 12 years, but he was far from played out as a creative force. Indeed, these 50 MGM sides are often jazzier and snappier than some of his better-known earlier recordings. Among the highlights are the bandleader's jive-talking interjections on "Dog House Blues" (1947) and "St. Louis Blues" (1954), Herb Remington's deliciously *pinging* steel guitar on "Playboy Chimes" (1947), the ensemble singing on the chorus of "Sally Goodin'" (1947), Laura Lee McBride's famous yodel number "I Betcha My Heart I Love You" (1950) and the fiddling of Johnny Gimble, who joined the Playboys in 1949. Although Western swing was fading in popularity during the MGM years, the band turned in five Top 10 hits for the company: "Keeper Of My Heart" (1948), "Ida

Red Likes The Boogie" (1950), "Thorn In My Heart" (1948) and future standards "Faded Love" (1950) and "Bubbles In My Beer" (1948). All are included. The last song's composer, Cindy Walker, provided Wills with several of his best-known tunes. Her only known recording with the band was 1951's "Three Little Kittens," a hipster ditty that makes its U.S. debut here. Other new U.S. releases include Wills' 1952 tribute to Bessie Smith, "Trouble Trouble Blues," and 1953's ballad "I'm Human, Same As You," ably sung by Playboy Jack Loyd. Enthusiastically recommended.

## MERLE HAGGARD & LEONA WILLIAMS

**Old Loves Never Die** (Bear Family)  
The multitasking Williams should have been a major country star. As fine a writer and singer as any female performer of her generation, her hard-country style somehow failed to click with radio programmers. Things looked up when she married Haggard in 1978 and scored a hit duet with him on



"The Bull And The Beaver." She signed with Mercury Records in 1982. Mr. and Mrs. Haggard recorded a duet LP for the company the following year. It flopped when they divorced shortly after its release. Williams also sang 18 solo sides for the label, 10 of which became her 1984 LP *Someday When Things Are Good*. The 10 duets with Haggard and all of Williams' solo Mercury recordings (including eight that were previously unreleased) comprise the contents of this package. Included are three of her best-known works as a songwriter, "You Take Me For Granted," "We're Strangers Again" and "Someday When Things Are Good."



## JOHN HARTFORD

**Gum Tree Canoe** (Flying Fish)  
Hartford, who died June 4, recorded prolifically in a variety of settings: Sometimes as a solo fiddler or banjoist, sometimes fronting a bluegrass ensemble, sometimes a gentle folkie, sometimes a quirky humorist, sometimes straightforward country and most times

as a champion of old-time string band music. In all settings, he exuded an ebullient charm. On 1987's *Gum Tree Canoe*, producer Jack Clement surrounded Hartford with a warm, engaging sound. Virtually everyone involved turned out to be a virtuoso, from Mark O'Connor and Sam Bush to Jerry Douglas and Marty Stuart. *Opry* star Jeannie Seely sang backup. Rockabilly Billy Lee Riley blew harmonica. And the repertoire included several songs that would remain in Hartford's live show for years - "Lorena," "I Wonder Where You Are Tonight," "I'm Still Here" and the like. And it may surprise some fans to learn that Faith Hill wasn't the first to countrify "Piece Of My Heart." Hartford was. An endearing, enduring gem of an album.

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Old-Time Texas String Bands** (County - 2 CDs)  
Instrumentalists often refer to "Texas-style fiddling." And maybe there is such a thing, today. But the 39 performances from 1925-30 collected on these two records indicate that fiddlers in the Lone Star State were a wildly diverse bunch back in the early days of recording. Country pioneer Eck Robertson is here,



as is the popular string band the East Texas Serenaders. But so are such lesser-known talents as the fine Red Headed Fiddlers, Prince Albert Hunt's Texas Ramblers and Smith's Garage Fiddle Band. Both CDs contain excellent liner notes by Chris King, and beautifully executed, vintage graphics by David Lynch.



## BILL CLIFTON

**Around The World To Poor Valley** (Bear Family - 8 CDs)  
Maryland native Bill Clifton has been bluegrass music's most important international ambassador. He lived in Europe and Asia and traveled and performed in Africa, Australia and the Eastern Block countries. He also organized the first bluegrass festival in 1961 and was a founding director of the Newport Folk Festival in 1963. As this extensive reissue indicates, his true contribution as a performer was in the preservation of hundreds of classic, old-time tunes and traditional melodies. He sings these in a gentle, warm voice that's closer to the coffee-house-folk tradition than to high-lonesome wailing of bluegrass pioneers. His accompanying pickers were always first-rate bluegrassers. It's an engaging sound. And his story, told in a 100-page accompanying hard-bound book, is a compelling one.



# PRECIOUS MEMORIES

FROM THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

## Dressing The Part . . .

For one especially moving night 10 years ago, Reba McEntire chose just the right wardrobe

Reba McEntire was cowgirl elegance in the conservative, two-piece ensemble (right) she wore to welcome then-President George Bush to the 1991 CMA Awards.



BUSH-PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS PROJECT

**O**ne way to track Reba McEntire's career is to watch how she dresses for the CMA Awards.

From early appearances in big hair and cowgirl dresses to the elegant, worldly gowns of the late '80s, to the daring, plunging neckline she revealed in 1993, McEntire's stagewear for country's biggest night often reflected the attitude her music communicated at the time.

In 1991, McEntire's disposition was somber, and she reflected that mood with elegant, tasteful stage attire. Earlier that year, she lost seven band members and her road manager in a pri-

ivate plane crash. And she had just released an album, *For My Broken Heart*, that obviously was influenced by her mournful state of mind.

McEntire hosted the 1991 CMA Awards, and for her duties she chose a conservative two-piece ensemble – a white, beaded top trimmed in gold with a flowing, floor-length skirt custom-made for her by her longtime designer, Sandi Spika. She sang her recent hit, the album's title song, in a performance that moved many viewers to tears.

After she performed, McEntire invited two audience members, President George Bush and First

**Reba's mood was somber – and she reflected it with elegant attire.**



## ... And Parting The Dress

**T**wo years after that somber, poignant CMA night, however, McEntire was in an entirely *different* mood.

When it comes to the famous redhead and the CMA Awards, her most-talked-about appearance came in 1993, when she walked onstage in what fans now simply refer to as *the dress*.

That evening, when McEntire walked out, the crowd audibly gasped. She wore another Spika creation – a burgundy-colored, sparkly lace dress cut down to ... well, to a southern region that left a lot of northern exposure.

By then, of course, McEntire had a reputation for bold moves.

She'd transformed herself from an Oklahoma rodeo cowgirl to a multifaceted, internationally famous entertainer known for her dramatic pop-country ballads and bold up-tempo tunes.

She'd become the owner of a diversified corporation. She'd tackled movie roles. She presented extravagant concerts full of costume changes, choreography and moving stage parts.

However, while always stylish, McEntire in the past had displayed a preference for conservative elegance rather than bold, revealing stagewear. That's why her conspicuously daring dress jolted so many observers. It wasn't that sexy stagewear at an awards show would be unexpected; it was just that, for McEntire, it seemed so out of character.

Her designer, Spika, said that she and McEntire realized the dress might raise a few eyebrows.

"We knew it was a little more revealing than people were used to seeing on Reba," Spika admits, "but she really had fun with it. The next day, we were going to some Nashville interviews and everybody she encountered said, 'Wow, that dress – you looked great!'"

"Then Reba started to joke about it and said things like, 'Sandi didn't tell me I put it on backwards.' It tickles her when people still mention things like that red dress."



At the 1993 CMA telecast, McEntire rolled out a revealing number that left little to the imagination.

BETH GWINNETT

Lacy Barbara Bush, to join her onstage. She referred to President Bush as "my good buddy," and when the Bushes reached the stage, McEntire asked, "I can call you that, can't I?" The president assured her she could and gave her a warm embrace.

Amid a night that swung from a mournful tribute to her deceased band members to welcoming the highest-ranking politician of the Free World, McEntire once again displayed how a performer can express deep emotions while remaining graceful and composed. It was one of many memorably triumphant evenings in her long career.

The dress she wore that evening is now on display at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

For information or to contribute to the Hall of Fame, please contact the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, 222 Fifth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203; phone 615-416-2001; or e-mail [www.countrymusichalloffame.com](http://www.countrymusichalloffame.com).

# COLLECTIONS

**Attention, Readers!** The Collections page is your source for buying, selling or trading country music-related merchandise and memorabilia. Entries are printed at the discretion of the editors. Please keep in mind the following guidelines when submitting your entry: 1) Entries must be kept to 40 words or less. 2) Only one entry per member per issue. 3) We reserve the right to edit for space and style. Please write each other directly about information or items.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Faron Young's biographer** is seeking fans and friends to provide experiences and information that will contribute to a comprehensive biography.

Diane J. Diekman  
25439 Via Adorna  
Valencia, CA 91355-2909  
djean@prodigy.net

**I am writing a book** on Cowboy Copas and need any information you may have on him. Did you see him in concert? What were your impressions?

John R. Simon  
8721 Pond Creek Rd.  
Portsmouth, OH 45663  
740-259-6337

## COMMENTS

**I tell you**, country fans are the greatest in the world. You recently published my request for the Tom T. Hall recording of "Ramona's Revenge." The response was more than a person could ask for. I received at least 10 letters and five tapes through your magazine.

Richard L. Day Jr.  
3785 Laurette Rd.  
Merritt Island, FL 32952  
daytwo@aol.com

**I enjoyed the article** on Henry Ford and his association with country music. But I was surprised at the omission of a very important legacy. I have a Victor disc by Henry Ford's Old-Time Dance Orchestra. This was supposedly made up of musicians who worked on Ford's assembly lines. If anyone knows of any good-condition discs by Henry Ford's Old-Time Dance Orchestra, I would like to hear from you.

Mr. Leslie Van Luvan  
60 Rochelle St.  
Rochester, NY 14612

## QUESTIONS

**When I was a child**, there was a country hit record titled "Tramp On The Street" by Molly O'Day.

Where was she born? Do you have a mailing address where I can write to her? Are her records still available?

Arthur W. Brooks  
PMB 916  
1916 Pike Place #12  
Seattle, WA 98101-1097

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Molly O'Day was born Lois LaVerne Williamson in McVeigh, Ky., on July 9, 1923. She quit country music to become an evangelist and died in West Virginia of cancer Dec. 5, 1987. The German label Bear Family Records issued a two-CD retrospective of her hits.*

**Who sang the song** in 1944 called "That's How Much I Love You"?

Paul Sill  
1702 Sweetwater Rd.  
Greenwood, SC 29646-4354

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Eddy Arnold had a Top 10 hit with this title in 1946. A year later, Red Foley also had a Top 10 with "That's How Much I Love You."*

## WANTED

**I am desperately seeking** these Johnny Cash songs on 45s, cassettes, CDs or albums. "Sold Out Of Flagpoles." "Texas 1947." "The Gambler." Also, artist unknown, "The Sow Song."

Bob Wilson  
4413 Hohman Ave., Apt. A  
Hammond, IN 46327

**I'm looking for** Dolly Parton's song "Robert" on *The Fairest Of Them All*.

M. Julia Crane  
2551 Midland Pk. Rd., #45  
N. Charleston, SC 29406

**I'm interested** in any memorabilia (CDs, tapes, LPs, souvenirs, etc.) of John Conlee.

C. Randy Chapman  
60 Stanmore Ave.  
Kitchener, Ontario  
Canada, N2B 3W2

**Searching for 12 years** for cassette or CD of songs by Tompall

& The Glaser Brothers – the best harmony I have ever heard.  
Charles Rafferty  
197 Burning Tree Dr.  
San Jose, CA 95119

**I would like the words to** "Deepening Snow." Or if someone has the record for sale, I would like to buy it.

Nancy J. Cox  
P.O. Box 407  
Centre Hall, PA 16828-0407

**I'm looking for** a cassette or disc by Jimmy Wakely with the song "One Has My Name. The Other Has My Heart."

Pauline Sharpe  
3805 Desert Ridge Dr.  
Ft. Worth, TX 76116-9449

**I'm searching for** the Skeeter Davis recording *Best Of Skeeter Davis*, including "Now I Lay Me Down To Weep."

Sandra L. Foos  
14202 Sonnenburg Dr.  
Chester, VA 23831-7074

**I'm looking for** the words to "Cowboy Logic" by Michael Martin Murphey.

Danny Lee Warner Jr.  
P.O. Box 250 28341  
Draper, UT 84020

## FOR SALE

**Antique autoharp**, Oscar Schmidt label. Fancy decoration, very good condition.

Also 1963 album *Early Bluegrass* by The Monroe Brothers and Conway Twitty album *Conway Twitty Touch*, both in very good condition.  
Doris Yoakam, R 6  
817A County Road 30A  
Ashland, OH 44805-9228

**Piccoletta 1871**, made by Hohner. Perfect playing condition. Make offer.

Etta K. Gray  
814 Crest View Dr.  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738-4944

**Old double folder** of Cowboy Copas. Also albums by Bob Willis and many more.

Evangeline Rine  
304 W. Orchard St.  
Vandalia, IL 62471-1314

**Music City News magazines**, 1975-1998. \$1 each or 40 for \$30. Joe Diffie clock, works fine. Many LP albums, 1960-1980. Send SASE for information.

Rachel Jones  
1132 N. Oak Crest Ave.  
Decatur, IL 62522



**Trivia answer: Jeannie Seely**

**24 Elvis albums**, including *Aloha From Hawaii* and *Legendary Performer Vol. 3* unopened limited-edition picture disc.

Bob VanOsdol  
P.O. Box 758  
Kimberling City, MO  
65686-0758.

**Selling a collection** of 6,000 LPs – pop, blues, gospel, country, western, including some very old Chuck Wagon Gang albums.

Mart McKeehan  
113 County Rd. 254  
Athens, TN 37303-6898

**My collection of albums** by Conway, Merle, Loretta, George, Tammy, Johnny Cash and many others. Call or write for list.

Lois Bannister  
1005 Brown Rd.  
Belton SC 29627  
(854-225-6556).

**LPs by members** of the Country Music Hall of Fame - Jimmie Rodgers, Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Bob Willis, Merle Haggard and more. Enclose SASE and want list.

Wilfred J. Lerche  
3123 West Larsen Rd.  
Neenah, WI 54956

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# Trey Fanjoy, Video Director

*In the male-dominated world of country music videos, Trey Fanjoy has bucked the system by emerging as one of the most successful directors of recent years. With nearly 50 videos under her belt, Fanjoy was the most nominated video director in any genre at the 2000 Billboard Music Awards. You've seen her work in Lonestar's "Amazed," Chely Wright's "Never Love You Enough," Billy Gilman's "One Voice" and Brooks & Dunn's "Ain't Nothing 'Bout You."*

**M**y job begins when the record company sends me a song and gives me the budget. The average budget for a country video is \$90,000 to \$100,000. I then write a concept for the video with the budget and location in mind. My biggest expense is the crew. I just finished a video that had 175 people working on it.

"After I listen to the music, I come up with my vision for the video and submit a treatment. Ideas can come from the most obscure sources. Sometimes it's a lyrical reference in the song, and sometimes an artist will provide ideas they want to incorporate.

"With Brooks & Dunn, Ronnie had a lot of creative ideas. The big rear screen projection on 'Ain't Nothing 'Bout You' was Ronnie's idea. He had seen it used in a concert and thought it would make a cool visual element.

"With Chely Wright's video 'Never Love You Enough,' I wanted to emphasize how sexy she is. I've always thought she was stunning. The idea came from a line in that song, *If I could have one wish, it would just be this/That I could take you to my soul and show you all the love there is.*

"I wanted the video to be a journey where she shows her lover all the feelings inside her. When you love somebody that way, the love becomes bigger than both of you. I wanted to shoot her in places that were enormous and lush and natural, so that's why I chose Hawaii. It was breathtaking and intensely romantic.

"Making a video usually takes about six weeks from

conception to finished product. Before we begin, I'm involved in everything from wardrobe and location selection to casting actors and extras. Once we have our locations, I prepare a list with the order of the camera shots and the progression of scenes. I know every shot before I walk on

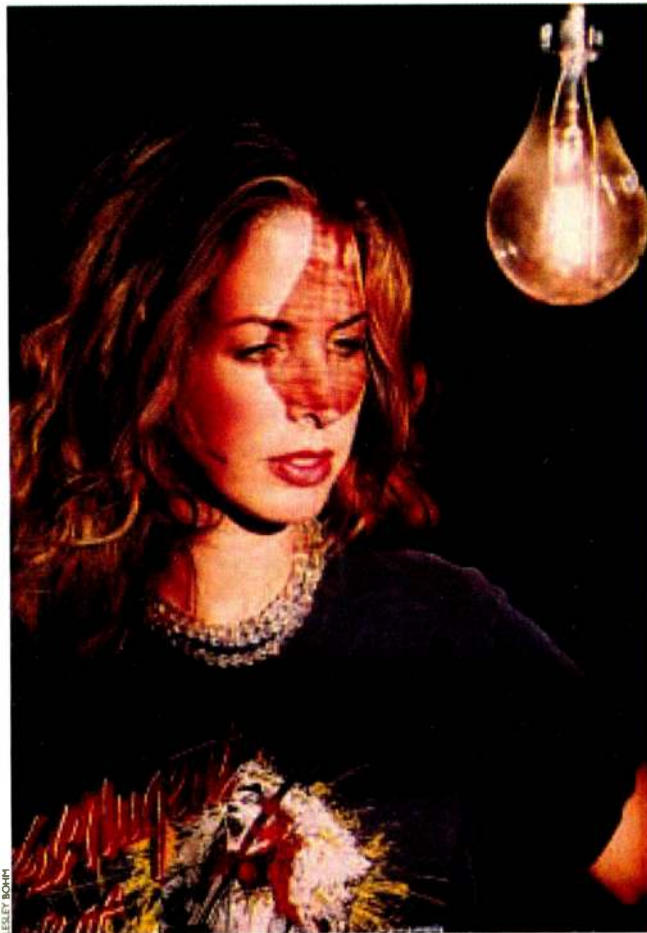
the set. The schedules for music videos are so fast and intense that I don't have time to waste. We usually shoot for two days, 14 hours each day.

"After filming, we do a negative-to-tape transfer. It's like taking a roll of film to the one-hour Photomat. In that process, we correct the color on all of the pictures. It's one of my favorite parts of the process. It's like unwrapping Christmas presents. It's where I see everything we've done. You can change the contrast in your pictures. You can make an artist's eyes bluer or their skin tanner. From there, I go into edit, which lasts three or four days.

"After editing, the label, manager and artist give you their feedback. If they want changes, you make those until everyone is in agreement.

"The best part of my job is working with the artists. In some cases, you

develop great friendships. The worst part comes when the label, manager and artist have conflicting opinions. I've had jobs where everyone had the same goal in mind, but we differed on how to get there. I've had it where a label didn't want something but the artist and manager did. Sometimes you just sit back and let everybody else figure it out." \*



LESLIE ROBIN



# COUNTRY'S CHANGED SO HAS SHE GET OVER IT

After abandoning her original trad-country platform, Chely Wright is now one of Nashville's sexiest new divas – with no regrets

Two years ago, Chely Wright dropped into a recording studio to visit her friend Jo Dee Messina as the redhead finished her third album. Eager for Wright to hear the new tunes, Messina excitedly punched up a few tracks.

by Bob Allen

Wright reacted with genuine enthusiasm, forecasting that several of the songs could be hits. "They better be!" Messina exclaimed. "We've been working on this album for two years."

At the time, Wright was astonished. "Two years? That's insane," she recalls thinking, wondering how it could take that long to record a dozen or so songs.

Now she understands. Just as Messina was under pressure to follow up on the success of songs like "Bye Bye" and "I'm Alright," Wright recorded her new album *Never Love You Enough*, knowing she had one chance to capitalize on the breakthrough she achieved with 1999's smash "Single White Female."

"I knew we had raised the bar," says the 31-year-old brunette.

For that reason, Wright grew nervous after delivering a finished album to MCA Records in the fall of 2000. The more she listened, the more she second-guessed herself. "The tracks were good," she explains. "But they just weren't quite there."

So she and her manager apprehensively approached Tony Brown, president of MCA and one of a platoon of co-producers on *Never Love You Enough*. They hesitantly asked Brown if they could return to the studio and revamp the album – a move that would cost the company money. "When you're a 'baby act' and you ask to move your record release back, the answer is often no," Wright says. "But Tony never balked. He just said, 'Let's do it.'"

At that point, the pressure for Wright increased. Juggling a hectic touring schedule, she buckled down and wrote more songs. She also teamed with songwriting partner Brad Paisley to co-produce a couple of the newer tunes.

What Wright wanted was more substance – songs that spoke candidly to the hearts and minds of mature women, whom Brown pinpointed as Wright's target audience.

In the end, she finished *Never Love You Enough* 17 months after starting

# CHELY WRIGHT

work. The next time she saw Messina, she related how much better she appreciated the work she'd put into her last album.

The end result of Wright's work can be heard on *Never Love You Enough* on such soul-searching odes as "One Night In Las Vegas," "While I Was Waiting," "Her," "Love Didn't Listen" and "Not As In Love." These tortured love songs depict the hard-fought triumphs and nagging disappointments that arise in the never-ending quest for meaningful, lasting adult intimacy.

Wright credits Brown for masterminding her transition to grown-up "anthem girl" – Brown's term for what he believes Wright

**“ I'm not gonna do pole dances or sleep with program directors. But if I have to use every tool in my belt to get my record heard, I'm gonna do that. ”**

does best. "I always thought Tony was one of the best at identifying a sound for an artist and helping them invent their own fingerprint," says Wright, who boldly sought out Brown in 1997 after two previous albums failed to establish her. "Tony really focused me on who I was singing to. He told me, 'Women love you. Usually for a pretty girl, it's hard to get that women demographic, but you're so open and approachable. They really think of you as their anthem girl.' "

Brown's edict hit Wright like a velvet hammer. "I remember thinking, 'Gosh, I've never really thought about who I was singing to!'"

As Wright shares this epiphany, she is picking at a bowl of salsa and chips in a chain restaurant near the Maryland State Fair Grounds, where she'll perform later that evening. Dressed in a sweatshirt and jeans, with hair pulled back and little makeup, she goes unnoticed.

She's cheerful and relaxed, coming across more like a girl-next-door teammate on the neighborhood softball team than the *haute couture* country glamour girl portrayed in publicity photographs and her recent "Never Love You Enough" video.

Obviously, Wright chooses comfort over calculated beauty when she's away from the cameras and bright stage lights. And she once struggled with those who wanted to emphasize the sexy allure of her

natural good looks. "I didn't want to show any skin!" she blurts with an uneasy laugh. "I thought, 'Oh my God! My dad'll kill me!' I grew up in the Midwest, where you don't show your arms and you don't wear short shorts. You just don't do that!"

Wright obviously feels differently now – as evidenced by her agreement to be photographed in a sexy, though clothed, lay-out for *Playboy* magazine. "I've really had some fun with my image lately," Wright adds. "I've been doing some new things with my hair, and some new makeup. And if a magazine says, 'Hey, we think you're pretty, we want to take your picture,' that's fine with me."

Wright readily concedes that in a competitive marketplace she's not above

using her looks to set herself apart from other singers. "I'm not gonna do pole dances or sleep with program directors," she laughs. "But if I have to use every tool in my belt

to get my record heard, I'm gonna do that." But Wright also insists that her new look and updated sound has to do with the woman she is now rather than the girl she was when she arrived in Nashville 13 years ago.

"When I came to Nashville, traditional country was my party platform," Wright admits. "Around my house when I'm vacuuming or hanging out, you'll still find me playing Buck Owens' *Live At Carnegie Hall*, *The Best Of Connie Smith*, Ricky Skaggs' *Waitin' For The Sun To Shine* or Randy Travis' *Storms Of Life*."

But when her tradition-spiced early albums didn't establish her, the Kansas native realized she needed to evolve if she wanted another chance to pursue her dreams of stardom. Making full use of her Midwestern work ethic, she transformed her sound and image from earthy, trad-country singer to sexy, contemporary glamour queen.

"I was a girl when I made my first record, and now I'm a woman," she says flatly. "I've had my heart broken and have maybe broken a heart or two along the way. And I've had some highs and lows, and that all finds its way into my music."

Wright knows that fans don't think of her as a traditional singer. But she has faced comments from music critics who harp on how she's changed since arriving in Nashville in 1988 or since her first record in 1994.

"When I'm asked – or sometimes accused – of selling out, I have to remind people that I'm 31 now," she says with polite defiance. "I've had 13 years of exposure to all different kinds of music. I've learned all about my voice as an instrument, and I'm also very cognizant of what's working and what's not working with country radio right now. You have to remember that since I've been in Nashville the music has changed. It's changed drastically."

Wright's changed, too. And this is one star who's not about to apologize for the success that change has brought her.

"I knew it would be hard when I came to Nashville, and I was ready for that," she says, her face taking on a sober, serious glint. "But there was something else I didn't know, that maybe I wasn't ready for."

She pauses, letting the drama build for a second, then her mock-frown dissolves into a broad grin. "I didn't know it would be this much fun," she laughs. "That's the best part of all."\*

**Producer Tony Brown told Chely that fans think of her "as their anthem girl."**



MORELLO/GHERGIA

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World Radio History

# THE COWBOY RIDES AGAIN

## MY FIGHT TO SURVIVE



For Chris LeDoux, life is a rodeo again after a liver transplant.

MORRISON/WALFRAT

*In the summer of 2000, Chris LeDoux was diagnosed with primary sclerosing cholangitis, the same liver disease that felled Chicago Bears running back Walter Payton. LeDoux's high-energy, virile presence as a performer – and his tough-as-leather background as a rodeo champ – made the news all the more stunning. Without a transplant, many patients with the disease, which erodes the liver, don't survive more than a year or two.*

*In October 2000, LeDoux underwent a successful transplant and continues today in his recovery. We asked him to write a piece for Country Music detailing his ordeal and the emotional upheaval it caused. In the following first-person exclusive, LeDoux shares his life-changing events of the last two years.*

by Chris LeDoux

**T**hey say your body begins to feel its age at 50. It wasn't that way for me. At age 50, I felt like a 17-year-old. I felt great.

I turned 51 on Oct. 2, 1999, and shortly afterward I noticed that I never felt exactly right. At first, I figured age was catching up with me. But it grew worse.

By the summer of 2000, every time I'd hit a stretch of concerts, I'd feel really worn out. I'd go home and rest for a few days and feel fine. Then I'd do a few shows, and feel bad again.

Each time, it was the same, as if I had a recurring case of the flu.

Finally I went to the doctor. I

informed them of my symptoms, and they ran a battery of tests. The doctor came back with the news: I had primary sclerosing cholangitis, or PSC, the same liver disease that football great Walter Payton had. They told me right upfront: I needed a transplant in order to survive.

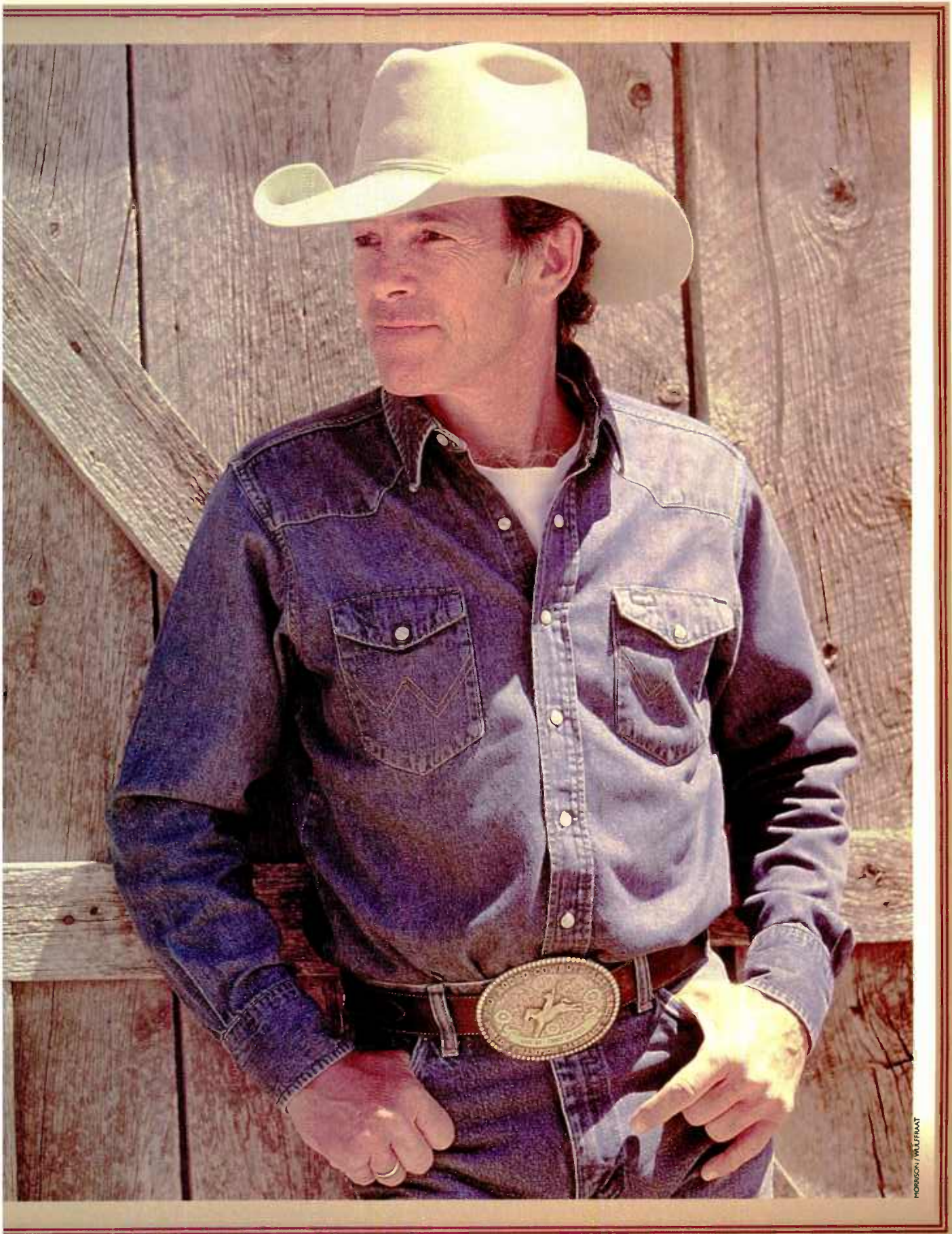
I suppose different people react to such news in different ways. My first thoughts were, 'Well, OK. I've had 50 wonderful years. It's been beyond my wildest dreams to have a life like this. And if I gotta go, I gotta go.'

My wife, Peggy, took it harder. She was much more shocked by the news. But she also proved what an incredibly strong woman she is. She stayed right beside me the entire time. I don't know how I would have made it through all this if not for my family and friends.

Shortly after people began hearing about my condition, calls and letters poured in, including an unforgettable message from my friend Garth Brooks. Out of the blue, he called and said, 'There's no sense looking any further, I'm your guy. I'm going to donate.' [A living donor can safely offer a portion of his or her liver.]

I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe he would do that for me. He went through all the tests and everything, never once showing any doubt about his determination to go through with it. But he wasn't compatible. Once I found out Garth couldn't be the donor, I actually felt relief, because he wouldn't have to go through the risks of what he had proposed.

Amazingly, only two days after Garth



World Radio History

HORNBACH/WOLFRUM



Family and friends: LeDoux with son Ned (left), wife Peggy (above) and making his comeback with a little help from Keith Urban and Charlie Daniels (right).



## CHRIS LeDOUX

left, we were at the University of Nebraska Medical Center when we heard the words we wanted to hear. 'We've got a donor,' they said.

Almost immediately, the transplant took place. Just like that. I didn't really have time to think about it – which was great. I'd rather it get done quick than sit and stew about it. We were fortunate it happened so fast, and even more fortunate that my body accepted the transplanted organ so well.

A week after the transplant, I had another operation. They figured a duct that goes from the liver to the pancreas might become cancerous. So they did a procedure where they take part of the pancreas out and rearrange your insides.

Afterward, we stayed in the hospital for two months. My wife, Peggy, was with me the whole time. My second son, Ned, the one who plays drums with us, stayed to support her and me. The other kids – Clay, Will, Cindy and Beau – spent a few days every other week. Everyone really pulled together.

But I'll tell you, I felt bad. Even after the operation, it was still bad. It was as if my spirit went into a hole and died. All that was left was this shell of a man.

But thanks to my family, my doctors and the Good Lord, I started to come back.

They told me the only way to get up out of the hospital was to walk and eat. They had me up walking in no time. But walking came easier than eating.

I wasn't able to eat for two or three weeks, and I didn't want to. They were telling me I needed the nourishment, but for a long time, I couldn't. Man, it was tough.

Eventually I got strong enough to go home. I still felt like crap, but it was just so wonderful to be back in Wyoming on our ranch.

My first big adventure involved taking walks in the snow. I would take my four iron out of my golf bag and use it for a crutch, and I'd walk through the snow and across the frozen river and up into the hills. It felt so good to be outdoors, smelling the fresh air.

that was to be expected.

Then we flew a red-eye to Nashville to do the *TNN & CMT Country Weekly Music Awards* show. None of us had much sleep but it was so good to be in Nashville with all my friends. When I went onstage, all I could think was that I didn't want to mess up on television. It certainly helped to have my hero, Charlie Daniels, be a part of it. And Keith Urban was such a good sport, having fun with us on guitar.

We blew through those three minutes, and it felt like it went pretty good. Backstage everyone seemed happy to see us. It was nice to feel

**It was as if my spirit went into a hole and died. All that was left was this shell of a man.**

Those walks took a lot out of me at first. I'd get home and stay beat for two days. That was the frustrating part. I thought, 'Man, am I ever going to get my strength back?'

Then, eventually, the sap felt like it was starting to flow again. There would be days where the sun would be just right, and the air would be just right, and I would just feel happy. I really learned to cherish those little moments of joy.

Our first show was at the Crazy Horse Saloon in Irvine, Calif. We got onstage, and it was like we never left. The first night just went so well, it was unbelievable. The second night I felt a little worn, but

that. Then we flew out to Reno, and we felt so good after the Nashville performance that I know it helped us have a great show in Nevada, too. It was a good start to a great summer.

Our crowds have always been good, but there's something that seems just a little extra special now. There's a little something extra you can see in their faces.

I've always been the kind of guy who appreciated every day – the blue sky, the green grass, just being alive. Those feelings are even more keen now. Every aspect of life feels special to me.

It's like, man, I'm into the gravy now! ★



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71M1CY



# Still Swingin'

John Anderson survives by sticking to his guns

**A**s much as he loves to hunt, fish and till vegetables, 46-year-old John Anderson is best known for his one-of-a-kind voice and distinctive way with a song. He's a front-rank Nashville stylist whose vocal cords elastically emit whine and growl in quantities roughly equal, with energies both devilish and soulful.

Like the great George Jones, he hasn't always found material worthy of his voice, but his hits have been many and memorable – "I'm Just An Old Chunk Of Coal (But I'm Gonna Be A Diamond Someday)," "Wild And Blue," "Black Sheep," "Straight Tequila Night," "Let Somebody Else Drive," "Money In The Bank," "Your Lying Blue Eyes" and the 1983 smash that put him on the map, "Swingin'."

At 17 he migrated to Nashville from his hometown of Apopka, Fla., and signed a recording contract five years later. Since then, his name has graced five record labels and 22 studio albums,

including his latest, *Nobody's Got It All*.

As one of the yeomen of New Traditionalism, whose popularity in the '80s saved Nashville from its previous era of pop-preoccupied blandness, Anderson

still stands tall as an inspiration to a new generation of young traditionalists who see in him an artist who forged his own path.

*You were in your early 20s when you got your big break. That was considered awfully young for a new country singer in those days, wasn't it?*

Yes. Back then ... how hard it was, man, to break in when you were young. The perception was that you couldn't sing a country song with soul until you'd lived 30 or 35 years. The first record anyone took seriously was a song called "Your Lying

Blue Eyes." People said, "That sounds like an old man singing that song." Maybe that was the reason that they took it serious. I just treated the song like I heard the guy that wrote it sing it. I heard him play it on acoustic guitar, and I knew right then if I could record that song I could have a hit. At that time to even make a statement like that would've been foolish. A hit seemed so far away for a starving wannabe singer.



Even when he was starting out as a young man in the early '80s, Anderson could belt hard-core country with the soul of a veteran.

LES LEVRETT

Anderson has always cut his own path, which has often led to friction with record labels. "There were situations with record companies where it would've saved me a quarter-million dollars if I wouldn't have been so bullheaded," he admits.



COURTESY THE PRESS OFFICE

**How starving were you?**

'Bout as starving as one can be – taking anything you could get to play anywhere in town and picking up whatever odd jobs you could to sustain yourself with food and rent until the next day.

**As unusual as your voice is, you can still hear the influence of classic country singers in it.**



**"Swingin' " before he could even walk.**

COURTESY JOHN ANDERSON

When I first started singing where people could hear me, I leaned on Merle Haggard. When I moved to Nashville, the first thing everybody wanted to make sure I knew was that "Merle Haggard don't need no damn help, boy. He's just doin' fine by hisself." In that same time I'd become familiar with George Jones, and I really loved George, too. So between the two of those guys is where I picked up my stuff. On the other hand, there was always a little bit of rock 'n'

roll background and influence in me that neither one of them ... well, that they don't show much. There was always a side of me that wanted to rock – "Swingin' " and "Black Sheep," even "Tokyo, Oklahoma." In "Swingin'," that's when I knew it was okay to be me.

**Many people criticize country today as being bland. What do you think?**

A lot of that comes from not wanting to step on too many boundaries. I've always said I think the country music fans have a lot more depth to 'em than the industry

or radio give 'em credit for. Country fans can understand just about anything you can come up with. The concept lately has been, "Don't get out of these guidelines or we probably can't play it." To my disadvantage, I live out of those guidelines.

**Looking back, do you see anything you'd do differently?**

There were situations with record companies where it would've saved me a quarter-million dollars a pop if I wouldn't have been so bullheaded. If I would have just went in and made a



**Striking gold in 1994**

LARRY KAPLAN



**Anderson credits his tight-knit family – daughters Alexa and Brianna and wife Jamie – for keeping his career in balance.**

COURTESY THE PRESS OFFICE

record and got a couple hundred grand instead of saying, "Naw, forget it, we want out." Sometimes it might've been better to stay. On the other hand, I can't say that I'm sorry.

**You were friends with Rick Danko of The Band, who died in 1999. You've seen a lot of fellow musicians die over the years.**

I sure have. Over either stress or the substance abuse that comes from stress. It's just the lifestyle. It's tough. It's tough on me, and I'm still pretty young at it.

**How have you managed to elude the traps that caught so many others?**

When I have time off, I stay with my family and go into the woods hunting or fishing, where I couldn't fall into those traps. They've killed a few friends of mine, dear friends and great talents. I'm talking about some guys that really made it. But did they make it, after all? Me, I've been on my way to finding inner peace for the last few years, trying to get to where it doesn't matter so much if the record is a hit. Trying to live with it and still do the best music I can and hope I've still got enough fans out there that'll sustain it. What would be sad for me is if there would be no reason to write or sing anymore. I heard Johnny Cash say once, "How do you retire from being Johnny Cash?" I'm finding myself in that same position. I can't retire from being me.

— Jack Hurst

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# REVIEWS



## THE DERAILERS Here Come The Derailers

LUCKY DOG

★★★★★

Roots-rockers, take note. Sure, you can deck yourself out in the appropriate Western-wear duds – Nudie suits, needle-nose cowboy boots, George Clooney pomade – just like Texas troubadours The Derailers. But all show and no go does not make a retro-combo great. You've gotta have songs, and this band's got 'em in spades.

Baritone-voiced Tony Villanueva and tenor-timbred co-guitarist Brian Hofeldt must've been born inside a classic country jukebox. They've got every note, every vintage nuance right; their clever three-minute nuggets might've come from a Texas jukebox, circa '62.

*I'm taking the bar exam under a neon sign/I'm gonna graduate when you're off my mind,* bellows Villanueva in the foot-stomper "Bar Exam," which, like the songs of the brilliant Roger Miller, manages to sound simultaneously cornpone and well-crafted. Ditto for "Your Guess Is Good As Mine," with its handclap rhythm, Duane Eddy-styled lead guitar and witty fortune-teller angle.

The band isn't afraid to kick up some dust with an instrumental, either. "Country A Go-Go" is exactly what its name implies, a groovy go-go hip-shaker set to a laid-back Chet Atkins beat (and, of course, the requisite pedal steel whine).

Think compositions this kitschy are child's play? Think again, Jethro – it takes studious determination to piece

together these components until they solidify into something fresh and new. These guys tackle their old-fashioned sound with such genuine class that they do great honor to historic country music while also having a bit of fun with it. As in those old *Beverly Hillbillies* episodes, where outrageous backwoods image was always underpinned by a sagelike wisdom, The Derailers are more than just the sum of their swell suits. Much, much more.

— Tom Lanham

## MARTINA MCBRIDE Greatest Hits

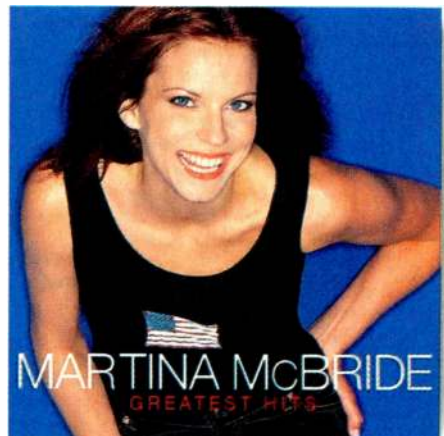
RCA

★★★★★

With extra-large pipes packed into a pint-sized frame, McBride remains one of country music's most likable stars. She's also managed the difficult trick of maintaining her country credentials while extending her fame into the larger world of popular music. After six albums, it was high time for a best-of collection to summarize McBride's career so far, and this 18-song CD proves that she has a solid ear for songs and a high sense of drama when it comes to delivering them.

Most of her biggest hits are here, among them "Independence Day," "Safe In The Arms Of Love" and "Whatever You Say," as well as her twin Top 10 soundtrack hits, "I Love You" from *Runaway Bride* and "There You Are" from *Where The Heart Is*.

Nitpicking over song selection is common for greatest-hits albums, and a number of McBride's best songs are missing, including her version of Matraca Berg's "Cry On The Shoulder Of The Road" from *Wild Angels*.



### Country Music rates all recordings as follows:

- ★★★★★ **Excellent.** A classic from start to finish.
- ★★★★ **Very Good.** An important addition to your collection.
- ★★★ **Respectable.** Recommended with minor reservations.
- ★★ **Fair.** For loyal and forgiving fans.
- ★ **Poor.** Seriously flawed.

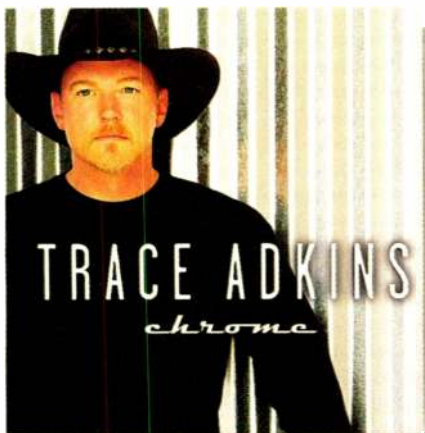
..... Ratings are supervised by Country Music editors.

It's also become common for hits retrospectives to feature new songs, and McBride tacks on four – including the recent hit “When God-Fearin’ Women Get The Blues,” a full-on, Dobro-tinged rocker that shows off her ability to adopt an aggressive attitude while letting her phenomenal voice wail. Another new song, “Where Would You Be,” is the kind of soaring ballad that McBride always nails.

“Concrete Angels” is the weakest new track, though it finds McBride once again focusing on an important social issue – in this case, child abuse. The new song listeners might find most striking is a gorgeous, mid-tempo tune, “Blessed.”

Again, while every greatest-hits collection is a series of compromises, this generous package does a credible job of summing up the highlights of McBride’s past and hinting at what the future still holds.

— Robert Baird



**TRACE ADKINS**

**Chrome**

CAPITOL

★★★★

Trace Adkins has led one interesting life. The 6-foot-6-inch, 250-pound, self-proclaimed roughneck is articulate enough to debate issues on TV’s *Politically Incorrect* and resilient enough to survive a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico, a bullet through his heart and three label presidents at Capitol Nashville.

On this, his fourth album, Adkins shows what he’s made of – stylistically, conceptually and vocally. The production tag team of Trey Bruce and Dann Huff deserves credit for *Chrome*’s contemporary leanings, as well as showcasing Adkins’ penchant for perfect

phrasing and rhythmic mastery.

The album’s lead-off single, “I’m Tryin’,” offers a melancholic portrait of a tired but tenacious real man, and it’s a knockout. The lyrics gives the song heart, but it’s Adkins’ expressive, Mississippi-wide baritone that gives it soul; it’s a fine reminder that Adkins has one of the best voices in the business. He also sounds particularly powerful on the ballads “Help Me Understand” and “Love Me Like There’s No Tomorrow.”

But then comes the fun. Adkins tackles the raucous, funky, talking-verse title cut with gusto – and success. “Scream,” while reminiscent of the smoldering sexuality first heard in “I Left Something Turned On At Home,” is an audacious rocker. He even makes us giggle in the alternately funny and wistful “I’m Goin’ Back,” another cadenced, humorist’s vision of a country boy in L.A.

How heartening to hear this huge talent, who once said life is all about sex and pain, add fun to that worldview. Simply put, *Chrome* shines.

— Charlene Blevins

**BLAKE SHELTON**

**Blake Shelton**

WARNER BROS.

★★

In Nashville, when Bobby Braddock speaks, people tend to pay attention. Braddock may be best-known as one of country’s most notable songwriters, but the fact that he produced newcomer Blake Shelton certainly brought attention to the young singer from Oklahoma.

Because Braddock has written some of country music’s most enduring songs – “D-I-V-O-R-C-E,” “He Stopped Loving Her Today” and “Unwed Fathers” among them – he has every right to complain about the shallowness of today’s country songs. Braddock makes himself clear when he steers Shelton through “Same Old Song,” which states: *I’m tired of the same old guy with the same old song/About the same old love that goes on and on/The same old guitar and the same old strum/I may be country but I’m not dumb.* These are noble sentiments, but after hearing Shelton’s self-titled debut, a question arises: Why does the lanky Oklahoman end up sounding like “the same old guy”? Why do these tunes – written by Shelton, Braddock and the usual Music Row suspects – sound like “the same old song”? Why do these arrangements

**PAT GREEN**  
*three days*



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sound like “the same old strum”?

Shelton has already scored a No. 1 single with “Austin,” a melodramatic story ballad similar to hits by Tim McGraw, Brad Paisley and John Michael Montgomery. “Every Time I Look At You” mirrors the country-rock of Montgomery Gentry and Travis Tritt. “Problems At Home” assumes that making a list of social problems equals having something to say about them.

To his credit, Shelton does have a strong, vibrant tenor, and he shines on good material, such as the comic “All Over Me” or the bluesy “Ol’ Red.”

But, at this point, Shelton should realize that complaining about cookie-cutter acts on Music Row has become just another cookie-cutter move.

— Geoffrey Himes

**GARY ALLAN**

**Alright Guy**

MCA NASHVILLE

★★★

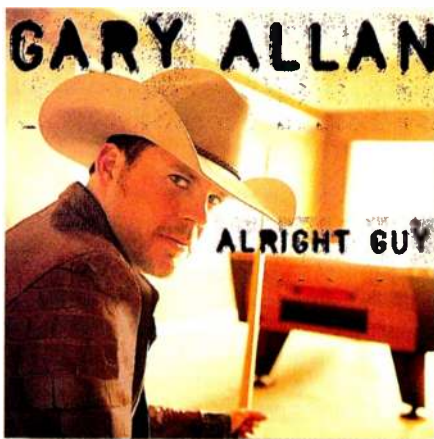
Gary Allan has never been the typical Nashville star. While his peers follow the latest trends and meander the middle of the road, Allan holds hard to his California honky-tonk roots and refuses to deny his rocking side. He also goes for the jugular in song selection, pushing the envelope for radio and carving out a niche for himself as a performer who cares more about music than fame.

On *Alright Guy*, Allan makes a few more atypical moves. The first hit, “Man Of Me,” comes with a video so full of sexual heat that televisions practically smoke whenever it airs. The song rocks harder than anything else he’s done, and he pairs the randy rhythm with a vocals that convey the bravado of a man who feels he can do almost anything on the

strength of his woman’s love.

A versatile performer, Allan is equally at ease with the elegant, once-around-the-Starlight-Ballroom sound of “Adobe Walls” and the hellfire and brimstone warning of “The Devil’s Candy.”

But the album doesn’t quite carry the heft of Allan’s previous efforts. “What’s On My Mind,” Jim Lauderdale’s chicken-pickin’ honky-tonker, is best done by Lauderdale himself, as is Bruce Robison’s folky, tongue-in-cheek paean to the Red-Headed Stranger, “What Would Willie Do.” Furthermore, Allan steps out on a shaky limb on Todd Snider’s rebellious title tune, which contains lyrics that might offend conservative country fans. The song is over-the-top even for a progressive



performer like Allan, and he reprises that out-of-control persona with “I’m Doin’ My Best,” in which a jilted lover works out his frustration in self-destructive acts.

Still, *Alright Guy* is a thoroughly enjoyable set. If it finds the star in transition, it nonetheless proves what he established long ago: This is one unpredictable performer, in the very best sense of the word. Boring he’s not.

— Alanna Nash

**THE DEL MCCOURY BAND**

**Del And The Boys**

CEILI

★★★

People speak of the rhythmic drive and the emotional heart that exists at the core of the best bluegrass music. There’s another important element, too: balance. And no current bluegrass group makes better use of its balance of talents and influences than The Del McCoury Band.

The title of the quintet’s new album, *Del And The Boys*, implies the secret

behind these six-time IBMA Entertainers of the Year: They have achieved an exemplary balance between hard-driving traditional bluegrass and song-oriented newgrass.

That balance comes from within. The silver-maned Del, an alumnus of Bill Monroe’s Blue Grass Boys, personifies mountain-music traditions. The “Boys,” Del’s baby-faced sons Ronnie and Rob, bring in progressively arranged newgrass sounds.

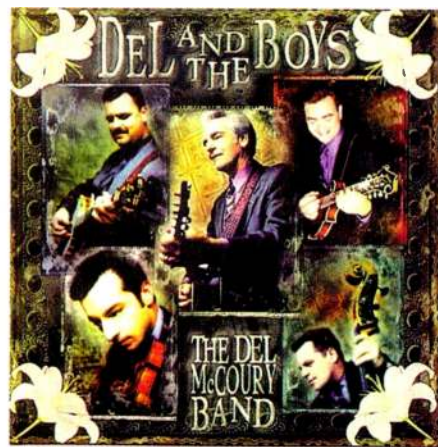
The balance works in the studio as well: Father Del sings leads and sets the rhythm with his insistent guitar chop, while mandolin-playing Ronnie produces, leads the band and suggests the unusual repertoire.

All members – banjoist Rob McCoury, fiddler Jason Carter and bassist Mike Bub – are disciplined players who highlight Del’s bluesy inflections and on-top-of-the-beat pulse. But they also take musical liberties that Del’s generation would never have considered. The band once again ranges far afield for material, from British folk-rocker Richard Thompson (“1952 Vincent Black Lightning”) to Frank Sinatra (“Learning The Blues”) to country singer Jeanne Pruett (“Count Me Out”). The band even coaxes a new tune from Country Music Hall of Fame songwriter Cindy Walker, who provides a soulful romp, “The Bluegrass Country.”

The group’s versatility wouldn’t be possible without the band’s free-wheeling solos, Ronnie’s imaginative song-scouting and Del’s authenticity and rock-solid groove.

As the title *Del And The Boys* simply yet smartly suggests, the band needs all these parts to be as great as they are.

— G. H.





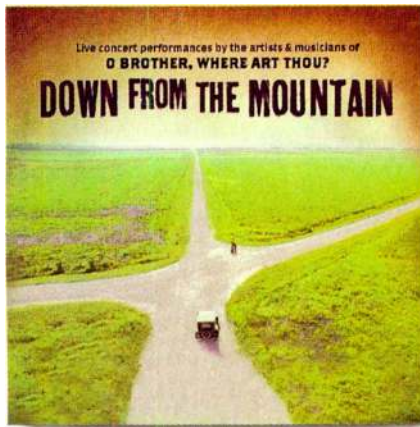
# REVIEWS

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Down From The Mountain**  
 LOST HIGHWAY  
 ★★★★★

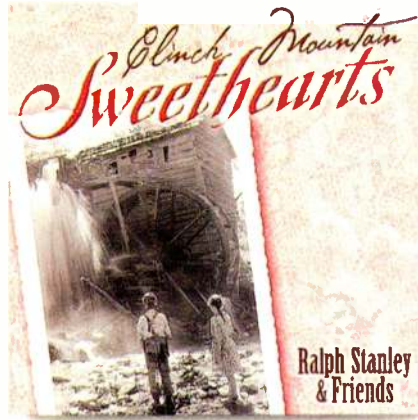
**RALPH STANLEY & THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS**  
**Clinch Mountain Sweethearts**  
 REBEL  
 ★★★★★

When the musicians involved in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* performed at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium on May 24, 2000, the film's soundtrack hadn't yet been released. It had not found its destiny atop the country charts, or become a rallying point for roots musicians everywhere.

Instead, it merely offered a good excuse for several of Nashville's more open-minded artists to indulge their love of mountain and Delta-roots music. That off-handed pleasure is captured in *Down From The Mountain*, a Ryman concert documentary by D.A. Pennebaker (*Don't Look Back*) and Chris Hegedus (*The War Room*).



Now the documentary has its own soundtrack, an *O Brother* sequel of sorts. *Down From The Mountain* repeats only three numbers from its platinum predecessor, and only one – Gillian Welch and Alison Krauss' "I'll Fly Away" – is even performed by the same act as the soundtrack cut. In their places, instead, are new versions of "Po' Lazarus" and "Big Rock Candy Mountain" by the Fairfield Four with the late John Hartford, and 10 more songs by Emmylou Harris, Chris Thomas King, The Whites, The Cox Family and others.




Highlights include two tunes by the original Soggy Bottom Boy himself, Dan Tyminski – who leads his *other* band, Alison Krauss & Union Station, through two infectious, rocking old-time tunes, "Wild Bill Jones" and "Blue And Lonesome," as if he were sporting George Clooney's fake beard. Though it lacks the studio precision of *O Brother*, *Down From The Mountain* offers superb singing and blues, gospel and hillbilly playing.

Ralph Stanley is the only big name missing from the *Mountain*, chiefly because he was saving new versions of "Oh Death" and "Angel Band" for his own album, *Clinch Mountain Sweethearts*. Featuring 16 duets with female singers ranging from Joan Baez to Sara Evans, *Sweethearts* is Stanley's third celebrity-duet project, following 1993's *Saturday Night & Sunday Morning* and 1998's *Clinch Mountain Country*. All of them are outstanding, but *Sweethearts* bests them all.

Roused into stirring performances, Stanley bites the same high-tenor parts he once sang with his late brother Carter. But the women sing their parts an octave up, creating a sound that's especially high and lonesome. The result makes such duets as "Oh Death" with Gillian Welch heart-shivering in their power and desperation.

The guests touch on contemporary country (Chely Wright on "Angel Band"), traditional country (Melba Montgomery on "You Win Again"), alt-country (Lucinda Williams on "Farther Along") and blood harmony (Ralph's daughter-in-law Kristi Stanley on "I'll Never Grow Tired Of You"). Dolly Parton continues her winning bluegrass streak with a terrific "Loving You Too Well."

But no one better echoes Carter Stan-



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ley or pushes Ralph harder than Iris DeMent, who delivers classic bluegrass readings of "Riding On That Midnight Train" and "Trust Each Other."

Right now, with the spotlight brighter on Stanley than ever before, he delivers yet another classic album that underscores his special spot in the annals of American music.

— G. H.

**ALISON KRAUSS & UNION STATION**

**New Favorite**

ROUNDER

★★★★

Alison Krauss habitually alternates between solo albums and collections featuring her band, Union Station. Since 1999's *Forget About It* was credited to Krauss alone, it's now time for the group to step forward.



The timing proves fortuitous: With Union Station member Dan Tyminski currently providing vocals for "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" on the million-selling *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* album, and with Krauss providing a couple of key tracks to the same soundtrack, it's the perfect moment for the entire band to flex its collective muscle.

In many respects, *New Favorite* is a typically wondrous Union Station release; the most noticeable change comes from new member Jerry Douglas, the esteemed Dobro master, who replaces departed mandolinist Adam Steffen. However, *New Favorite* also sharpens the group's virtues, as Krauss and company once again transform traditional bluegrass into a contemporary sound best characterized, perhaps, as "acoustic country."

This time out, Krauss turns over the traditional-leaning, banjo-propelled num-

bers to the male vocalists. Tyminski's fierce tenor bolsters three tracks, sounding particularly stunning on the ominous "The Boy Who Wouldn't Hoe Corn," while banjoist Ron Block sings his own "It All Comes Down To You."

For the most part, Krauss concentrates on utilizing the breathtaking fragility she can coax from her ethereal soprano. The exception is the hard-driving "Take Me For The Longing," on which the 30-year-old singer really lets it rip. Otherwise, her voice was born to convey the aching, tender side of love. Whether dreaming of an unattainable lover on "Stars" or confronting heartbreak on the title track, Krauss draws out emotions with beautiful, believable vulnerability.

Indeed, *New Favorite* is the sound of a great band at the height of its prowess and power. Instead of playing it safe and capitalizing on its current popularity, Union Station continues to forge a freshly modern sound of its own.

— Stuart Munro

**PAUL BREWSTER**  
**Everybody's Talkin'**

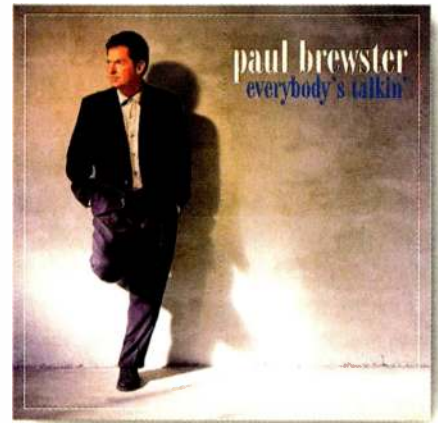
CEILI

★★★★

If you think bluegrass and contemporary country music belong on opposite sides of a high wall, prepare to have your beliefs challenged. On his debut solo album, Paul Brewster – who provides high tenor harmony for Ricky Skaggs and his band Kentucky Thunder – here presents a collection that ranges from bluegrass classics to originals that could, with slight alteration, fit comfortably on today's country radio.

In other words, Brewster is a musician who listens to his heart rather than paying attention to walls.

Brewster is a good – no, make that great – singer. His high-pitched voice may take some adjustment for listeners who haven't heard much bluegrass. But his sweet, full tenor undeniably comes straight from his soul. He brings these songs to life with a direct, intimate tone that captures each mood and story, whether it's Kris Kristofferson's tale of a man devoted more to building a castle than to his young wife in "Darby's Castle," Bill Monroe's enduring "Kentucky Waltz" or Brewster's own reflection on religious faith, "It Is Finished." "Teresa's Song," a tender address to his wife, serves as the album's heart.



To provide instrumentation and harmonies, Brewster turned to boss-man Skaggs and most of his Kentucky Thunder bandmates, seasoned Nashville veterans like Stuart Duncan and Kenny Malone, and – on one song each – Lee Ann Womack and Dolly Parton. From the hard drive of "Roll Muddy River" to the sorrowful ballad "Don't Go," the supporting staff adds just the right touches at the right times while keeping the focus where it belongs: on the songs and the singer.

Brewster has long been a favorite of bluegrass fans, first as a member of the Knoxville Grass (whose second album was titled, coincidentally, *Darby's Castle*) and then with the Osborne Brothers, who recorded "Roll Muddy River" in the late 1960s. It's great to hear him step into the spotlight with such a powerful, moving album.

— Jon Weisberger

**WAYNE HANCOCK**  
**A-Town Blues**

BLOODSHOT

★★

Wayne Hancock must record in a time machine. On *A-Town Blues*, his fourth album and first for Bloodshot Records, he once again returns to those years between the start of World War II and the end of the Korean War when country music routinely caught the "A" train uptown to borrow a bit from swing. As Hancock sings on a cover of the 1942 hit "Cow Cow Boogie," his music has a *knocked-out Western accent with a Harlem touch.*

What are we to make, in 2001, of a performer who remains so defiantly retro? Sadly, Hancock's only advantage over his influences is that he's not dead; otherwise, he wouldn't measure up to the

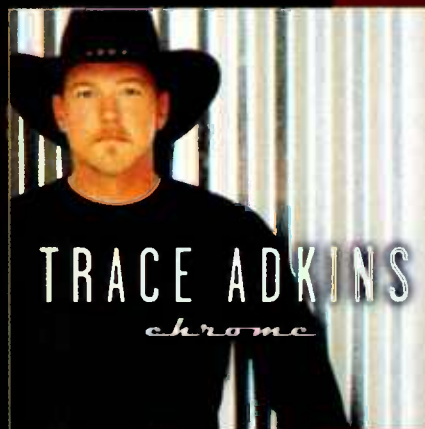
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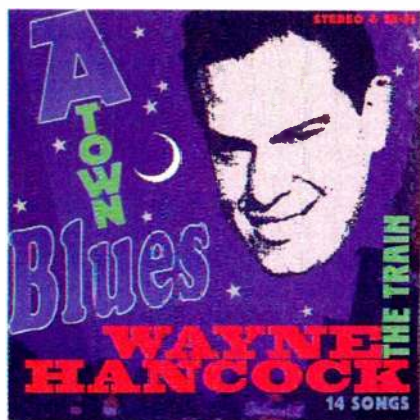


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competition. Nonetheless, his live shows faintly echo what it might've been like to visit a honky-tonk or dancehall midway through the last century. For those who weren't around then, Hancock's club gigs are a real gift.

But *A-Town Blues* isn't a nightclub concert. It's a studio recording that demands comparison to the classic 78s upon which it's consciously modeled. By this standard, Hancock's music falls short. His pinched tenor is pleasantly soulful but indistinctive; his original songs are period-perfect but generic. Then again, who could be expected to match the swingin' honky-tonk of Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell or Floyd Tillman, all of whom still have recordings available on CD?

Still, Hancock's hillbilly bop carries its own charms: pedal steel man Jeremy Wakefield whizzes and wails away impressively throughout; the singer offers a fetching reading of the Tin Pan Alley chestnut "We Three"; and on his own "Miller, Jack & Mad Dog," his message comes as close as *A-Town Blues* ever gets to evoking the world in which we live.

— David Cantwell

**DRY BRANCH FIRE SQUAD**

**Hand Hewn**  
ROUNDER

★★★★

After 24 years and 15 albums, Dry Branch Fire Squad certainly can't be accused of jumping aboard the current trad-music bandwagon.

Long before *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* spawned a bluegrass revival, singer and mandolinist Ron Thomason remained committed to a traditional approach to bluegrass and old-time mountain music. His lone concession to

modernism came when he included electric steel guitar on a previous album — a move that still sparked protests from some fans of the Southern Ohio quintet.

Thomason may be a purist, but there's nothing academic about the Dry Branch sound. Their love for what they do permeates every lick, just as their reverence for the past shines through on traditional tunes like "Angelina Baker," which dates back as far as Stephen Foster, and on updates of material by such bluegrass giants as Ralph Stanley and Hazel Dickens.

Thomason gives his bandmates plenty of room to stretch and strut. Suzanne Thomas offers a solo turn on "The Cuckoo Is A Pretty Bird," which she sings beautifully and tops with fluent banjo accompaniment. It's the album's highlight.



Elsewhere, "I Can Go To Them" and "I'll Live Again" are traditional Southern Gospel numbers showcasing the Squad's harmonies, while the instrumentals "Nazeer Nazeer" and "Lonesome Road Blues" add a breezy bounce.

But the unequivocal showstopper is the coal-mining lament "Black Lung," a heart-rending duet performed a cappella by Thomason and Dickens, who wrote the song.

*Hand Hewn* is organic and crafted with love, and it fully displays how Dry Branch Fire Squad puts a fresh spin on tradition, rather than merely paying homage to it.

— Kerry Doole

**BILLY BOB THORNTON**  
**Private Radio**

★★★

The world of Billy Bob Thornton is a quirky and intriguing place. Whether

on-screen or in provocative magazine spreads, the actor/rebel/raconteur has made an art out of serving up a certain I'm-not-as-dumb-as-you-think-I-am, good ol' boy duality. He talks like a hick, then leans over the counter of his bait-shop personae to recite the Bard. Kiss my you-know-what.

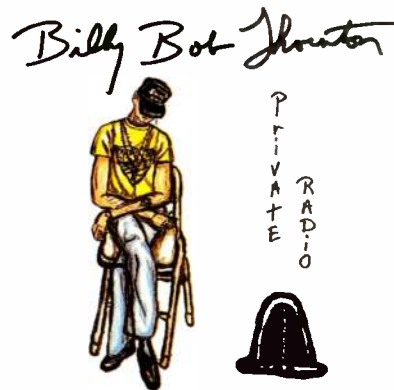
On his recording debut, Thornton further opens the screen door on his brilliant universe. The result is an experimental album stewed in his South-meets-Sartre schtick and served up with bluesy guitar riffing, country-rock, roadhouse rave-ups and lonely acoustic guitar — all produced by the non-formulaic hands of Marty Stuart.

Bringing it together is Thornton's thick Arkansas accent. Sometimes he sings, but more often he speaks his words with a careful, rhythmic cadence reminiscent of a Cowboy Channel narrator. It's Leonard Cohen meets Kris Kristofferson.

The rhyming hooks and cooing background singers make "Angelina," a Tom Petty-like ode to Thornton's wife, the album's most accessible tune. "Walk Of Shame," built around a jangly Byrds guitar, features cheap-motel lyrics about a one-night stand — *The mirror told her the magic disappeared with the night.*

But Thornton's work is most interesting when he doesn't play it safe. "Beauty At The Back Door" is a 10-minute, stream-of-consciousness recitation in which he describes his childhood home like a Southern writer over his third pitcher of beer. Meanwhile, "Forever" opens with the scratch of a match and a long hard swallow of sweet tea, while the witchy opener, "Dark And Mad," sounds like Carlos Castaneda with a guitar.

Like many of his characters, Thorn-





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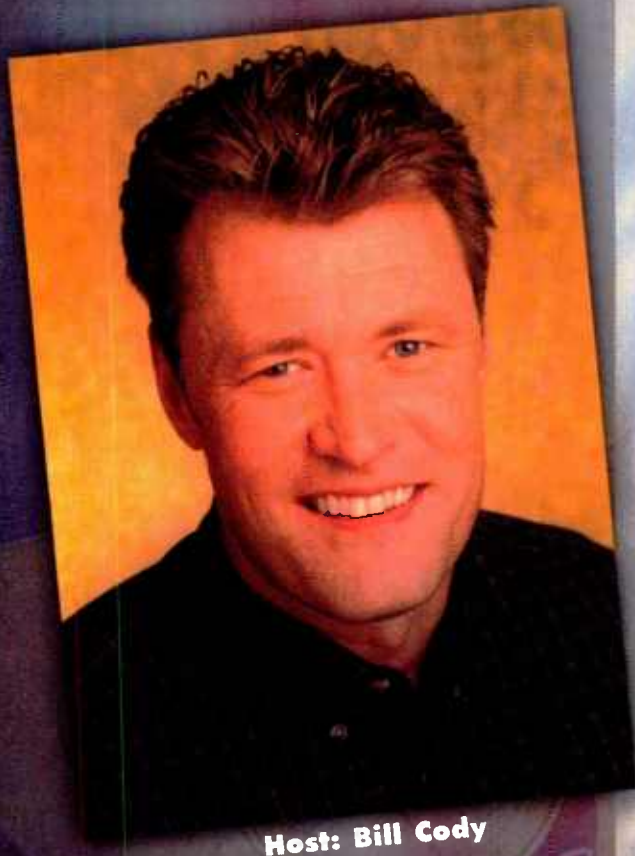
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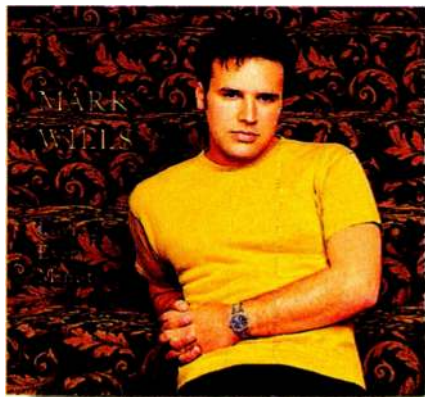
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ton's music is flawed, mostly because of his limited voice and inconsistent style. Putting *Private Radio* in the CD player is more like having Thornton over for a lively evening. It may not be polished, but it's rarely boring.

— Miriam Pace Longino



**MARK WILLS**  
**Loving Every Minute**  
MERCURY

★★

Talk about unwitting irony. "I'll Be Around," a track from Mark Wills' latest album, finds the Georgia singer looking on as the fun-loving girl of his dreams prepares to marry a buttoned-down bore. Appealing to her unbridled side, Wills makes a last-ditch play for the woman's hand: *When you long to feel the wind in your hair/When your choices seem a little too square/I'll be around.*

It's a harmless pledge, or at least it would have been if only the song, and the rest of this ballad-sated album, didn't contradict Wills' every word.

The epitome of safe and predictable, *Loving Every Minute* is exactly the sort of record that industry insiders have in mind when they talk about someone singing to the proverbial soccer mom.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with aiming a record toward middle-class women. And Wills, despite the hopelessly staged soap-star pics in the CD booklet, seems like a guileless enough guy. Yet does radio really need more treacly greeting cards like Wills' "In My Heaven" and "Universe"?

The problem with *Loving Every Minute* involves more than hackneyed songwriting. Although Wills possesses a full-bodied tenor, the sum of the parts is as banal as lowest-common-denominator country – or pop – gets.

— Bill Friskics-Warren

**CHRIS KNIGHT**  
**A Pretty Good Guy**  
DUALTONE

★★★★

The hubbub greeting Chris Knight's 1998 debut revolved around the album's gritty, pulp-country point of view, a tone set by scenes rife with guns, tough luck and beat-up pickups – and by the weight of the world etched into Knight's ash-can rasp.

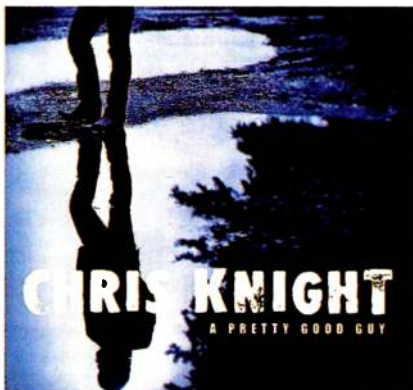
The Kentucky native's new album, the wryly titled *A Pretty Good Guy*, continues his penchant for dramatic, back-holler noir, once again filling an album with odes to empty bottles, broken dreams and hungry hearts.

Yet what separates Knight from all the Bruce Springsteen and Steve Earle wannabes isn't his hard-boiled exterior, but what lies beneath: the empathy and understanding – the sheer depth – he betrays every time he delves into that forbidding, often unforgiving, world.

Take "Down The River," a fiddle-haunted tale of bloodlust and biblical reckoning in which Knight refuses to cast judgment on his protagonist, instead crawling inside the guy's skin to illustrate how revenge and violence feed upon themselves, devouring our humanity in the process.

The Earle-inspired "If I Were You" settles another score. Playing a homeless panhandler who pulls a gun on a would-be benefactor, Knight confronts how injustice breeds desperation. Elsewhere, the roiling guitars and thwacked backbeats often evoke John Mellencamp's heartland anthems, as in the new "Oil Patch Town," which throbs with the ache of feeling stuck somewhere without seeing a way out.

The uncluttered roots-rock arrangements on *A Pretty Good Guy* are more muted and brooding than on Knight's



debut, and more attuned to his lyrics. Credit goes to producer and former Georgia Satellite Dan Baird, whose rock-solid rhythms, hide 'n' seek guitars and down-home stringed instruments give the songs muscle without getting in the way of the stories. Knight's painterly images and careworn croak do the rest.

— B. F.-W.



**CAROLYN DAWN JOHNSON**  
**Room With A View**  
ARISTA NASHVILLE

★★★★

On this 13-song collection, Carolyn Dawn Johnson pours personal, heartfelt emotion into her lyrics, a talent she's previously demonstrated as a hit writer on Jo Dee Messina's "Downtime" and Chely Wright's chart-topping "Single White Female." And she does it with such striking sincerity that the Canadian chanteuse captures the essence of love's intricacies.

Johnson rummages through deeply personal territory as she dives into her scrapbook of old flames, detailing the complexities of falling for a close friend in the soul-searching ballad "Complicated," and embodying romantic hunger on the upbeat "I Don't Want You To Go."

This former backup singer for Martina McBride isn't afraid to get playful, either. "Little Bit Of This, Little Bit Of That," adds a hummable, lighthearted spin. On the flipside, "Room With A View" is a solemn tribute to a fallen brother that tugs on the heartstrings. To add to her versatility, the coolly defiant chorus of "Georgia" is elevated by her fresh whisper 'n' wail delivery.

Whether she sings in a calm and collected manner, or wears her heart on her sleeve, Carolyn Dawn Johnson's girl-next-door charm radiates on *Room With A View*, a revealing window to her soul.

— Christopher Mitchell



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WINTER  
SPRING  
SUMMER  
FALL

**(PICK FIVE)**

- When Mama Ain't Happy  
**PAUL OVERSTREET**
- I Pray For You  
**JOHN RICH**
- How Do You Milk A Cow  
**(LEDU'S T. JUDD**
- Looking For Love  
*(In all the wrong places)*  
**SAWYER BROWN**
- Breakin' What's Left Of  
My Heart  
**LEN DOOLIN**

- What's Forever For  
**B J THOMAS**
- It's A Great Day To Be Alive  
**TRAVIS TRITT**
- I've Got My Game On  
*There's And here you*  
**GEORGE STRAIT**
- Don't Happen Twice  
**KENNY CHESNEY**
- No Fear  
**FERRI CLARK**
- Walk The Llama Llama  
**RASCAL FLATTS**

- Cowboys Don't Cry  
**EDDY RAVEN**
- The Last Thing On My Mind  
**PATTY LOVELESS**
- Sometimes  
**CLAY DAVIDSON**
- She Is  
**HAL KETCHUM**
- A Piece Is A Piece  
**MERIDITH EDWARDS**
- He Rides The Wild Horses  
**CHRIS LEDOUX**
- Burn Down The Trailer Park

**BILLY RAY CYRUS**

- I Wanna Your Bad  
**CHARLIE ROBISON**
- Don't Let Me Down  
**KORNEYY KAYLE**
- Laredo  
**CHRIS CAGLE**
- When Somebody  
Loves You  
**ALAN JACKSON**
- Angels In Waiting  
**TAMMY COCHRAN**
- What I Do  
**BELAMY BROTHERS**

- The Most Beautiful Girl  
South 65  
**THE WILKINSONS**
- The Girls Got It Goin' On  
**RICK FERRELL**
- Out Of Here Tonight  
**THE GREAT DIVIDE**
- There You Go Again  
**KENNY ROGERS**
- You  
**MARSHALL DYLLON**
- There's A Hero  
**BILLY GILMAN**

- Shine  
**DOLLY PARTON**
- Man Of Me  
**GARY ALLAN**
- That's A Plan  
**MARK MCGUINN**
- Never Free You Enough  
**CHELY WRIGHT**
- Six Pack Summer  
**PHIL VASSAR**
- Louisiana CoCo  
**KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS**

**(PICK FIVE)**

- When Rita Leaves  
**DELBERT MCCLINTON**
- Love Is Enough  
**3 OF HEARTS**
- Rose Bouquet  
**PHIL VASSAR**
- Breathing  
**NEAL COTY**
- Ain't Nothing About You  
**BROOKS & DUNN**
- If My Heart Had Wings  
**FAITH HILL**
- Punk Your Name In Purple  
**TRENT SUMMAR & THE NEW ROW MOB**

- Second Wind  
**DARRYL WORLEY**
- Ever-thing To Me  
**REBEL HEARTS**
- Be Careful What You  
Wish For  
**RICKY LYNN GREGG**
- Dinkley  
**ELBERT WEST**
- While You Travel Me  
**RASCAL FLATTS**
- I Would've Loved You  
Anyday  
**TRISHA YEARWOOD**

- What I Really Meant  
To Say  
**CYNDI THOMSON**
- When I Think About Angels  
**JAMIE O NEAL**
- Two People Fall In Love  
**BRAD PAISLEY**
- Honey Do  
**MIKE WALKER**
- Carol Get Where  
**THE TRACTORS**
- Complicated  
**CAROLYN DAWN JOHNSON**

- After The War  
**TIMOTHY P. IRVIN**
- I Can't Hear The Music  
**LORETTA LYNN**
- Where The Buckin' Ends  
**KEITH URBAN**
- There You'll Be  
**FAITH HILL**
- Come A Little Closer  
**LILA MCCANN**
- She's My Girl  
**BILLY GILMAN**
- Black Number 3  
**JERRY ALAN FITZGERALD**

- I Walk The Line (revisited)  
**RODNEY CROWELL**
- I'm Just Talkin' About  
Tonight  
**TOBY KEITH**
- I'll Fly Away  
**MERLE HAGGARD W/  
ALBERT BRIMLEY JR.**
- On A Night Like This  
**TRICK PONY**
- I'm Already There  
**LONESTAR**
- What's A Gonna Take  
**O J HANSEN**

- Loving Every Minute  
Of It  
**MARK WILLS**
- Right Man For The Job  
**CHARLIE ROBISON**
- Before The Next  
Teardrop Falls  
**LYDIA MILLER**
- I Will Surprise  
**WILD HORSES**
- I Ain't Drinkin' Any Less  
**RAMBLER**
- Write Your Name  
Across My Heart  
**OAK RIDGE BOYS**
- America The Beautiful  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

**(PICK FIVE)**

- Only In America  
**BROOKS & DUNN**
- When God Feels  
Women Get The Blues  
**MARTINA MCBRIDE**
- The Boys Are Back In Town  
**PATTY LOVELESS**
- Ain't Nobody Here But  
Us Chickens  
**ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL**
- Helplessly, Hopelessly  
**JESSICA ANDREWS**
- Love Of A Woman  
**TRAVIS TRITT**

- The Lucky One  
**ALISON KRAUSS**
- Daddy's Dream  
**REBEL HEARTS**
- You're The Best Part  
Of Me  
**DALE WATSON**
- Sometimes In The Water  
**JEFFREY STEELE**
- Too Lazy To Work To  
Nervous To Sleep  
**BR549**
- Austin  
**BLAKE SHELTON**

- It's Alright To Be A  
Redneck  
**ALAN JACKSON**
- Don't Play An Love Song  
**JAMESON CLARK**
- Vascular Disease  
**TOMMY GILHAM**
- Ain't Nobody Gonna  
Take That From Me  
**COLLIN RAYE**
- Cold One Count On  
**MONTGOMERY GENTRY**
- Texas In 1880  
**RADNEY FOSTER**
- Elizabeth  
**BILLY GILMAN**

- I'll Fly Away  
**ALISON KRAUSS  
W/GILLIAN WELCH**
- What's Around  
**BRAD PAISLEY**
- In The Mountains  
**SHERRIE AUSTIN**
- Life Don't Have To Be  
So Hard  
**TRACY LAWRENCE**
- I Wanna Talk About Me  
**TOBY KEITH**
- Unpredictable  
**ELBERT WEST**
- I'm Tryin'  
**TRACE ADKINS**

- More Of Your Love  
**THE DERAILERS**
- That's What Brothers Do  
**CONFEDERATE RAILROAD**
- I Breathe In, I Breathe Out  
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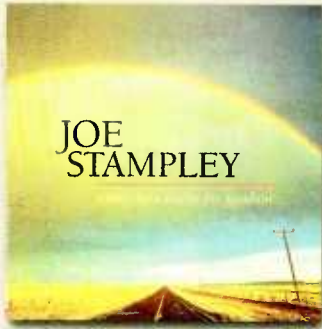
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**JOE STAMPLEY**  
*Somewhere Under The Rainbow* (Crittter) ★★

The good news: Joe Stampley, at age 58, remains a distinctly soulful singer who understands the power of understatement. The bad news: His production too often relies on a synthetic keyboard sound that went out of fashion with leisure suits and garish gold necklaces. These days, low-budget recording sessions need not sound cheap, as Stampley proves when he gathers the old Muscle Shoals studio session players for a stirring version of the Harold Melvin soul classic, "If You Don't Know Me By Now." Stampley should ditch the lounge-act touches and concentrate instead on highlighting his expressive voice with a leaner, earthier – and more compatible – roadhouse sound.



**DALE ANN BRADLEY**  
*Cumberland River Dreams* (Doobie Shea) ★★★

Bradley's sweet soprano has always conveyed a tender-yet-durable beauty, but the one-time New Coon Creek Girls vocalist gains more shine on her fourth

solo release. She displays growth as a songwriter and proves better at choosing covers that give her music more distinct style. Moreover, the bluegrass performer surrounds herself with an outstanding acoustic ensemble. The result carries a seriousness of message and intention that affords the songs of this preacher's daughter a rare and delicious depth.



**LEROY TROY**  
*The Old Grey Mare* (Rounder) ★★★★

Leroy Troy closes his national recording debut with an old Little Jimmy Dickens song touting how "hillbilly fever is going round." By then, listeners will have contracted the fever themselves, for the banjo-wielding Troy presents old-time string music with such exuberance and expertise that it's impossible not to be affected by his infectious charm. Troy harks back to a vaudevillian era when country performers emphasized entertainment, boisterous fun and close-to-the-earth tales of farming, courting, drinking and traveling down that ol' open road. The most obvious comparison is early *Grand Ole Opry* star Uncle Dave Macon, though Troy cites banjo entertainer Cordell Kemp as his primary influence. By now, though, Troy's his own man, as he makes clear on his spirited versions of folk and country standards "Shady Grove," "Bottle Of

Wine" and "Miss Molly," as well as a few bell-ringers from the pen of Troy's producer, Marty Stuart.



**GRETA LEE**  
*You Must Be Present To Win* (Let's Roll) ★★★

That Lee covers Gene Watson's classic honky-tonk hit "Got No Reason Now For Going Home" signifies her devotion to traditional barroom rhythms and themes. That she delivers it – and the rest of *You Must Be Present To Win* – with such conviction certifies that she's a true-to-life female honky-tonker with a resilient attitude and a compelling twang in her delivery. That her own songs, which fill the rest of her 11-song album, stand up well alongside the famous cover tune provides further evidence that Lee is a country singer worth seeking out.



**JESSE DAYTON**  
*Hey Nashvegas* (Stag) ★★

His soaring voice combines the grandeur of Texas roadhouse Carusos like Johnny Bush with the brooding bite of Del Shannon or Eddie Vedder. He writes decently,

too, creating classic couplets that only occasionally slip into bad puns or easy clichés. Despite all that, Dayton's records never live up to his potential. Part of the reason is production – the recording, supervised by Dayton's longtime moneyman Randall Jamail, sounds like he's singing in the living room with the band dispersed in back rooms. Part of it is song selection: Someone needs to advise Dayton on how to cull the ripe fruit ("Mama's Guilty Fool") from the withered vines ("One Life Stand"). For now, he remains an unvarnished gem in need of better handling.



**BLUE HIGHWAY**  
*Still Climbing Mountains* (Rounder) ★★★

A band of acoustic virtuosos, Blue Highway strives to be more than flashy bluegrass instrumentalists. They often succeed, largely through textured ensemble arrangements and careful song choices, many of which reveal close ties to the land and some of which explore social tensions. The band's fifth album, *Still Climbing Mountains*, finds them drawing only on their own songwriting for the first time. For the most part, they prove up to the challenge. Highlights include a sympathetic working-class tune, "Union Man," and three fresh takes on relationships, "This Ain't The First Time I've Walked In These Shoes," "Goodbye For A While" and "Only A Thought Away."

Altogether, Blue Highway continues to be a band that deserves attention beyond its fervent bluegrass base.



**THE WAYFARING STRANGERS**  
*Shifting Sands Of Time*  
(Rouner) ★★

An art project rather than a working band, The Wayfaring Strangers involves violinist Matt Glaser and a core group of well-regarded friends – including jazz pianist Bruce Barth, klezmer clarinetist Andy Statman and banjo innovator Tony Trischka – who strive to transform earthy old tunes into cerebral chamber music. It’s far from a new concept: Scores of progressive acoustic musicians have been pushing similar boundaries for more than 30 years. However, Glaser lets ambition overrun potential, cramming songs like “Motherless Child” and “Rank Stranger” with incongruous elements and opening them to jazzy improvisations. For example, Glaser’s arrangement of the fiddle standard “June Apple” incorporates musical references to Thelonius Monk, Igor Stravinsky and Bulgarian choir music. The result is about as interesting as a high-speed scan of the radio dial. It’s not that old-time string music can’t inspire new sounds; it’s just that it shouldn’t sound as forced as this.

**JOHN HARTFORD**  
*Hamilton Ironworks*  
(Rouner) ★★★

John Hartford’s final studio album, released a few months

after his death in June, is a fitting eulogy. *Hamilton Ironworks* concentrates on ancient folk tunes – “Devil’s Hornpipe,” “Money Musk,” “Dusty Miller” and others – that Hartford first heard while falling in love with string-band music as a Missouri kid. As usual, Hartford alters the tunes to fit his personal style, this time using a rhythmic speaking voice to explain where he first heard the song and the memories it summons for him.

Hartford, best known for penning Glen Campbell’s “Gentle On My Mind,” was an exceptional musician, but he preferred to emphasize character and charm over speed and precision. Fitting his purpose, *Hamilton Ironworks* is a reverent



work, yet by nature the fiddler can’t help but include a few irreverent curves. That’s what made Hartford such a memorable musician: He toasts tradition while displaying a healthy disregard for convention.

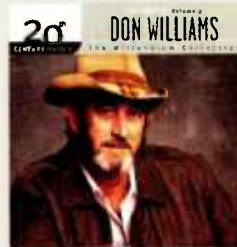
On every album he made – from his early ’70s progressive albums like *Aereo-Plain* and *Morning Bugle* to recent old-time works like *Wild Hog In The Red Brush* – what came through clearly was Hartford’s whimsical soul and his love of making music. It certainly shines through once more on this parting collection.

— Michael McCall

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# Queen Mother

**Naomi Judd talks straight about pajamas, glamming it up at the Oscars and her love affair with a washing machine**

**A**s most country fans know, Naomi Judd is one opinionated mother. She's also much more than the parent of actress Ashley Judd and singer Wynonna Judd, with whom she ruled the '80s as country's most famous mother-daughter duo, The Judds. Busy as ever these days, she takes time annually to participate in a society of brainiacs who meet in New Mexico. "It's sort of a think tank, and

George Lucas [creator of *Star Wars*] and I decide who to invite each year," says the still-flaming redhead. Now a spokesperson for WE: Women's Entertainment television network, the six-time Grammy winner is the host of WE's *Between Us*, three-minute clips of words of wisdom that touch upon "everything from intuition to how popular culture affects us." Naomi recently took time to toss us a few pearls.

**Are you still the "Queen Of Everything"?** Well, I'm up to 11 tiaras right now. So I guess that means yes.

**Are you wearing one right now?** No, but I could grab one. Actually, my favorite use of the tiaras is to freak out my daughters. When we were on our Power To Change tour, Wy was wearing her leathers during her solo set, doing her vamp-until-she-cramps thing. After her song, I appeared right behind her, wearing a long, glittering Badgley Mischka evening gown, a huge crown, a scepter and a basket full of fairy dust. Before the lights came up so she could see me, my voice booms out into the cosmos, "Did you have fun playing with your little friends, dear? I just ran to the bus to make us a tuna casserole." Oh, the look on her face!

**Do you still celebrate, as you once put it, "the sacredness of ordinary moments"?** Oh, yes. I was just in the backyard, wearing my pajamas, laying in the hammock with the four dogs. I was having what I call *present moment awareness*, with the warm sun on my face, the soft fur from the dogs next to me and I could smell the wisteria. Those are the moments our lives are made of.

**What's your favorite household chore?** Laundry. Growing up, we had a Maytag Ringer, so now I'm totally enchanted with putting a load of clothes into a machine, and they come out clean! I have a love affair with a major appliance.

**How do you feel about going to awards shows like the Oscars or the Grammys?** I get a real giddiness about it. Riding in the limo, wearing these amazing clothes, being around all these cameras and beautiful people. Sometimes I look at Ash and say, "We are at the freaking

*Oscars – how did this happen?*" I cherish it, but those awards shows are not the real deal. Sitting here with [husband] Larry and drinking flavored coffee in my PJs – *that's* the real deal.



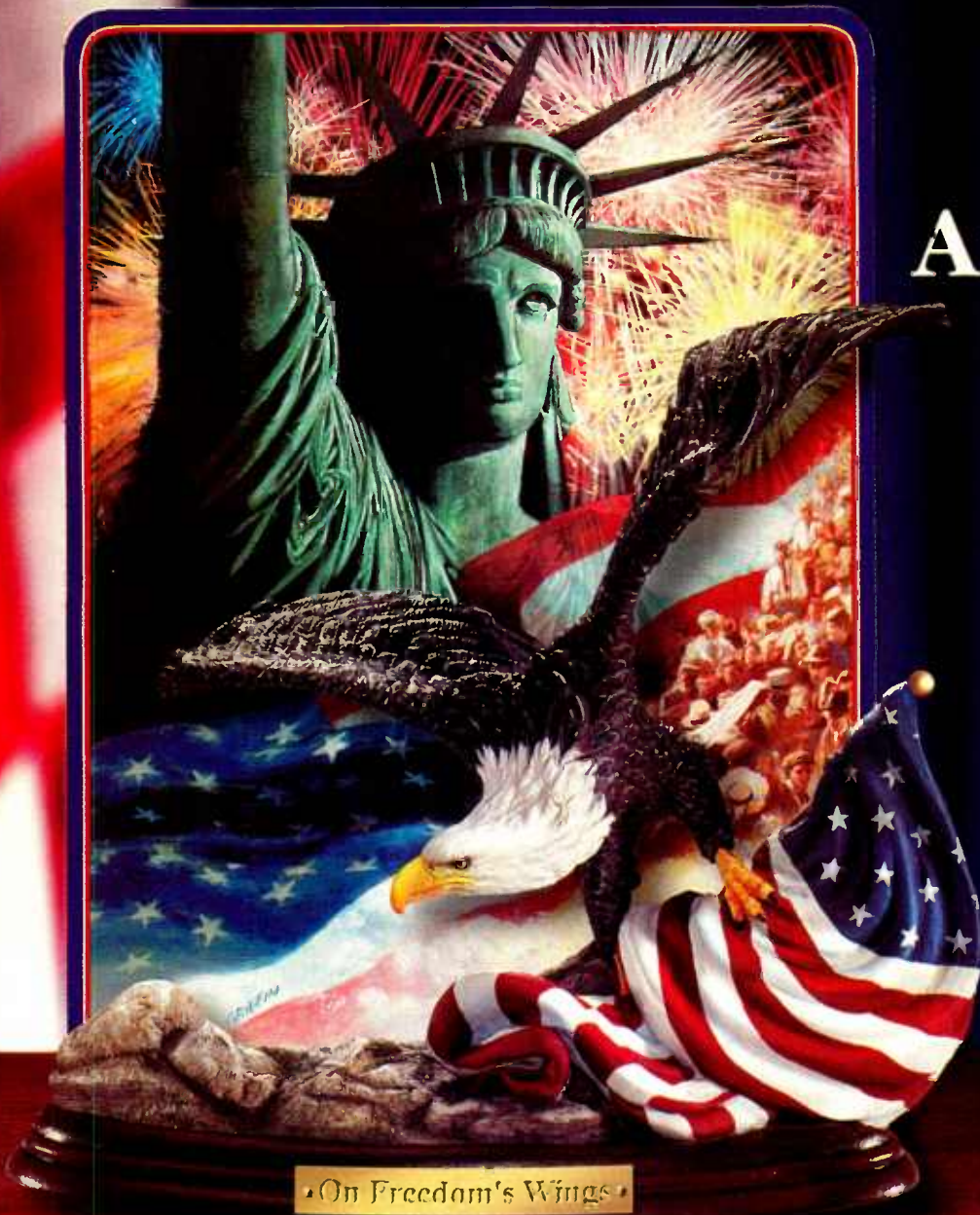
**How is your health these days?** Fine, for the most part. Recently, I had been having these mysterious nosebleeds, so I went to my doctor. They gave me three shots of Novocain to numb it, then they had to cauterize it. So my doctor asks what in the world I had been doing to irritate my nasal cavity so much. I couldn't think of anything. That night, [grandson] Elijah says, "Mama, stick that fake snot back up your nose *again*." It's just this wiggly clear plastic toy you stick up your nose. *Ooops!* I saw this doctor at the movie theater a few days later,

and he asks if I ever figured out what caused the nosebleeds. Of course, I told him I had no idea.

**Which character from *The Wizard Of Oz* do you best identify with?** Glinda, the Good Witch, of course! I have two figurines of her I'm looking at this very minute. Wynonna gave them to me.

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World Radio History

# OFF THE CHARTS

THE COUNTRY BUZZ OUTSIDE THE MUSIC BIZ

## Ex-Byrd Still Flying Gene Parsons follows an off-the-radar path

**G**ene Parsons may be best known for joining landmark bands The Byrds and The Flying Burrito Brothers during their swan-song years. But 30 years after leaving The Byrds, Parsons remains an active music-maker, making a living from a company that sells a well-regarded guitar attachment while continuing to perform and record.

In the mid-1970s, Parsons formed StringBender Inc. to manufacture a string-pulling device that enables an electric guitar to sound like a pedal steel. Over the last 25 years, Parsons has personally installed more than 2,000 StringBenders for a variety of artists, including country pickers Marty Stuart, Albert Lee and Bernie Leadon, as well as rockers Pete Townshend of the Who and Ron Wood of The Rolling Stones.

He also has released *Gene Parsons In Concert: I Hope They Let Us In*, a CD of a recent California solo concert performance, and it's an absolute gem. Thanks to the record's intimate approach, it's easy to discern Parsons' musical prowess on a variety of instruments, including acoustic guitar, slide guitar, banjo and harmonica. He also intersperses amusing, insightful anecdotes, displaying an easy rapport with his audience.

"In all the years I've been in the business, I've never done an entire solo performance in front of an audience that just came to hear me," says Parsons, who is selling his album through his website, [www.stringbender.com](http://www.stringbender.com). "I had done maybe four or five songs in the midst of a band performance, or perhaps as part of a duo, but it's never been just me. But I've got to tell you, it was really an exhilarating experience."

## GENE PARSONS IN CONCERT



Once a member of California's seminal country-rock band, Gene Parsons now revs up a solo career.

The album includes a solo version of Parsons' own "Gunga Din," which first appeared on The Byrds' 1969 album, *Ballad Of Easy Rider*. He also includes a couple of Cajun-flavored banjo tunes, a string-bending guitar workout on Lowell George's "Willin'" and the folk classic "Old Blue." He updates "Abilene," a song from the catalog of the late folk singer Bob Gibson, and closes with his own take on Bob Dylan's "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere," a song originally made famous by The Byrds.

He also plans to make available remastered versions of *Melodies*, his acclaimed 1979 album, and *Birds Of A Feather*, an album he recorded with

his music and business partner, folk singer Meridian Green.

As for his former band, Parsons recalls The Byrds' golden period with fondness and respect. "We were a pretty close little group," he says of the groundbreaking band he played with from 1968 to 1972. "I remember before shows we would go into the dressing room and close the door, and then we'd form a circle and hold hands and sing harmonies. Those were some of our best nights. Playing with Clarence [White] and Skip [Battin] and Roger [McGuinn] was definitely one of my high points."

— Rick Petreycik

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had before. 'I completed the treatment 3 months ago. My hair is the length I like now. It is so full I hardly ever go to my hairdresser any more. I wash and dry it... and that's all!'"

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"Now people stop and stare at me as I walk through the streets. Many ask me what I did to have such beautiful hair. 'I think I was most moved when my boyfriend said: 'It's amazing: it's like your new head of hair has turned you into a younger woman.'"

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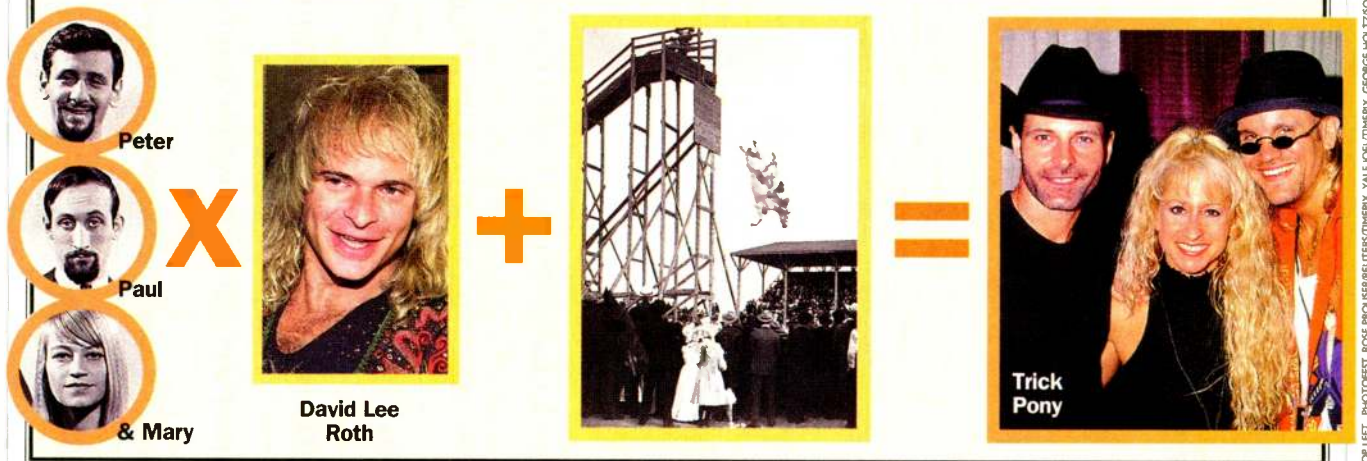
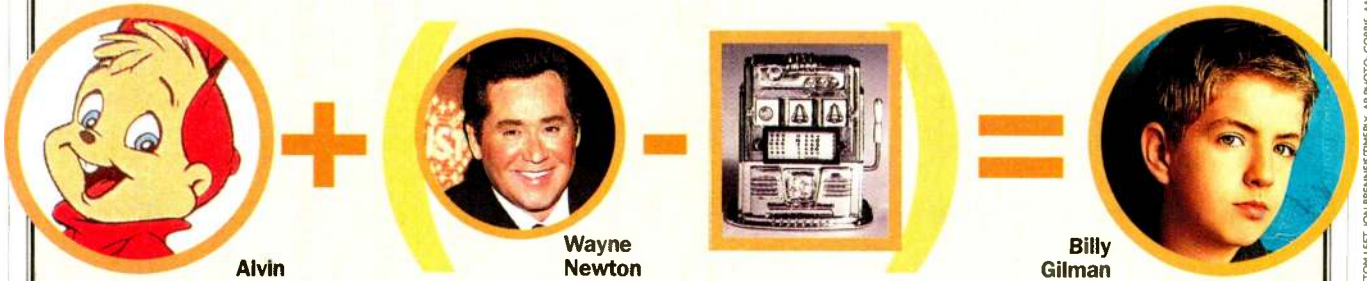
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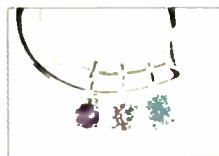
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## The Cold Hard Truth

Minton Sparks spins trenchant, true-life tales of the Old South

**T**he spoken word was once a conspicuous component of country music entertainment. From the recitations of Hank Williams and Bill Anderson to the plain-folks humor of Minnie Pearl and Jerry Clower, country recordings and concerts featured artists who told tales that ranged from dramatic to hilarious.

But there's never been anyone in country music quite like Minton Sparks.

Much like the late Sarah Colley created alter ego Minnie Pearl, Nashville poet and social worker Jill Webb-Hill invented Minton Sparks as a vehicle for literate, unflinching stories about family life in the rural South.

For example, take "Trella's Trash," one of 12 pieces on *Middlin' Sisters*, Sparks' debut CD: *I heard he beat her, treated her like his slave, made her tape Reynolds Wrap over every peeling window in that run-down house - to keep out the light. He kept it out, all right, 'til dark was the only hand Trella had to hold.*

As those words suggest, Sparks delves into the most tender of topics on *Middlin' Sisters*. Throughout, she concentrates on the difficulties women endured in the Old South and the colorful ways they interacted with elders, husbands, children and neighbors.

The tales were inspired by the tales she heard from the older women in her family. "I grew up in this family that, like most people in the South, had thousands of stories, so I started mining mine," she says. "I just got out this notebook where I had all of these notes about family stories, and I wrote them."

Produced by singer/songwriter Marcus Hummon, Sparks' CD features musical support from multi-instrumentalist Darrell Scott and guitarist Rob Jackson, who add a haunting backdrop to the stories. Waylon Jennings lends his ominous voice to one of her stories, "John 3:16: Guest Preacher At Prayer Meeting."



Sparks flies in the face of convention with colorful, well-woven tales of the rural South, inspired by the women in her family.

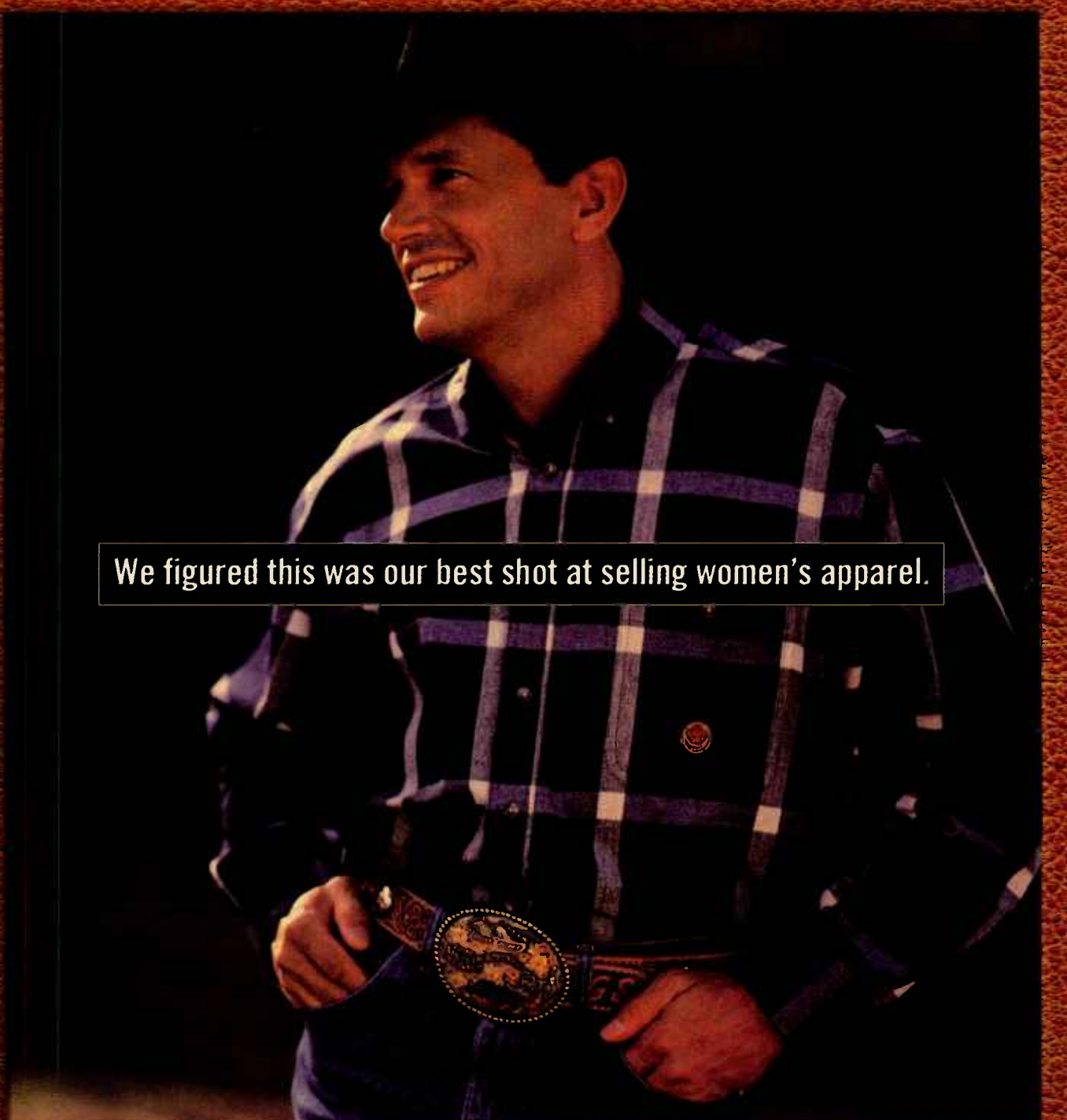
The idea for the CD grew out of a weekly writers group, the Thirsty Night Poets, where Hummon was struck by the prose Webb-Hill read. "Each piece was just so wonderful and poignant," recalls Hummon, the writer of such hits as the Dixie Chicks' "Ready To Run" and Alabama's "Cheap Seats." "She was wanting to speak through these characters and talk about her under-

standing of the culture she comes from."

Sparks has begun giving spoken-word performances in bookstores and nightclubs, and the crowds have let her know how much they enjoy her age-old form of entertainment.

"This collection was written very quickly," Sparks says. "But it's taken on a life of its own. The response has been very gratifying."

— Randy Rudder



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# Book Beat

***Wrong's What I Do Best:*  
Hard Country Music And Contemporary Culture**  
By Barbara Ching (University of Oxford Press, \$22)

**T**he first thing you need to know about *Wrong's What I Do Best*, named for a George Jones song, is that author Barbara Ching is an assistant professor of English at the University of Memphis.

While she is obviously a fan of country music, Ching's book adopts a semi-scholarly tone and strives mightily to say something *important*, particularly on hard country's place in the intellectual hierarchy. You get the feeling her tome was part of a "publish or perish" university directive, and that she had a heck of a time convincing someone that country's puns, stories and characters were worth serious study.

Sometimes she gets so academically feverish that by the time she stops chasing tangents, you can't remember the point she wanted to establish in the first place. At other times, she stretches so hard to find hidden meaning where there is none – particularly in her psychoanalysis of Hank Williams Jr. – that she's annoying.

Still, in looking at the careers of hard-country singers – George Jones, Merle Haggard, David Allan Coe, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Buck Owens, Dwight Yoakam and Hank Sr. and son – Ching makes plenty of highfalutin'



sense about the artists' intent to "sing of failures to live up to American standards of success." One might argue in part with her statement that "hard country ... is not the kind of country music that beams forth from the *Opry* every Saturday

night," but she's right in her assessment that younger honky-tonk performers such as Alan Jackson lack the authenticity of their forebearers.

"[Jackson] may have learned the hard way from listening to Jones, and he claims that he's always tried to sound like Jones," she writes, "but he doesn't play the role of the hard-living abject male ... The glamorous Jackson relates to his audience as a superstar rather than as an inhabitant of hard country."

There's not much new between the covers of Ching's study, but she sprinkles her text with fascinating factoids: Haggard walking off *The Ed Sullivan Show* rather than sing "Surrey With The Fringe On Top"; Coe wearing a dress until the age of seven (according to his mother); Jennings keeping an empty bunk in his hearselike tour bus for the ghost of poor ol' Hank.

Ching makes the occasional mistake (she doesn't seem to know that *Music City News* is out of business), but she makes up for such shortcomings with some memorable writing. Anyone with the guts to call Buck Owens a "repellent cornball" may raise a lot of ire, but hard country never was for the faint of heart.

— Alanna Nash

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# Playing The Fair Way

Stars tee off to raise money for charity

**C**oncert tours are a prominent part of every country star's career. But an increasing number of performers are making time for another type of tour as well.

During the summer, a veritable mini-tour of celebrity golf tournaments keeps Music Row hotshots busy competing on the links while raising money for charities.

Diamond Rio recently celebrated the 10th installment of their golf tournament, while Vince Gill has hosted his event – known affectionately as The Vinny – for nine years. Trace Adkins and Joe Diffie are among the other stars to lend their names to charity golf tournaments. There's even a Music Row Ladies Golf Tournament each year where male celebrities serve as caddies for women golfers who work in the Nashville music industry.

This year, Mark Wills jumped on the golf cart – er, bandwagon – as well. The “Don't Laugh At Me” singer recently lent his name to an Alabama-based golf event, the Price Oil Plainsmen Celebrity Golf

Tournament, which raised \$40,000 to fund research for the American Heart Association at Auburn University.

Big-name performers are important to such events because corporate bigwigs jump at the chance to hobnob with stars. For example, when businessmen question Price Oil chief executive Todd Armstrong about the \$6,500 enrollment fee, he tells them that they get more than two days of golf and entertainment. They also get to meet some of the biggest names in country music.

“I tell them, ‘You're going to be able to rub elbows with 'em, sit down and chat with 'em and get to know 'em,’” Price says. “It's a big networking thing that just snowballs.”

It's also a tax thing. Whether it's Fan Fair's City of Hope Celebrity Softball Challenge or an annual golf match, sponsors like Price Oil generally use these events for a sizable tax write-off.

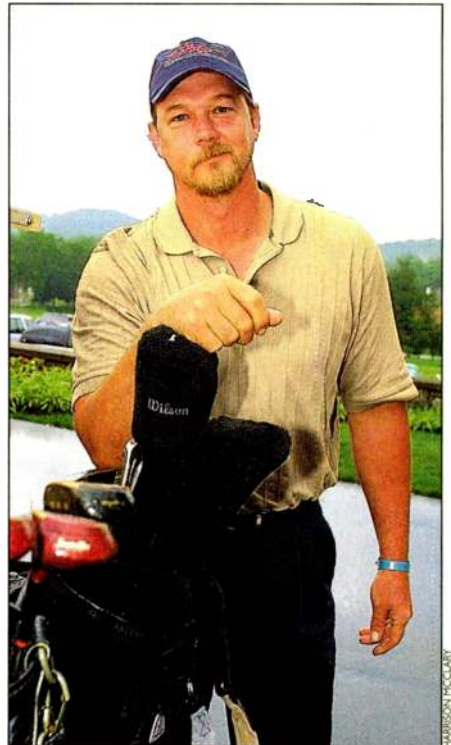
“The money we spend to sponsor the event is a charitable contribution to the Heart Association,” Armstrong notes. “It does reduce taxable income – which never hurts anybody!”

Taxes aren't part of the motivation for the stars, since it's not a payday for them.

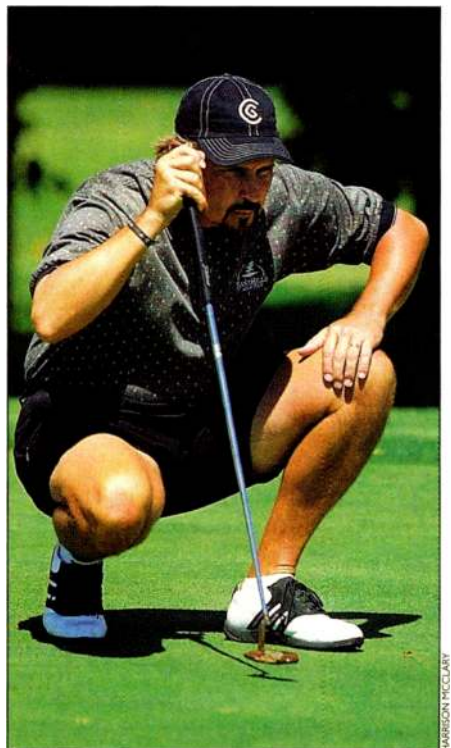
“I don't take an appearance fee,” says Wills. “For me it's just a cool way to hang out with a bunch of friends and play some golf for a few days. I'm just making money for a great cause. It's not something that I'm looking at like, ‘What's in it for me?’”

Still, no one leaves empty-handed. “They have great stuff in the goodie bags!” exclaims Wills. “This year they had really nice bathrobes, and shirts and hats and a real nice leather travel bag.”

— Bob Cannon



Wherever there's golf and a good cause, the stars don't hesitate to hit the links. Trace Adkins (above) participates in several charity events, while Diamond Rio lead vocalist Marty Roe (below) helped celebrate the band's 10th annual celebrity tournament.



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The **Quick Slim Fat Blocker** is a new combination of herbs and plant-based ingredients, that we're all familiar with: Sea Kelp, Lecithin, Bromelain, Oyster Shell and Apple Cider Vinegar combined with the Apple Pectin. These proven effective ingredients are combined for the first time into one caplet.



**MELT BODY FAT  
AND TRIM  
INCHES IN  
JUST 48 HOURS**

**"I LOST 4 INCHES  
FROM MY OVERALL  
MEASUREMENTS  
IN 28 DAYS"**

-CAROLINE



EMAIL ORDERS: [www.quickslimdiet.com](http://www.quickslimdiet.com)  
QUICK SLIM IS A CERTIFIED INTERNET SECURE MERCHANT

### THE EFFECTS OF THE APPLE PECTIN FAT BLOCKER ARE POWERFUL

- 1 Apple Pectin is an energized enzyme that can ingest up to 900 times it's own weight in fat. That's why it's a fantastic **FAT BLOCKER**.
- 2 Apple Pectin **attacks fat 24 hours a day**, everyday. It's devoured and expelled through your system day after day to eliminate unsightly bulges.
- 3 The **Quick Slim Fat Blocker** is **100% natural**. Forget about prescriptions. In no way can Apple Pectin harm your health, there's absolutely no side effects.
- 4 The **Quick Slim Fat Blocker** eliminates fat for **effortless weight loss**. Same results as:
  - Jogging 10 miles per week,
  - An hour of aerobics per day,
  - 15 hours of swimming or cycling per week.



**"I LOST  
30 POUNDS  
IN 25 DAYS  
FOR MY  
WEDDING"**

-Sofia M.

### Yes, I want to lose weight and it's guaranteed!

Make your check or money order out to:  
Bio Lab  
334, Cornelia Street  
PMB #289  
Plattsburgh  
New York, 12901



**ORDER 24 hours a day  
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 American Express  Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that if I don't lose weight during my treatment, I may return the empty bottle for a refund, valid for a full month.

Acc. #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special discount coupon: order **Quick Slim** today and receive a free gift.

TRIAL SIZE	TREATMENT	LENGTH	PRICE	TOTAL
→	90 caplets	30 days	\$39.95	
→	180 caplets	60 days	\$69.95	
→	270 caplets	90 days	\$89.95	
→	360 caplets	120 days	\$109.95	
	Add \$5 shipping & handling			\$ 5.00
	Add \$15 for express delivery service			\$ 15.00
	CM-104	TOTAL COST		

You will be another satisfied customer of Bio Lab laboratory  
\* Less shipping & handling

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_



BETT MANN/CORBIS

## Heere's Johnny

**E**ven though Johnny Cash has starred in movies and on television, he's not a Hollywood type of guy. Son of an Arkansas sharecropper, Cash imparts a sense of gravity and a grasp of mortality that conflicts with Tinseltown's vanity and superficiality. But on March 9, 1976, when

bestowed a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, Cash, shown laughing with wife June Carter Cash and 6-year-old son John Carter Cash, embraced the experience. The moment signified how even the poorest of Americans can have an impact on the world.



THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER, AND HOW I LOVE

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VIRGINIA SLIMS



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